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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
DELIVERED AT THE 12TH MSP OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION  
[ARTICLE V]  
(GENEVA, 3-7 DEC 2012)**

Mr President,

We should like to inform the States Parties on the ongoing preparations in Turkey as regards our obligations arising from Article V of the Convention.

As we have indicated in previous MSPs, Standing Committee meetings and Article 7 reports, a great majority of anti-personnel mines are laid along the borderlines. Our western borders with Greece and Bulgaria, as well as the border with Georgia however, are mine-free.

Mine clearance along our southern border constitutes the priority, in particular the borderline with Syria, which is the longest land border of Turkey. Along this border, we currently have a total of 613,715 mines, of which 163,823 are anti-tank mines and 449,892 are anti-personnel landmines).

The "*Law on the Tender and Mine Clearing Activities along the Land Border between Turkey and Syria*" has been adopted by the Turkish Parliament and approved by the President on 17 June 2009. This law provides the necessary legal basis for mine clearing activities along the border between Turkey and Syria. On that basis, the Ministry of National Defence (MOD) is entrusted with the task of implementation.

Allow me briefly summarize the major steps taken so far. For the sake of brevity, I shall skip details pertaining to dates and information relating to Turkish law :

- In February 2011, a "Sales Agreement for Quality Management, Consultancy Support and Certification" was concluded between the MOD and NAMSA, now the NATO Support Agency (NSPA).
- In April 2011, the tendering process was announced.
- In June 2011, candidate firms submitted their files to the MOD.
- In August 2011, preliminary assessment of the firms was concluded and a short-list was established, in consultation with NSPA.
- Later, a second, more detailed assessment took place again under the consultancy and supervision of NSPA and qualified short-listed firms were invited for tender.
- Selected companies have been taken to the Syrian border for a site survey last May. The survey covered an area of 527 km.
- Following the submission of the bids on 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, the selection process for the contractors began.
- The contracts will be signed as soon as the evaluation process is completed.
- We expect that the mobilization process of the teams to take their designated positions along the border area before clearance work can actually begin will take around three months.

-On condition of absence of any force-majeure that would delay the clearance activities, completion of clearance of mines along the Syrian border is expected at the end of October 2016.

Mr President,

In carrying out the duties entrusted to it, the MOD established a "**Project Implementation Group**" to determine the precise coordinates of the mined areas and put this information on digital maps. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the financing of the project.

The project to clear the mined borderline with Syria, which is 911 km long and on average 350 metres wide, is a major undertaking by any standard.

The project not only entails clearance of mines in a safe and environmentally sound manner, but also entails the simultaneous establishment of a new physical border security system with the involvement of other sub-contractors. There are also various other technical and administrative details involved, which are being sorted out by an "**Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board**" through regular meetings.

In this connection, allow me to give some brief information on the activities of the "Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board (IMCB) which commenced working on 26 October 2010, meeting regularly and practically functioning as the "National Mine Action Authority":

- The Board issues instructions to and coordinates work between relevant governmental bodies pertaining to mine clearance activities and related undertakings.
- Members of the Board include all relevant Ministries and agencies, including, inter-alia, the Prime Ministry and Ministries of National Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Education, Health, Energy and National Resources, Agriculture, Transport, Environment, Culture and the Ministry of Interior.
- Meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board cover subjects over a wide array of issues, ranging from environmentally sound and most appropriate methods of mine clearance, to issues relating to the preservation of cultural assets, educating regional populace on mine awareness, re-planning infrastructure of the region, among others.
- Equally important in this context has been the coordinated work by the Board for the development of Turkish Mine Action Standards (TMAS). "International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)" has constituted a template for TMAS to a great extent. In the meantime, a similar set of standards has been prepared to be utilized on the Syrian border prior to full adoption of Turkish Mine Action Standards.
- Accordingly, once the necessary national legislation is enacted, the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Board will officially assume the functions of a "National Mine Action Authority".

-“The Law on the Establishment of a National Mine Authority and Mine Action Centre” has already been drafted and has been presented to the Prime Ministry, from where it will be submitted to the Parliament.

Mr. President,

Allow me now to elaborate on some details:

The Turkish-Syrian border has been divided into six segments taking into account various factors, including -most of all- physical properties of the areas. The segments have a different order of priority based on this assessment and clearance activities will follow this prioritized order.

The total length of the borderline is 911 kilometers and the mined area, including the adjacent mine-free security buffer, is just over 190 square kilometres

As has been the case with our Article IV activities, clearance activities along the Syrian border and in areas other than borders, are being fulfilled by means of national sources, with earmarked finances.

Another project towards fulfilling our Article V obligations, is the decision to start clearance on the eastern borders of Turkey, starting north and moving southwards; and to operationalize this in the light of experience gained from the massive scale clearance on the Syrian border.

The sum of the area that will be cleared of mines within the framework of this project is 13.5 million square meters. Two-thirds of the cost of this project of 53.4 million Euros will be covered by the EU under the “Pre-accession Financial Assistance Scheme”. This is the first phase of the project, initiated in 2011, for which a financing agreement with the EU is expected to be signed by the end of this year.

Another project to clear the area further south of the eastern borders has been prepared and covers an area of 13.7 million square meters. This project will also be partially financed by the EU if approved.

Mr. President,

A thorough work is ongoing in the relevant agencies in Turkey with regard to our Article V obligations. As I have just mentioned in my statement and also our statement last year in Phnom Penh, we expect mine clearance along the Syrian border to be completed in October 2016; which is already two-and-a-half years past the prescribed deadline for Turkey of March 2014.

Mr. President,

Turkey’s eastern and southern borders are not only very long but also topographically very difficult, regional security issues notwithstanding. While we regret that the work on

clearance of mines has begun rather belatedly due to bureaucratic necessities and other factors, serious work has been ongoing for some time and there is genuine effort and political will to proceed apace to fulfil our Article V obligations.

It is a fact that Turkey will not be able to fulfil its Article V obligations in a timely manner, which is why I wish to officially inform the States Parties that Turkey will be submitting a report by 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2013 on its projections and need to use an extension period for the clearance of its laid mines, with extensive details.

I thank you for your attention.