

**STATEMENT BY THE TURKISH DELEGATION
DURING THE MEETING OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON MINE CLEARANCE, MINE RISK EDUCATION AND
MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES
(5 June 2008)**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Allow me to begin by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the Co-Chairmanship. Our warm wishes also go to the Co-Rapporteurs. You have my delegation's full confidence and support.

I would like to underline once more the importance Turkey attaches to the full implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. The mine clearance obligation of Article 5 is one of the central provisions of the Convention and Turkey will spare no effort in order to meet her 2014 deadline.

I would like to update the information given by my Delegation at the Eighth Meeting of States Parties held in November.

According to Turkey's "Mine Action Plan", the 510 km long minefield on the border with Syria will be cleared under the supervision of the Directorate General for National Real Estate Affairs of the Ministry of Finance.

"The Draft Law on the Tender and Mine Clearance Activities along the border between Turkey and Syria" prepared by the Ministry of Finance is currently under discussion at the relevant Commission of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The first hearing was held on 10 April 2008. The draft law will provide the necessary legal platform for the tender and planned mine clearance activities along the border between Turkey and Syria.

Once adopted, it foresees the transfer of the right to use the land for agricultural purposes in return of clearing it from landmines. The draft law stipulates that mine clearance activities should not exceed five years and that the agricultural use of the cleared land will not exceed 44 years.

I would like to mention that mine clearance activities are currently being carried out at three border crossings between Turkey and Syria. A number of protocols have been signed and implemented regarding these border crossings.

First, "The Protocol Regarding Mine Clearance Activities to be carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces around Akçakale border crossing" was signed on 30 January 2007 to clear landmines, within the framework of broadening the Akçakale border crossing area. This is an area of 7.175 square meters. The clearance activities were completed in July 2007

Second, "the Protocol Regarding Mine Clearance around Nusaybin Border Crossing" was signed on 6 November 2007. In line with this Protocol, the Governorship of Mardin will ensure the mine clearance of an area of 200.000 square meters. The tender agreement regarding this area will be signed shortly.

Third, on March 2008 the General Directorate of Turkish State Railways was authorized to carry out activities, including the holding of tender for mine clearance, in an area of 38.500 square meters out of a total land of 187.607 square meters, in Kilis, Çobanbey district. A protocol has already been signed with the relevant Syrian authorities in order to carry out mine clearance in both sides of the new train border crossing.

I thank you.