

Statement by Greece

As it is the first time we take the floor, under your presidency allow me to congratulate you and Juan Carlos on the assumption of your duties and to assure both of you of our delegation's full support.

Madam President,

As we outlined during the 14th meeting last December, the Greek Authorities have to address a complicated legal issue taking into consideration, on the one hand our obligation to proceed with the destruction of the APLMs and on the other the need to fully comply with the domestic legislation which governs the procurement procedures and the issuance of the import license for the Anti Personnel Landmines from Bulgaria.

Concerning the issue with the Anti Personnel Landmines which are stored at Videx facilities in Bulgaria, the necessary procedures are further complicated due to the fact that the destruction of the mines there, is not foreseen by an intergovernmental bilateral agreement but rather by a commercial contract concluded between 3 companies, namely Hellenic Defence Systems (HDS), AKMON, VIDEX, thus making the settlement of this issue more time consuming.

In light of this situation, the issue which must be resolved by the Hellenic Ministry of National Defence in accordance with the provisions of the domestic legislation revolves around the signature of an amended contract with the HDS to allow the return of the Anti Personnel Landmines from Bulgaria in conjunction with the destruction of the remaining stockpiles at Hellenic Defence Systems facilities in Lavrio,

However, the procedure for the revision of the existing contract cannot be initiated due to the fact that the facilities of the Hellenic Defence Systems in Lavrio await certification in accordance to international standards for safety and environmental compliance during the demilitarization process of the Anti Personnel Landmines.

The Ministry of National Defence is in close cooperation with the Hellenic Defence Systems in order to resolve the issue the soonest possible. In this regard and taking into consideration the progress of work that has been achieved at the Lavrio plant since last December, it is estimated that the procedures will be completed in the next four months notwithstanding of course any future unforeseen circumstances. At this point it should be stressed that the Hellenic Defence Systems have launched the trial phase for the destruction process during which a quantity of 100 mines from the training stockpiles were demilitarized.

Thereafter an amended contract between the Ministry of National Defence and the Hellenic Defence Systems will be signed in

order to establish a definite timetable for the destruction of the remaining stockpiles. It goes without saying that once a timeline is set State Parties will be immediately informed.

With reference to the discrepancy noted by the President between the number of stockpiled APLMs in Bulgaria in the 2015 report and those reported in 2016 allow me to provide the necessary clarification.

On July 21, 2015 the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a verbal note informed the competent department of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the quantity of the APLMs stored at the Videx facilities amounted to 190.570. This number does not include the mines destroyed during the explosion, the mines ineligible for transportation and those that were used by the Bulgarian authorities in order to conduct an investigation experiment on the origins of the explosion at the Videx facilities.

Madam President

Since its accession to the Ottawa Convention, the Hellenic Republic has spared no efforts in order to comply with all its obligations. With regard to our obligations emanating from Article 4 of the Convention, we have always addressed the complications which have arisen with the utmost transparency and sincerity. These complications should not in any way be construed as a deliberate failure or lack of willingness to comply with the Convention's obligations but rather as a hurdle due to circumstances beyond our control.

Last but not least, I would like to reiterate that the Hellenic Republic fully recognizes its obligations emanating from the Ottawa treaty. At the same time, however, all necessary actions have to be implemented in full compliance with Greek legislation in order to avoid further delays.

Thank you.