



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
15th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Statement on Stockpile Destruction

Madam President,

From its inception, this forum has had the comparative advantage of adopting a purely humanitarian approach, which has been preserved throughout the years, thus safeguarding the credibility of the Convention. It is therefore important that we all remember that the process of mine destruction and mine clearance is a very dangerous one, which could cost human lives, not to mention the contamination of the environment, if we do not take the necessary measures and precautions.

Taking the above into consideration, we have from the very outset also stated that legal issues emanating from the provisions of the national procurement legislation, as well as safety and environmental compliance are of utmost importance. These must be addressed during the demilitarization process of the mines in order for the Hellenic Defense Systems to proceed to their destruction at their facilities in Lavrio, Greece.

With the above guidelines in mind, I would like to provide you with the most recent developments regarding the process for the signature of a revised contract between the Ministry of National Defence and the Hellenic Defence Systems.

Madam President,

Since the Intercessional meeting, the Hellenic Defence Systems acquired the necessary certificates for the demilitarization of ammunitions in their Lavrio facilities. With the certification process completed, the necessary prerequisites were reached in accordance with the provisions of domestic legislation for the submission of a request by the Hellenic Defence Systems to the competent department of the Ministry of National Defence for the signature of a revised contract.

Following the issuance of the above mentioned certificates and the subsequent completion of the infrastructure works at the facilities of the Hellenic Defence Systems in Lavrio, the competent department of the Ministry of National Defense, begun the compilation of the necessary documents for the submission of a query to the State Legal Council in order to formulate its opinion for the revision of the core obligations of the existing contract.

Madam President,

We are at the final stage of completing the necessary procedures for the signature of a revised contract with the Hellenic Defence Systems and we recognize that the progress achieved on this issue is slower than we had anticipated. I would like to assure you that the settlement of this issue is considered a priority for the competent department of the Hellenic Ministry of National Defence. At this point allow me to reiterate that the Hellenic Republic fully recognizes its obligations emanating from the Ottawa treaty. At the same time, however, we cannot ignore the provisions of the domestic legislation on this issue.

Concerning the APLMs which are stored at the Videx facilities in Bulgaria, we took note of the Bulgarian remarks during the intercessional meeting. The issue was addressed again between the Ministries of National Defence last July, in order to find a mutually agreeable solution. In this context the Bulgarian authorities promised to examine the possibility to destroy the mines in Bulgaria and inform us accordingly. Allow me to stress at this stage that cooperation with the competent Bulgarian authorities has been excellent and we are very grateful for their very forthcoming approach.

Madam President,

Since its accession to the Ottawa Convention, the Hellenic Republic, has spared no efforts to comply with all its obligations. As we have stated in the past, we completed mine clearance four and a half years ahead of the treaty's stipulated deadline, a task we considered more important from a humanitarian perspective.

With regard to our obligation emanating from Article 4, the lack of compliance is not willful, neither does it reflect a lack of political will. Legal obstacles and unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, like the deadly explosion at the Videx facilities which disabled VIDEX to continue any further activities of demilitarizing the mines, and the subsequent revocation of its operating license by the Bulgarian authorities, have delayed the process for the destruction of APLMs.

Last but not least, we would like to inform the participants of the meeting that despite the challenges that we have encountered in fulfilling our obligation to destroy all the stockpiled APLMs, challenges which are associated with financial constraints, unforeseen circumstances, contractual and legal issues, we have never wavered from our commitment to implement the Convention's obligations, and we have handled the issue with the utmost transparency and sincerity and, of course, we will continue to do so.

Thank you