



**United Kingdom
Permanent Representation
to the
Conference on Disarmament**

UK Statement

to the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies

by

Ambassador John Duncan

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Please check against delivery

Madame Co-Chair,

At the outset let me thank you for this opportunity to update other States Parties on progress the UK has made in proceeding with the clearance of selected mined areas in the Falkland Islands that we announced at last November's Meeting of States Parties.

This clearance project is subject to a competitive tender process that is underway. On 20 April the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire for the contract was issued. Copies were issued to all potential suppliers who had expressed an interest and made available on the contracts page of the FCO website. The deadline for responses was 20 May.

We are now evaluating these responses. The intention is to issue Invitations to Tender to around 4-6 companies. An important criterion in the selection process will be the safety track record of potential suppliers. It is vital that the clearance is carried out to the highest standard possible with all necessary steps taken to ensure the safety of the de-miners and the Falkland Islanders when clearance has been completed. Our goal is that the record of no civilian mine casualties remains intact.

The aim is for the contract to be awarded this autumn, and for work to begin by the end of this year.

In parallel with the tender process for the de-mining contractor there is a tender process underway for the "De-mining Programme Office." The role of the DPO will be to co-ordinate mine action on the Falkland Islands, and it will also be responsible for Quality assurance and quality control of the clearance carried out.

Madame Co-Chair,

On 19 May the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire for this contract was issued, and we hope to have the De-mining Programme Office in place by the end of August so that it can assist in the preparation for the clearance operation itself.

To provide overall national oversight of the clearance operation a National Mine Action Authority has been established. The National Mine Action Authority is currently reviewing National Mine Action Standards, based on the relevant International Mine Action Standards. The aim is for these Standards to ensure the effectiveness and safety of the clearance operation by providing guidance, establishing principles, and where necessary defining requirements and specifications.

The National Mine Action Authority includes representatives from both the UK and Falkland Islands Government. Whilst it is the responsibility of the UK Government to clear the mined areas in the Falkland Islands we will continue to work closely with the Falkland Islands Government on clearance of these mined areas. The right of self-determination, fundamental to the UK's relationship with the Falkland Islands, and to all UK Overseas Territories, means that under the Falkland Islands Constitution the Falkland Islands Government has responsibility for most domestic policies.

To conclude: the UK is on track to be able to provide other States Parties by 30 June 2010 with a detailed explanation of how demining is proceeding and the implications for future demining. I look forward to providing a further update at the Second Review Conference in Cartagena later this year.

The UK hopes that the progress on taking forward the clearance announced in November 2008 will serve to reaffirm the UK's commitment to its obligations under the Convention. The UK will continue to support the Convention's aim of putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Thank you.