

Intervention of Denmark, 23-26 April 2007 at Meeting of Standing
Committee of the Ottawa Convention, Geneva

Chairs, Co-rapporteurs, distinguished delegates, Dear colleagues.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Danish Government as a staunch supporter of the Ottawa Convention and as a large contributor to humanitarian de-mining around the world to give you a status on the progress on clearance of the Second World War minefield in Denmark on the peninsular with the name of Skallingen.

99% of the estimated 1.4 million landmines deployed during the Second World War in Denmark have been removed. The balance left is located on Skallingen on the North Sea coast. The mines remaining are located in dunes, beach, and marsh habitat. Approximately 10 % of the total area of Skallingen is mine affected. The area is a very dynamic environment with fluctuations in ground levels over time due to the movement of the dunes. Furthermore, Skallingen is protected under several international directives and conventions.

Skallingen is not inhabited and no incidents associated with the mines on Skallingen have officially been recorded since 1946.

A total of approximately 295 hectares is fenced off from the public.

In November 2005 the Danish Government allocated a total of 86 million DKKR (approx. 16 million US Dollars) for the clearing of mines in the dune and beach areas on Skallingen. Late last year a further 32 million DKKR (approx. 6 million US Dollars) were allocated to the mine clearance effort.

The Danish Coastal Authority undertakes the task of clearing the landmines.

A project organisation has been established, and it was decided to execute the de-mining through a competitive international tendering process. It was decided that part of the area was to be released to the public during mid 2006. These three areas were released to the public as planned.

The time constraints imposed requires an interactive approach to the planning. We are pleased to record that the cooperation between governmental agencies, local authorities, NGO's, and other stakeholders

promoted this interactive approach and secured all required permits within time constraints. This cooperation has proven to continue since.

A British company was awarded the contract for 2006 after a competitive bidding process. A total area of approx. 18.5 hectares was cleared and released in 2006. By the end of 2006 a large number of mines and mine components have been detected and removed or detonated. The majority of the finds have been rendered non-functional by the environment. Mines are found at depths ranging from 3 centimetres all the way down to 4 meters. The density in the dunes is 1 mine per 480 square meters.

A new tender process for mine clearance starting in 2007 was initiated in 2006. A contract for the mine clearance was concluded in March 2007, with work commencing this month (April 2007). This contract was awarded to a Danish consortium.

This tender process did draw extensively on the experiences from 2006 and benefited greatly from it. We have experienced that it is an intricate process to clear WWII mines under these circumstances in a coastal environment. It

has shown to very much a learning-by-doing-process since the international community does not have much experience in this regard.

We look forward to continue to report on the progress, but also to continue to share the knowledge gained from the clearing of these antique mine fields with these special circumstances, where many new methods and techniques are being developed and implemented. Several international partners have already paid visits to Skallingen and continue to do so to learn about our experience and to gain access to our data.

We very much continue to stand ready to share our experience to the benefit of our common mine clearance mission in the Ottawa community.

Thank you, Chair.