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AGENDA ITEM 10

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOHN DUNCAN, HEAD OF THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE EIGHTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND THEIR DESTRUCTION**

Mr President,

In this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the signing of the Ottawa Convention, the United Kingdom is pleased to participate at this eighth meeting of States under your skilled leadership. I thank you and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this meeting in this wonderful setting and for putting in place all the administrative arrangements. Yesterday's tour to the "Baptism Site" was however a poignant reminder to us all of the impact and importance of the Ottawa Convention and a clear demonstration of the advantages adherence to its provisions can bring.

Of course my delegation fully endorses the written general statement distributed by my colleagues from Portugal on behalf of the European Union and several other countries. The United Kingdom is committed to universalising the Ottawa Convention and to supporting humanitarian mine clearance. We are working closely with our European Union partners to promote universal acceptance of the Convention. The UK spends over 10 million pounds sterling annually on mine clearance through the UN and NGOs on programmes in a number of affected countries including, Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.

On the issue of the UK's obligation to de-mine the Falkland Islands. I wish to take this opportunity to inform fellow States Parties and the international community of the significant progress that has been achieved in the production of a feasibility study on the clearance of landmines in the Falkland Islands. As delegations will be well aware, the United Kingdom, jointly with the government of Argentina, embarked on a joint project several years ago to conduct a study into the feasibility of de-mining the Falkland Islands – the anti-personnel mines and other unexploded ordnance being a legacy of the conflict there in 1982. Since then 117 mined areas have been clearly marked. Fortunately this has had very little impact on the local community as there have been no civilian casualties and there is no economic necessity to use most of the contaminated land.

As the distinguished representative of Argentina will no doubt attest, this joint project has been conducted under a “sovereignty umbrella”. Although it has been a long and complex journey that has had to overcome significant difficulties, I am pleased to confirm that we concluded our work last month. Despite it having taken a long time we consider the end product to be a good one.

The Joint Working Party’s completed feasibility study, of which the main element is a field survey by Cranfield University, concludes that mine clearance in the Falklands is possible – but to do so will present significant technical challenges and risks including those related to the possible environmental impact. In consultation with the Islanders, my Government will now actively consider the options for clearance presented in the feasibility study. We look forward to updating States Parties on any actions taken and on our future intentions at the next intercessional meeting of States Parties.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express publicly to the government of Argentina its sincere appreciation for its cooperation on this project over the past 9 years. And jointly we look forward to presenting further details of our feasibility study next Wednesday lunchtime (21 November) at 1400 in room Mount Nebo 1. I can announce that copies of our joint feasibility study and the Cranfield University field survey report will be made available on the day. In addition, we will explain how the Joint Working Party reached the conclusions it did and there will be an opportunity for questions and answers. We therefore invite all delegates to this presentation and in case a further incentive is required, light refreshments will also be available. The UK and Argentine delegations look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

Mr President,

The Ottawa Convention is working well and the UK is proud to be part of it. But there is still a way to go before we reach our shared objective of a world free of anti-personnel landmines. The UK stands ready to work hard with all states to achieve this.

Thank you Mr President