

OTTAWA INTERSESSIONAL MEETING, 19 – 20 MAY 2016

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
STATEMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5**

Madam Chair,

As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor, I wish to thank everyone for all the hard work that has been put into the organisation of this meeting. I would also like to thank the Implementation Support Unit, the Committees and GICHD for their role in enabling our discussions. I would like to congratulate Juan Carlos on his appointment to Director to of the ISU. We look forward to working with you, and you have full support of the United Kingdom. The UK remains committed to the work and goals of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

The Falkland Islands pose a unique challenge for demining operations. The remote location, adverse weather conditions, the environmental consequences of demining, capacity limits of the Islands to provide certain facilities for demining, for example, medical evacuation, incomplete minefield records and the tough financial climate are all factors the United Kingdom must contend with in taking forward this work. These factors will become more significant as the later phases of demining tackle the more remote and technically-challenging minefields.

Despite these many challenges, we remain committed to meeting our obligations in relation to the Falkland Islands. The UK has now completed four phases of demining, including both clearance of mined areas and land release. Phase 4, the latest phase, concluded in March 2016 and cleared a total of 25 mined areas. As a result, a significant area of land has been released behind the Stanley Common Fence. This represents a significant step forward in meeting the United Kingdom's mine clearance obligations.

We have also already begun to prepare for future mine clearance operations by carrying out Technical Surveys in some areas. As part of Phase 4b, a limited Technical Survey of Yorke Bay, MF45 and MF 46 were completed. The results of these surveys will help the United Kingdom to understand better the resources needed to demine this environmentally-sensitive area in the future.

The United Kingdom's understanding of the demining challenge posed by the Falkland Islands improves as its demining operations progress. During the latest phase, we found an unexpectedly large number and pattern of mines in one area that did not match the mine records, as explained in the UK's statement at the 14th MSP last November. I would like to emphasise again that these additional mines are located within a previously fenced and marked Suspect Hazardous Area and so do not pose any additional risk to the local population. This new batch of mines has been given a unique designation of 50C for ease of clearance and reporting and has been added to the total number of mined areas remaining.

Madam Chair,

The previous four phases of demining have made good progress. We continue to review how we may address the many challenges posed by Falkland Islands demining as we prepare for further demining beyond Phase 4 in order to seek to fulfil our Article 5 obligations. I would like to note that the small humanitarian and socio-economic impact of the remaining mined areas in the Falkland Islands decreases as the mined areas closest to population centres are cleared. Most of the remaining mined areas are in extremely remote locations, and pose negligible risk to civilians. As such, the United Kingdom considers the Falkland Islands to be 'mine-impact free'.

The United Kingdom remains committed to transparency with regard to its obligations under the Convention. Its understanding of the requirements of demining the Falkland Islands continues to evolve, and the United Kingdom will update the Committee as this process moves forward.

Madam Chair,

In response to the statement made by the distinguished representative of the Argentine Government, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falklands Islands [South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas]. The principle and the right of self-determination as set out in Article 1.2 of the Charter of the United Nations and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights underlies our position. The United Kingdom is clear that the future of the Falkland Islands should be determined by the people of the Falkland Islands, in accordance with our obligations under the UN Charter.

Thank you.