

Meeting of Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction of Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Geneva, Monday, 21 May 2012

Statement by the delegation of Belarus

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As of 21 May 2012 Belarus has 3 million 356 thousand 636 anti-personnel mines remaining to be destroyed, all of them PFM-1 type.

Since 11th Meeting of the States Parties of the APLC the Government of Belarus continued its efforts to ensure the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines in accordance with the obligation of Article 4 of the Convention. We also remain to be committed to Action #9 of the Cartagena Plan of Action on Mine Free World requiring inform on regular basis on plans to ensure compliance as soon as possible and in strict conformity with relevant safety and environmental standards.

Government of Belarus continued to render support and assistance to Spanish Company EXPAL acting as a Contractor under joint European Commission – Belarus project "Destruction of PFM-1 series ammunition in Belarus", funded by the European Commission.

EXPAL, being defense division of MAXAM group, the company with international experience, specializing in manufacturing and integrating systems and services for the defense and security sectors, has received residential status in Belarus and has been granted with all necessary licenses to operate with explosives.

Works on installation and commissioning of a destruction facility to implement destruction of the stockpiled PFM-1 series munitions (by so called "cold detonation" technology in armored camera) has been continued at ammunition base near Rechitsa in South-East Belarus.

This process appeared to be for EXPAL more complicated and time consuming than it has been envisaged earlier. The reasons for that was the need to deliver most of the equipment from Spain and Germany. Thousands of items, dozens of tons of equipment had to be delivered to the destruction site in Belarus.

Another reason for delay was unfavorable weather conditions in winter to proceed with construction work on the destruction site. Gas, electricity and water supply maintenance at the destruction site took additional time as well.

Following Belarus-EC arrangement all imported items have been cleared by Belarus' custom authorities without any custom duties. In many cases for transfer of explosives, i.e. detonators and detonation cords, special licenses, permits and end user certificates were required in accordance with international export control practice. Belarus' licensing authorities issued all required licenses and permits and passed them to the Contractor on time.

Madams Co-chairs,

To solve effectively all pending issues, pertaining to stockpile destruction, the Government of Belarus and the EC decided to establish in February 2012 Coordinating Committee on the project "Destruction of PFM-1 series ammunition in Belarus". The Committee has convened three meeting so far, co-chaired by the representatives of the MFA and EC, last on 14 May. Coordinator of the project from the MoD, Contractor and Sub-Contractor, and representatives of the Ministry of Environment took part in these meetings. The Committee has considered status of realization of the project and addressed number of pending issues, related to legislation, licensing, construction documents, permits, industrial certification procedure, custom clearance, visa issues, environmental expertise, waist treatment and so on. The meetings of the Committee appeared to be helpful to solve many problems. Just to mention, the Government started to apply simplified procedure for visa issuance to enter Belarus for representatives of EXPAL. Customs' clearance procedure for items imported for the destruction facility has been simplified as well. Belarus' authorities have assisted EXPAL in finding qualified personal to be employed at the destruction site and extended invitation to EXPAL to further educate them on special courses on explosive techniques, conducted by the Ministry of Emergency. To accelerate the start of destruction of mines Belarus' authorities also permitted to Contractor to convey construction work on site in parallel with preparation of construction documentation.

To sum up, the manufactory house at the destruction site has now been installed. The detonation chamber is also on its place. Most of the documents and licenses to operate the project have been already obtained by the Contractor. We expect that the Contractor will get the rest of the permits and finalize the construction documentation in 2 month. In coming month we also expect delivery of Off-Gas Treatment Machine to Rechitsa. Before the start of the project the Contractor will have also to complete the environment impact assessment. This assessment will be implemented by the authorized environmental agency in conformity with the requirements of the legislation of Belarus. Request for assessment has already been sent to the Agency. Upon its completion (as estimated in 1 month), the report on the assessment will be open for public hearing for the period of one more month. It should be noted that the Government of Belarus and EXPAL pay great importance to ensure environmentally friendly treatment of hazardous liquid and gaseous waste developing during the

destruction of stockpiles of mines. Armed Forces of Belarus will also bear full responsibility to promote safety and security of the destruction site.

Madams Co-chairs,

All the parties of the Project, MFA, MoD, the EC and the Contractor are looking forward to start the destruction phase of the project as soon as possible and to complete it in 2013.

I thank you.