

Statement by Georgia
Meetings of the Standing Committees of the Ottawa Convention
Geneva, Switzerland
April 23-27, 2007

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining and the Group of Donors for the opportunity to participate in current session of the International Standing Committees of the Ottawa convention. Besides, I would like to congratulate participants of the session with the 8th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, and 10th anniversary of the treaty's historic signature in Ottawa, Canada.

The fact that it is the second time when the representative of my country participates in the meetings of the Standing Committees indicates that Georgia attaches serious importance to the problem of antipersonnel mines. Georgia is well aware that the negative impact of landmines far outweighs their military value, and tries to make its possible contribution in facilitation of the process of elimination and eradication of this threat.

Georgia has not acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Over the years one of the principle reasons for not acceding to the convention has been the existence of the territories uncontrolled by the

central authorities of the state and therefore, incapability to fulfill the obligations put forward in the convention.

Nevertheless, Georgia fully shares the principles and objectives of the Ottawa Convention and the concern of international community regarding the challenge of anti-personal landmines. It expressed support for the global ban on anti-personnel mines on several occasions. It should be emphasized, that Georgia has voted in favour of every annual UN General Assembly resolution supporting a ban on anti-personnel mines since 1996, including UNGA resolution 61/84 in December 2006 and is intended to continue to vote in favour of it in the future.

At the same time, Georgia is a party to “the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects” of 1980 (and its original Protocol II), though it has not ratified Amended Protocol II for the same reason as the Ottawa Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since restoration of its independence in 1991, Georgia has never produced, exported or imported anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, it has had an official moratorium on the production, use, export and import of antipersonnel mines, which was declared in September 1996. Since that time corresponding official structures of Georgia have been strictly refraining from use of anti-personnel mines. I have the chance to confirm my country’s firm resolution to keep this commitment in future.

The landmine problem in Georgia is largely confined to the secessionist region of Abkhazia, and a limited number of military sites elsewhere in Georgia. The majority of mined areas in Georgia are located by the river Inguri, dividing Abkhazia, Georgia from the rest of the state. Mine problem in Abkhazia represents a consequence of the armed conflict of 1992-1993, during which thousands of mines were planted. Since 1998 demining activities on the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia had been implemented by organization "The Halo Trust" and in 2005 the Gali region of the separatist autonomous republic was declared Mine Impact Free. As for the territory of the other secessionist region, namely South Osetia, there have not been conducted serious mine clearance activities.

In recent years, the South Osetian separatists accused the official Georgian side in mining the territories of the conflict area, however, it must be stressed, that all statements of that sort do not reflect the real picture – the Georgian Armed Forces and other relevant structures strictly follow the declared moratorium.

Apart from the above-mentioned, the territories of military bases abandoned by the forces of the Russian Federation, and surrounding areas of the territories of still existing military bases are affected by land mines. Although, estimates of the number of such sites vary, still at least 5 former Russian military bases are considered dangerous to civilian population. The exact area of mined territories, the types of mines and their disposition is not yet completely studied. In spite of repeated request, Georgia did not receive any records on mining activities conducted by the Russian militaries. According to the explanation, provided by the Russian side, territories have been mined spontaneously, without taking any records.

The special engineering unit within the structure of the Georgian Armed Forces conducts mine cleaning in military zones and military bases, whereas the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for populated areas, roads and railroads and border areas as well.

It has to be mentioned, that in accordance with the results of researches conducted by certain international organizations Georgia needs assistance in the following fields: training on mine action management, victim assistance, demining; victim assistance needs assessment, land mine impact survey etc.

As a conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again the observance of Georgia to the idea of mine free world and its readiness for cooperation with all interested parties.

Thank you