

UK Statement on Stockpile Destruction and Retention

CCM 2MSP, Beirut, Sept 11

Chair

Let me begin by extending our thanks to you and [your distinguished German colleagues] for all the work that has been done to advance this agenda and progress this important obligation of the Convention.

The UK is committed to implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions and is helping to lead the way on disposal of these outlawed weapons. We believe that destroying operational stocks is the only way to categorically put them beyond use and secure the Convention's humanitarian aims. Destruction of munitions is a complex process that must conform to regulations that protect people and the environment. We continue to ensure that these aspects are funded appropriately. To date, 62% of UK stocks, representing some 23.8m sub-munitions, have been destroyed. Under current plans it is our intention that all UK stocks will be destroyed by the end of 2013. This time frame reflects the limited destruction capacity available to destroy the munitions in a safe, secure, environmentally friendly and responsible manner. The remaining stocks awaiting destruction are being held, clearly marked and segregated in secure locations. [We estimate that the cost of the destruction is in the region of £40m].

Chair

As we reported at the Intersessional in June, it is the UK's current intention to not retain any prohibited munitions from our own, former operational, UK stocks. We will however, retain a small number of prohibited sub-munitions for trials, development and training activities for the advancement of counter measures to any uncertain future threats; acting, of course, within the requirements of Article 3.6.

The UK's requirement to retain live cluster munitions and/or their explosive bomblets includes the need for the technical exploitation and assessment of weapons and ordnance that may be used against personnel, including civilians, under our protection. For example, we conduct trials as part of the process to develop armour (for both vehicles and personnel) which we consider, in some cases, may require testing against live explosive sub-munitions. We also use live explosive bomblets in static firings to support capability development projects and the defeat of armour demonstrations during technical training courses.

We presently hold less than 1000 foreign prohibited sub-munitions, which we currently consider to be the minimum number required. We have reported precise numbers and details of these holdings in the UK's first Article 7 transparency report. The numbers that the UK may retain in the future may vary as operational circumstances dictate, but will always remain the minimum necessary. Thank you Chair