

**STATEMENT BY THE TURKISH DELEGATION
DURING THE MEETING OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON MINE CLEARANCE, MINE RISK EDUCATION AND
MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES
(28 May 2009)**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Let me begin by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the Co-Chairpersonship. 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 Ninth Meeting of States Parties held in November.

As it was indicated in our first national report, anti personnel land mines are laid along the border lines. Nevertheless, the western borders that we share with Greece and Bulgaria, as well as the border with Georgia are mine-free.

At present, a mine clearance programme along the borderline with Syria, which is the longest land border of Turkey, is a priority.

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 General Assembly of the Turkish Parliament.

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 this law is enacted, we will be able to call for a tender on mine clearance activities along the borderline, of which the clearance period will not exceed five years. In the case that the call for tender fails, a new one will be organized. In this context, the new call for tender will include both the clearance for a period which will not exceed five years and the agricultural use of the cleared land for a period which will not exceed 44 years.

Furthermore, while awaiting for this legislation to be adopted by the Parliament, we are proceeding with complementary mine-clearing activities at five separate border check-points between Turkey and Syria.

A number of protocols are being 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 in 2007 to clear landmines, within the framework of broadening the Akçakale border crossing area. The clearance activities covering an area of 7.175 square meters have been completed. In February 2009, a study has been initiated in order to clear an additional area of 24.718 square meters.

Second, "the Protocol Regarding Mine Clearance around Nusaybin Border Crossing" was signed in 2007. In line with this Protocol, under the auspices of the Office of the Governor of Mardin, the tender agreement was signed on 14 March 2008 and the mine clearance of an area of 200.000 square meters has been completed.

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.

Fourth, pre-tender and tender specification activities with regard to clearing mines in an area of 8.771 square meters within Kilis-Öncüpınar customs district are conducted under the auspices of the Office of the Governor of Kilis.

Fifth, work is underway in order to issue a tender for mine clearance in an area of 663.800 square meters within Gaziantep Karkamış district.

We will continue to inform the States Parties on our efforts and preparations regarding our Article V obligations.

I thank you.