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ENGLISH only

UK Delegation to the OSCE

UK's CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON PRIVATE MILITARY AND SECURITY COMPANIES (PMSCs)

1. On 24 April 2009 the UK launched a Public Consultation on a proposed policy to promote high standards of the Private Military and Security Company industry internationally. The aims of the policy are to promote high standards of conduct by PMSCs internationally, and to reduce the risk that the activities of PMSCs might give rise to human rights or humanitarian law concerns, assist internal repression, or provoke or prolong internal or regional tension.

2. We will be consulting on our preferred option, which consists of a three part package of:

- Working with the UK industry to promote high standards through a code of conduct agreed with and monitored by the Government;
- Using our status as a buyer to contract only those companies that they demonstrate that they operate to high standards; and
- An international approach to promote higher global standards, based on key elements of the UK approach.

3. We will work with the relevant UK trade association to devise a code of conduct to which all its members would adhere. The association would implement the code. We believe that security companies will find it in their commercial interests to adhere to the code, which will be agreed with and monitored by the Government. We will be asking that all companies bidding for British government contracts must undertake to follow regulatory, humanitarian and ethical standards consistent with the trade association's code of conduct, or can show adherence to other equivalent standards. PMSCs operate in a global environment and international co-operation is necessary to promote high standards. To this end, we will:

- Build on the initiative by the Swiss government and the International Committee of the Red Cross to create internationally agreed industry standards within two years; and
- Build a convention of states and key buyers that will be able to insist that PMSCs wishing to bid for future contracts will be required to adhere to the internationally agreed standards. This will set a benchmark for private security procurement and practice, and help drive up standards globally.

4. The Public Consultation will close on 17 July 2009, and a full analysis of responses will be undertaken and published. Based on the responses received and evidence gathered during the consultation period, a final decision on the proposals will be taken and, if appropriate, proposals will be laid before Parliament. The Consultation Paper and a summary of responses will be made available, and will be accessible through www.fco.gov.uk.

Thank you Mr Chairman, and we ask that this statement be attached to the Journal of the day.