

## **UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE**

As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your Presidency of this Convention, and to thank you for your guidance in steering our work so far. You continue to have the United Kingdom's full support. I would also like to thank Ms Sheila Mweemba, the ISU staff and the Coordinators for all their work in enabling this meeting and its discussions to take place. The UK aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, and will make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

The UK remains fully committed to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Convention has been a key international disarmament initiative in prohibiting not only the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions, but also in requiring clearance operations, as well as promoting victim assistance. We are mindful of the suffering and casualties caused by the after effects of cluster munitions. We are deeply concerned by the reports of cluster munitions use and call on the actors involved to cease employing these weapons.

We also call on any states not already party to the Convention to accede to it without delay. Ultimately, it is the practical implementation of the Convention by a greater number of states which will yield the most lasting humanitarian benefit. We congratulate Madagascar and Benin for their ratification of Convention in the last year. We have now reached 102 States Parties, but our work on universalisation should continue in order to achieve our goal of making this Convention a global one so that civilians can live their lives free of fear and risk.

The UK completed the destruction of its stockpile of cluster munitions in December 2013, more than 5 years ahead of the schedule set by the Convention. We would be pleased to share our experience with interested States and urge all States Parties with outstanding obligations under Article 3 to complete destruction as soon as possible.

In 2015, countries adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions contributes towards the goals, by preventing tremendous human suffering and providing direct benefits to societies. People everywhere need to be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives. Insecurity has a destructive impact on a country's development. It is important that governments, civil society and communities work together to implement lasting solutions to the problems caused by cluster munitions.

The UK is committed through its many international mine action programmes to improving the quality of life for people affected by cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines, other explosive remnants of war, and other effects of armed conflict. In particular, the UK tackles the humanitarian threat posed by sub-munitions by surveying for, and clearing, cluster munition remnants; delivering risk education; supporting the development of strong, accessible health systems; and building national governments' capacity to manage their own ordnance clearance activities.

In 2016 the UK expanded its mine action programme to perform clearance in Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe to complement existing work in Cambodia, Laos and Sri Lanka. This resulted in 84million square meters of land being released in 2016 which allows people access to basic services, facilitates increased economic opportunities and improves community safety. Since 2014 to the end of 2016 the UK's mine action programme has cleared over 120million square meters of land and reached over 239,000 people through mine risk education activities. Furthermore, the UK works in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Iraq and Ukraine to strengthen the ability of national authorities to manage their own landmine and ERW programmes. The UK is also proud to contribute to via the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund to ensure more effective and accountable security actors have the skills, incentives and checks and balances to ensure remnants of war are managed safely and effectively and assets are used legitimately, safely and kept in the right hands.

Significantly, looking to the future, the UK was proud to announce on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 that the UK will triple its spend on mine action, taking UK spend to £100million over the three years to March 2020. This new support will make safe an area the equivalent of over 20,000 football pitches. It will help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines. Over 100,000 people – especially children – will benefit from education in fully understanding the dangers posed by landmines.

The United Kingdom's mine action efforts have been an important component of its commitment to reach the target of spending 0.7% of gross national income on Official Development Assistance (ODA). The UK's programmes are one of the many ways that UK aid can, and is, making the world safer, healthier and more prosperous for us all. The UK attaches a great deal of importance to gender-awareness in its mine action and explosive remnants of war programmes. The United Kingdom also has an increasing focus on supporting people with disabilities. We do not discriminate against, or among, persons with disabilities, whether they be victims of cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines, armed conflict generally, or disabled through illness, accident or other causes. Support should be non-discriminatory and should aim to improve capacity in a sustainable manner.

The UK hopes that by demonstrating our commitment and by working together we can once again focus the world on this vital issue. With concerted effort we can make a real difference. In closing, I would like to assure you of the United Kingdom's continued support for achieving the Convention's goals.