

**UK STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5,
CLEARANCE OF MINED AREAS**

Mr President

**As this is the first time that the UK has taken to the floor
may I congratulate you on your assumption of this
important role and may I assure you of the UK's full
support.**

**May I take this opportunity to fully align ourselves with
the statement of the EU.**

Mr President

**At the Intersessional meeting in June, the UK reported on
a successful land release pilot project that we undertook
in the Falklands between January and March this year as
part of the UK's Article 5 commitments.**

**This land release programme focused on the suspect
hazardous area behind the Stanley Common Fence south
of the capital Stanley that was known to contain
minefields and unexploded ordnance. The programme of**

work involved confirming the extent and perimeters of the known, but poorly defined minefields in the area, accurately defining their boundaries and fencing them on all sides. Battle area clearance was conducted on the remaining land. By the end of the project over 3 million square meters of land was safely released for community use. In the process 79 items of unexploded ordnance were identified and destroyed. The land released had been used extensively for recreational purposes before the 1982 conflict and included a nineteenth century stone corral which had been off limits to the Islanders for 30 years.

A key component of this pilot phase of work was community outreach aimed at building confidence in the land release process. A suspect hazardous area land release committee was established chaired by the Demining Programme office and involving members of the Falkland Islands Government. It provides a forum through which confidence in the land release processes can be established and by which key issues – such as the impact on the fragile environment – can be discussed.

Following this year's successful programme, I am glad to report that work will resume again next month focused on clearing the minefields and suspect hazardous areas demarcated during the last phase of operations. As part of this programme a minimum of 5 minefields will be cleared. The vagaries of weather in the South Atlantic are an unpredictable variable, but subject to a good summer the total number of minefields cleared might be greater and more suspect land may also be processed for release. The areas selected for work next year have been made in full consultation with the Falkland Islands Government and we will continue to consult the Falkland Islanders on their future priorities.

Mr President

In contrast to clearance work in 2010, where Argentine minefield records for the areas cleared were clear and accurate, the next phase involves areas whose records are less precise. In some instances the only available information of possible contamination is from anecdotal comments gathered in 1982.

This latest phase of work will therefore provide an opportunity to work on land where uncertainties exist and

thus help us develop relevant processes to manage these uncertainties and provide the same level of confidence that land to be released is as safe as all the land processed so far. This is an important learning process before we start work on some large areas for which no records at all exist.

The clearance of a minimum of 5 designated minefield areas will bring to 108 the number of minefields both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle that remain to be cleared.

Mr President

This latest phase of demining operations is concrete evidence of our continued commitment to our Article 5 obligations. Demining progress on the ground has faced significant challenges from the remote location, adverse weather conditions, local concerns over safety and the environment, incomplete minefield records and the tough financial climate. But despite the difficulties we remain fully committed to complying with our obligations and continue to make significant strides towards this end. We will report on the outcome of this latest phase of operations at next year's Intersessional, when we hope to

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be in a position to provide further detail of future clearance operations.

Mr President

We will continue to share our experience of operating in this particularly challenging environment with the mine action community and of course this growing bank of data will inform future work, and help build confidence in de-mining and land release within the Falkland Islands and elsewhere.

Thank you

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