

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION: 4TH REVIEW CONFERENCE

UK Statement under Agenda Item 7(c) Review of the operation and status of the
Convention: Clearing mined areas on Wednesday 27 November 2019

Thank you Mr President, the UK has obligations under Article 5 of the Convention to destroy anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, namely in the Falkland Islands. The 17th Meeting of States Parties agreed a five-year extension to the deadline for fulfilling this obligation, to 1 March 2024. I would like to use this opportunity to provide a short update on progress towards discharging these obligations.

The **Falkland Islands continue to pose a unique challenge** for demining operations. The remote location, the fact that some minefields do not have complete records, environmental conditions such as adverse weather, and capacity limits of the Islands to provide certain facilities for demining (for example, medical evacuation), are all factors the United Kingdom must overcome to complete this work.

Nonetheless, the UK remains committed to meeting our obligations in relation to the Falkland Islands, and confident that we will do so, successfully.

We are now in the fifth and final phase of clearance, including tackling the most technically-challenging and environmentally-sensitive minefields. This Phase is progressing well and we are scheduled to clear the last 10 mined areas within this phase of the programme. This is estimated to release 1 million square metres of land. We are on track to complete within the extended deadline of 1 March 2024.

Four of the remaining mined areas are in remote locations and six are quite close to Stanley, the capital.

Overall, there is negligible risk to civilians and as such, the UK considers the Falkland Islands to be 'mine-impact free'. All remaining mined areas are fenced and clearly signed. There is a very clear ordinance in place that makes it illegal to tamper with the fences, or signs, or to cross into the mined areas. We continue to ensure that the population, and particularly children, receive the appropriate mine risk education.

The UK supports gender and diversity objectives across all aspects of mine action, and endeavours to implement this within our own domestic demining programme. The UK Government and its contractors adhere to an equal opportunities approach to recruitment for the Demining

Programme. Women hold four key Government positions overseeing the project and our demining and disarmament policies generally.

Mr President.

We warmly welcome the Review Conference focus on practical steps to enhance and accelerate survey and clearance efforts over the next five years. The United Kingdom remains committed to meeting our transparency obligations under the Convention and to sharing our experience, best practice and lessons learned with you all. In particular, we will be pleased to share what we have learned from exploitation studies about mine degradation – and what the practical implications are for demining programmes. The United Kingdom will continue to update the Committee on progress.

Thank you, Mr President.