



United Kingdom Statement on Clearance of Mined Territory

**at the Second Review Conference of the
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty**

**by
Ambassador John Duncan**

Ambassador for Multilateral Arms Control and Disarmament

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Madame President,

I am pleased to present States Parties to the Ottawa Convention with an up-date report on the United Kingdom's de-mining project on the Falkland Islands.

We are delighted to announce that the project is now underway and that de-mining will commence this week.

Madame President

Following two rigorous tender exercises, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office appointed BACTEC International Limited to carry out the clearance work and C. King Associates to carry out quality control and quality assurance work and to monitor progress. Together these two companies will ensure the areas are cleared safely and to the required depths in order that the local population has confidence that the land is safe for use, post clearance.

C. King Associates will in particular provide the vital link between the project and the local community— supplying the Islanders with information, up-dates and answering questions through the local media, large “Town Hall” and smaller face to face meetings. Their aim is to give the community the confidence to use the sites post clearance.

Madame President

In my Statement to the ninth Meeting of States Parties last year in Geneva, I announced that, following the completion of the previous Feasibility Study we planned to clear three mined areas, namely Fox Bay West (east settlement), Sapper Hill and Goose Green 11.

These areas were chosen because of:

- their proximity to urban areas; and
- the variety of terrain they cover will serve as a useful exploration of the environmental and ecological impact of de-mining.

The areas are believed to contain Anti-Personnel landmines and also Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) from cluster munitions strikes.

Following thorough consultations with the Falkland Islanders it has been further agreed that we should add a fourth site, Surf Bay.

This latter site is bisected by a road and also contains sand dunes adjacent to a non-mined beach, popular with Islanders. There are an estimated 1,000 landmines on the site which represents about 5% of all mines on the Islands.

We expect completion of the demining of these areas by the end of the austral summer, April/May 2010. The task is a difficult one with de-miners working on varied and difficult terrain. BACTEC will be using experienced de-mining teams from Zimbabwe.

As I explained in my presentation in Geneva last year the climatic conditions also present many challenges to the de-mining teams. The austral Spring should have arrived in the South Atlantic by now. However with snowfall as recent as two weeks ago, the comparatively clement weather of the short austral summer still seems far off. High winds all year round but particularly in the summer months will add to the pressure of an already difficult job. However, we are confident that they will be successful in their efforts. I am grateful to the Falkland Islanders for their support in what is a challenging endeavour.

Due to the fragile environmental habitats of the sites marked for clearance, BACTEC and C. King Associates are also tasked with ensuring the impact of clearance on the environment is kept to a minimum.

Madame President,

All four sites form a representative sample of Islands' terrain. Their successful clearance will help us to fulfil our obligations under the Ottawa Convention and the newly signed Convention on Cluster Munitions, but will also help us develop solutions for future clearance.

The United Kingdom will provide States Parties with a full report of the project at the Intersessional meeting in Geneva in June 2010.

Thank you.