

Stockpile destruction (Art. 4)

Statement of Bulgaria

The Republic of Bulgaria would like to provide brief information on the recent developments on the anti-personal mines transferred from the Hellenic Republic to the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of destruction, to follow-on the information just provided by the Greek delegation.

As we have previously informed, after the explosion in October 2014 at the installations of the demilitarization factory "Midzhur" owned by the Bulgarian private company "Videx", the utilization section of the factory was totally destroyed and therefore no further destruction of the Greek APLMs was possible. A regular channel of communication with the Greek side has been established in order to find a solution to the issue.

Most recent developments: in response to a request made by the Greek side during a meeting between the ministers of defence of the two countries in July last year, our Ministry of Defence inquired about the possibility to destroy the Greek APLMs, remaining in "Midzhur" factory, on Bulgarian territory. It has been confirmed that currently there are no public or private entities in Bulgaria that are able to destroy the Greek APLMs. The Bulgarian Ministry of Defence officially informed the Greek side (*through the Defence Attaché of the Hellenic Republic in Sofia*) about the outcome of this inquire, with a letter as of November 2016. As the only remaining option, a renewal of the talks on the organization of the repatriation of the mines to the Greek territory was suggested. This issue has been tackled again on several bilateral occasions (*bilateral consultations between the Political Directors in March 2017 and exchanges between the respective points of contact in the foreign ministries*).

We are glad that now, according to the information provided by our Greek partners, the conclusion made is that there are no legal obstacles to sign a revised contract between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) of Greece and the Hellenic Defence Systems. We hope that this will allow for a rapid progress on the issue and organization of the transfer process of the mines back to the Greek territory. Given the mountainous terrain in this region of Bulgaria, it is strongly preferable to carry out the transportation in the warm seasons - late spring, summer and very early autumn. Our institutions stand ready to provide the necessary facilitation in organizing the repatriation of the mines.

We hope that the cooperation with the Greek side will continue in the same constructive way and we will be able to solve the problem as soon as possible.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's strong commitment to the Ottawa Convention. Bulgaria was amongst the first States Parties to implement Article 4 obligations. We continue to improve the implementation measures including by further strengthening the relevant national legislation through adoption in 2015 of a special Law on the Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Convention.