

UNITED KINGDOM

The ICBL finds it extremely disappointing that the United Kingdom, one of the wealthiest mine-affected states under this treaty, has not only failed to finish its clearance obligations within 10 years, it has failed to even *start* demining operations.

We have heard from many States Parties that we should not harp on problems in the past, but look ahead to what the requesting state now plans to achieve. We happen to believe past and future performance are closely linked, but for the sake of argument, let's look at what the UK formally commits to accomplish in the additional 10 years requested. NOTHING. The request includes a detailed description of the problem, but provides no operational plan, no date to begin demining operations and no date of projected completion. The UK has not developed a budget, nor has it identified the internal source of funds. What are States Parties to assume, but that the work may simply be postponed for another 10 years, if not more?

For these reasons, the ICBL believes that the United Kingdom's request simply cannot be accepted as is. The request undermines the convention by essentially asking for a *carte blanche* on the UK's Article 5 obligations. If States Parties approve this request on Friday, they would essentially be allowing the UK to opt out of its duties to demine the Falkland Islands. The damage to the treaty will be severe and long-lasting.

For what would a yes decision say to the other mine affected states that are making their best effort to comply with their obligations, despite the high costs, despite the technical difficulties, despite the danger to their deminers? What would they learn from a "yes" decision on Friday? If one state is allowed to ignore clear legal obligations on the basis the work is challenging and expensive or because its humanitarian or developmental implications are judged minimal, other mine-affected States Parties may believe that they may also avoid fulfilling their treaty obligation.

The UK adhered to the Mine Ban Treaty knowing and accepting the obligation to clear the Falkland Islands. We strongly encourage the UK to revise its request before Friday to begin clearance before the expiry of its 2009 deadline. If it does so, a one-year extension should be granted to conduct the necessary technical assessments to create a demining plan. If not, we urge States Parties to vote against it on Friday and to invite the UK to return in a year with another request.