

Statement by Greece to the Meeting of the States-Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel mines and on their Destruction

Mr. President,

Ioannis Mallikowtis

~~Given that it is the first time we take the floor, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties and to reassure you of our delegation's full support.~~

Mr. President,

Greece signed the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty on 3 December 1997 and ratified it on 25 September 2003, thus coming into force for Greece on 1 March 2004. As a State- Party to the Ottawa Convention Greece has spared no efforts to implement its contractual obligations. In this regard, at the Cartagena Summit we announced the completion of the clearing of all our mined areas, four years ahead of schedule. In addition, during the past year we were Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies, placing priority on promoting the application of the Cartagena Action Plan by those States Parties still in the process of implementing Article 5.

With regard to Greece's obligations emanating from Article 4 of the Convention, in mid 2008 the Greek state signed a contract with the Greek company EAS, which appointed the Bulgarian company VIDEX as subcontractor. In this context, from 15 December 2008 to 14 May 2010, 615,362 mines were shipped to Bulgaria, of which 614,882 were destroyed, as confirmed by the Bulgarian Mission in Geneva by note verbale on 28.10.2010. The issue of the ~~small~~ difference (of 480 mines) between the Bulgarian and Greek data is being examined by the Greek authorities, who were only recently informed ~~of the issue by EAS~~.

In addition, in 2008 Greece destroyed 18,144 ADAM (Area Denial Anti-Personnel Mine) mines in 504 artillery shells, a project undertaken by the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency in Germany. Moreover, during the course of 2010, Greece also destroyed 1,066 mines of our retained stockpile for training purposes in mine detection. Hence, the number of mines which we now retain, according to Article 3 of the Convention, amounts to 6,158.

With regard to the remaining stockpile ~~(951,146)~~^{951,146} mines) it must be noted that in March 2010 the Greek state terminated the contract with EAS/ VIDEX, given the delays in the destruction process. Subsequently, EAS filed indemnities against the Greek State claiming very large amounts as compensation. The aforementioned case is under consideration by the competent Greek courts.

This of course does not prohibit the awarding of the destruction of the remaining stockpiles to another contractor and actually the Ministry of Defence has prepared the necessary groundwork for a new contract. However, given the potentially high price which the Greek State would have to pay should EAS win the law suit, the Ministry of Defence is unable to proceed to the awarding of the new contract at this stage, taking into consideration the severe financial difficulties which Greece is now facing. In any case, we would like to assure our partners that the optimum solution will be found, so that Greece will be in the position to announce its full compliance with Article 4 of the Convention in due course.

Thank you Mr. President.