

UK Statement: International Cooperation and Assistance 2MSP, Beirut, Sept 11

[Mr/Madam President]

[Please let me begin by extending thanks to you and our distinguished South African colleagues for overseeing this important session on International Cooperation and Assistance and for the work of the Republic of South Africa in advancing this agenda.]

The UK believes that International cooperation and assistance are crucial if we are to rid the world of the burden of cluster munitions. International cooperation and assistance are core obligations of the Convention, made even more important as they often help realise considerable humanitarian and developmental benefits. The UK welcomes the progress made by many States in undertaking clearance, promoting victim assistance and nationally implementing the Convention. There is no doubt that the cooperation and assistance work of other States Parties and NGOs has played an important role in supporting many of these achievements. The UK is fully committed to advancing the Vientiane Action Plan through the provision of cooperation and assistance, where possible. And it is helpful that the Beirut Declaration, once again, strongly focuses our mind on this obligation.

Mr/Madam President

Let me clarify upfront that the UK, like many others, takes a comprehensive approach to assisting mine action and does not differentiate between action on mines, explosive remnants of war and cluster munitions. This approach maximises the efficiency of our programmes and the socio-economic impact of demining for affected populations. However, this means that it is often difficult to distinguish

between the provision and use of our funding and expertise for work in relation to these different munitions.

In support of Mine Action, the UK is allocating more than £30 million to programmes of assistance and cooperation across the globe, between 2010 and 2013.

Provision of this assistance work is based on our mine action strategy: *Creating a Safer Environment: Clearing Landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War*. This Strategy increases the focus on reducing the socio-economic impact of ERW, over the simpler calculation of number of mines cleared for funds spent. It consists of three main objectives:

- Objective 1 - To release ERW affected land to make a measurable contribution to the socio-economic development of affected communities.
- Objective 2 - To help governments take full responsibility for their National Mine Action Programmes.
- Objective 3 – To improve value for money in mine action

We were privileged, alongside other EU colleagues, to be able to present this Strategy to other States at the First Meeting of States Parties, and would be happy to continue to share our experience in detail with any interested parties.

Mr/Madam President

With this Strategy, and our £30 million of committed assistance funding, the UK is concentrating our support on those states in greatest need. As recognised in the Vientiane Action Plan, the UK believes particular attention should be paid to the world's least developed States. Our Strategy therefore prioritises work according to countries' socio-economic and development needs, the extent of the problem with mine and cluster munitions contamination, and the willingness of National Authorities to engage in mine action. Specific examples of assistance programmes include:

- £27 million for two implementing partners, the Mine Advisory Group and the HALO Trust, principally for operations in Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lao PDR, Mozambique, South Sudan and Vietnam.
- And, a further £5 million granted to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund to support mine action in countries including Afghanistan, Cambodia, DRC, Iraq, Lao PDR and Mozambique.

Mr/Madam President

I'm pleased to report that we expect to exceed our commitment of £30 million over three years as additional work is being funded, for example, through a £10 million, five year programme in Afghanistan. We are also supporting Mine Advisory Group's work in Libya as part of our wider humanitarian assistance efforts. This emergency clearance and destruction programme aims to reduce the risk from explosive remnants of war to local populations and humanitarian aid workers.

In all these programmes, the UK recognises that effectiveness is best achieved through cooperation with the governments of mine-affected countries to develop sustainable national capacities. Examples of UK assistance under action 33 of the Vientiane Action Plan include: joint evaluation visits between HALO and the Mozambique National Demining Institute, contributing towards Mozambique's national progress reporting; and support from MAG and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining to the Cambodian Mine Action Authority, to enhance implementation and management of mine action. The UK recognises the unique role the United Nations Mine Action Team plays in the development of national institutions and national development and reconstruction plans.

Mr/Madam President

The UK is fully committed to realising our duty of international cooperation and assistance. In just 6 months of the UK sponsored projects starting in Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique and Vietnam, 2.5

million square metres of land considered high priority in national planning has been cleared and returned to communities for productive use.

We look forward to continuing this work with state parties, UN agencies and implementing partners to assist states in meeting their Convention obligations.

Thank you