

Tenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention 29/11-03/11 2010,
Geneva

Update on the Danish process of clearance of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention

Mr. President,

As mentioned at our meeting last Monday Denmark's remaining mined area originates from the Second World War and is concentrated on the west coast of Jutland at the peninsula of Skallingen. There has been no mine related accidents since 1946 and the negative impact to the local community of Skallingen is insignificant. Denmark has established a structure suited for large scale mine clearance under the Danish Ministry of Transportation in which the Danish Coastal Authority is appointed to plan and manage the operation.

When the mine clearance operation was initiated the affected area was divided into three sub-areas: Area 1 was cleared in 2006; Area 2 was cleared in 2007-2008; Thus, of the original 300 hectares of mine affected area, 120 hectares remained prior to the third and final operational phase. In May this year a clearance contractor was identified in a competitive tender process. The clearance operation commenced in July this year. By November 2010 approximately 15 hectares have been cleared in Area 3.

Mr. President,

Area 3 consists of five different terrain types, each of which provides different conditions for the mines: dyke and dune area; marshland covered with dunes; frequently flooded low marshland; high marshland; and finally, of beach terrain.

The mine threat is different for each of these terrain types and so are the clearance criteria as well as the planned clearance methods. In analyzing the area various mine types have been identified, including anti-tank mines. These mines will be removed as well during the clearance operation.

In the dyke and the dunes, the clearance criterion was originally to remove and destroy all explosive items to a depth of 2 metres by sifting this volume. The first months of operation has however shown that the mines in this area can be found much deeper. The Danish Coastal Authority has therefore revised the clearance depth which means that some areas are cleared down to 5 metres. These extreme depths are caused by drifting sand. By November the Contractor had cleared approximately 30% of the dyke and dune area.

In the marshland which has been covered with dunes after the mines were laid, the clearance criteria was to remove and destroy all explosive items in a danger layer around the estimated 1944 surface. This was done by removing the safe volume above the danger layer and then sifting the danger layer. This work was completed in November 2010.

In the low marshland the clearance criteria will be to remove all Teller mines to a depth of 50 cm. The clearance is done with metal detection equipment. The progress in the low marsh area is approximately 10% by November 2010.

In the high marsh the clearance criteria is to remove all explosive items to a depth of 20 cm. The items will be identified with metal detection equipment. The clearance of high marsh areas has not commenced yet.

In the beach the clearance criteria is to remove all Teller mines to a depth of 130 cm. Identification of the mines will be done with metal detection equipment. The clearance of beach areas has not commenced yet.

The Contractor has been given until the end of 2011 to complete the clearance. We have then added a six months buffer-period to allow weather-caused delays as well as to complete quality control of the area.

Consequentially, Denmark will be able to release the area at latest by 1 of July 2012.

Mr. President,

As mentioned last Monday Denmark will continue to keep State Parties informed of our progress and actions. We have appreciated our dialogue with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining in the planning process regarding the release of the final area, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Centre for its valuable cooperation so far.

Finally, should any State Parties have an interest in the experiences Denmark has gained in terms of mine clearance in dynamic beach and dune areas as well as marsh areas, we will be happy to share such information.

Thank you for your attention.