

Danish presentation, Colombia, December 2009 (Nov09)

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

[Picture 1: Åbningsbillede med sigtning på stranden]

Madam. Chairperson, Co-rapporteurs, Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues and Friends

On behalf of the Danish Government my colleges and I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Colombian Government for the excellent preparation and for the warm welcome at this summit.

And to you Mrs. President, let me congratulate you and your colleges for a very professional and efficient leadership of this summit.

On behalf of the Danish Government my delegation would like to present a status of the process of clearance of the minefield Skallingen – located on the west coast of the Jutland-peninsula.

But before I do that, allow me to reiterate Denmark's full commitment to all obligations under the Ottawa Convention. Among the first countries to ratify the Ottawa Convention, Denmark has pledged itself to work towards securing a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Since 1992 Denmark has donated more than US\$ 240 mill. to mine action activities around the world; making Denmark among the ten largest donors in this field in absolute numbers.

Denmark will continue to support and provide funding for mine action activities and continue to seek international coordination and cooperation within the EU, the UN, as well as with NGOs and private sector as to mainstream mine action activities. Into humanitarian aid – to stabilisation and reconstruction activities, peace and security and with the ultimately goal of development.

Returning to the issue of Skallingen, Denmark is fully committed to fulfil its obligations in accordance with Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention. At the 9th Meeting of State Parties, Denmark's request for a preliminary extension was approved, allowing Denmark to commence technical surveys and environmental impact assessments as basis for preparing and presenting a final time schedule and release plan before the deadline of January 1, 2011. Allow me to present a status of the process of clearance of the Danish minefield Skallingen.

[Picture 2: Skallingen placering i DK]

Denmark's only remaining mined area, is concentrated on the west coast of Jutland at the peninsula of Skallingen. It originates from the Second World War and was partly cleared in 1945-47. No mine related accidents have been reported since 1946. Furthermore, the negative social and economic impact to the local community of the remaining minefield in Skallingen is insignificant.

[Picture 3: Helé Skallingen med de tre faser]

For operational purposes the suspected mined area was divided into three sub-areas: Area 1 and 2 covered the dynamic beach and dune areas on the west coast of the peninsula, whereas Area 3 covered the more stable inland marsh and the south coast. Since 2006, Denmark has considerably reduced the affected areas:

- Area 1 was cleared in 2006.
- Area 2 was cleared in 2007-2008, releasing both minefield area and facilitating further area reduction of unmined, but adjacent land, which could only be accessed through the minefield.
- Thus, of the original 255 hectares of mine affected area, 124 hectares remain to be cleared from mines.

Denmark is happy to report today to State Parties of the progress made and the actions taken since the Ninth Meeting of State Parties in fulfilling Article 5 mine clearance obligations.

Mrs. President, I will now, with your permission, give the floor to the director of the Danish Coastal Authority, Mr. Jensen

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Since the ninth Meeting of State Parties, Denmark has conducted a number of technical surveys to establish a proper understanding of the suspect area and enable a better understanding of the problem. The reason for these surveys is to provide basis for an economical and ecological efficient and sustainable risk based approach to the clearance of the specific remaining mine area.

[Picture 4: Fase 3 området med områdereduktion og de forskellige terrænkategorier markeret]

Firstly we have carried out a major terrain analysis comparing terrain surveys made just after the war and surveys of the terrain today. The terrain analysis has established a more accurate definition of the boundaries of Area 3 adjusting the affected area slightly. The analysis shows that a great part of the area is low marshland which is frequently flooded by salt water.

The terrain analysis has provided an understanding of the different conditions of the minefield which has led to a categorizing of the terrain into 5 different terrain types: Marsh covered by dunes, low frequently flooded marshland, dry marshland, dunes and beach as shown at the picture. Each of these provides different conditions for the mines. This has great importance for the functionality of the different mine types as well as the depth under terrain surface of the mines.

[Picture 5 : Fase 3 området med prøverydningsbanerne og minefundene markeret]

Clearance samples of 15,000 square metres have been conducted in the low marshland areas, which comprise approximately half of the suspect area. This resulted in 19 complete mines of four different types as well as a large number of mine parts left in the area from the clearance in 1945-47.

Detonators and percussion caps from the mines found during the survey have been chemically analyzed.

[Picture 6: Eksempler på minefund fra prøverydningen i den lave marsk]

These surveys have provided a more accurate picture of the mine types, the mine depths and the present quality of the mines, making it possible to map the mine threat and diversify the clearance criteria for each type of terrain. In this way the different threats and depths can be targeted with different clearance methods.

An example of this is that all wooden mines and fragmentation mines from areas which are frequently flooded, have been rendered safe by chemical reactions in their detonators, caused by salt water. This allows focus at the last remaining mine type present in the area which is better protected against the water, meaning that detection tools can be selected from its ability to detect this specific mine.

[Picture 7: Eksempler på forskellige procedurer og rydningsmetoder]

In other areas where the mines are better protected, all mine types will have to be removed and the clearance approach and the selection of tools will therefore be different there. With this differentiated approach where the clearance criteria are adjusted to the actual threat, clearance can be conducted to a higher quality, faster and with less negative impact on the environment.

[Picture 8: Naturbillede fra Skallingen med en tekst der forudsiger operativ opstart i 2010]]

Secondly, the area is designated as a specially protected nature and wildlife area under both the RAMSAR Convention and the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives, which of course will influence the way we approach the clearance process.

Therefore an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out and clearance standards and methods are being revised to address the issues raised in this assessment.

A specific clearance plan taking the environmental considerations is now being developed and will form the basis of an application to the environmental authorities of permission to conduct the necessary operations. In addition to the technical and environmental aspects, a mandatory conduct of a public consultation process of relevant interested parties has to be carried out in the near future.

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Denmark is happy to announce that we expect to be ready to present a time schedule and a release plan at the next meeting in the Standing Committees in June 2010.

Two weeks ago the Danish Government adopted the financial grant on the National Budget, covering all expected expenditures in the remaining clearance. This is expected to be confirmed in the Parliament later this month.

This week the Danish Coastal Authority has send out the pre qualification note for the commercial tendering.

Provided that all necessary permissions from the Environmental Authorities are obtained without any delaying obstructions, operations are expected to commence in July 2010 making us one year ahead of what we expected at the 9. Meeting of State Parties in 2008.

Denmark will keep State Parties informed of all progress and actions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION