

STATEMENT BY CYPRUS
11th Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention
Phnom Penh, ... (29 or 30) November 2011

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

Cyprus would like to extend its congratulations to the Kingdom of Cambodia for its decision to host such a significant meeting.

Cyprus, having suffered the atrocities of war and still suffering a situation of foreign military occupation of a third of its territory up until today, attaches particularly high importance to disarmament in general, and in particular to the aims of the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines, and on their destruction.

Committed to achieving complete demining of the areas of the island which are under its effective control, as its own contribution to efforts for achieving a safer world, the government began a process of demining in line with its National Plan for the Implementation of the Ottawa Convention. In accordance to the time schedule of Cyprus's National Plan, from the beginning of the process until today, 2.610 Anti Personnel mines, from 15 minefields that were laid down by the National Guard have been effectively removed and destroyed. The remaining 1.708 Anti Personnel mines laid in 3 minefields located in the vicinity of Dali, are expected to be removed and destroyed within the deadline of July 2013.

The government submitted its first Report under article 7 in 2003 six months after the Ottawa Convention entered into force for the Republic of Cyprus. Since then, the Republic of Cyprus submits its report to the Secretary General annually, providing updated accurate information, covering the previous calendar year.

Demining efforts are steadily progressing in the government controlled areas. The Mine Action Centre established by the National Guard monitors and regulates all demining actions, up to the point of successful disposal. All

demining teams receive the necessary technical and financial support, whilst new technical means are easily acquired, if and when necessary. The same demining methodology has been implemented from the beginning and has proved highly effective. National safety standards which are in line with international standards for humanitarian demining, are applied. Mines are being destroyed in small numbers at a time, at a military testing range away from inhabited areas. All mined areas which are under the control of the government are perimeter-marked, monitored and protected ensuring the effective exclusion of civilians, again in accordance with international standards.

It is also worth reiterating that by July 1 2007 the government of Cyprus had completed the destruction of all stockpiled antipersonnel mines, in accordance with Article 4, specifically 44,548 in total.

In addition, within the framework of the Government's initiative for clearing all minefields in the buffer zone, 10 minefields and 5 suspected areas that were laid down by the National Guard were cleared, 2,256 mines were removed and destroyed, and the areas were returned to the legal owners for civilian exploitation. The government continues to work closely with the

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the United Nations Mine Action Service for achieving complete demining of the entire area of the buffer zone. The UN's overall contribution has been fundamental towards the attainment of such a strenuous endeavor.

Regrettably no relevant progress can be reported about the clearance of antipersonnel mines in the areas of the Republic's jurisdiction which are under military occupation, and on which the government is prevented from exercising effective control.

Mr. President,

Cyprus takes its international responsibilities very seriously, respects the letter and the spirit of the Convention and values its contractual obligations stemming there from. Given the continuation of the well known situation on the island, the government is currently examining whether further measures

might be considered as necessary for duly implementing its obligation under article 5, to "destroy or ensure destruction of anti personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible but not later than ten years after the entry into force of this Convention".

Indeed the task of declaring the whole of Cyprus free from anti personnel mines is not an easy one. Yet, we wish to believe that it is not an unattainable one.

Thank you for your attention.