



Embassy of Greece
Bangkok

STATEMENT

BY

**AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS ZAFIROPOULOS
HEAD OF THE GREEK DELEGATION**

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION
(Bangkok, 15-19 September, 2003)**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of Greece and, right at the outset, I would like to congratulate you for your election to chair this meeting. Congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. I can assure you Mr. President of our support and our firm conviction that under your leadership this meeting will be guided to a successful outcome.

I would like also to stress that Greece fully subscribes to the Statement delivered by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Presidency of the E.U.

It is, of course, common knowledge that Anti Personnel Landmines kill or maim indiscriminately but also hinder the economic growth of a country in a manifold way. For example, on the one hand we have the costs incurred for the care of the persons crippled by mines and to provide support for the bereaved families of those killed by APL.

On the other hand we have the negative impact of landmines on the economic growth of a country since, typically, cultivated land is precluded from use by farmers, transportation networks are compromised while stock breeding is hampered, and so on.

Of course the humanitarian costs are by far more serious but we should not overlook the economic dimension of the mine problem as well.

It has been stated that mines are a cheap weapon, easily affordable by the poor, in order to protect their national integrity. This argument, however, is a double edged sword for although landmines may offer some form of short term protection, in the long run they turn against those who they are supposed to protect.

Therefore, we wholeheartedly support every effort made to increase the outreach of the antimine ban. We further support the demining campaign. Greece, in its national capacity, in the course of 2002, contributed several amounts to the International Centre of Humanitarian demining for specific projects such as 885.000 Euros for the demining programme in South Lebanon and 611.000 Euros for the demining programme in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We also donated mine detection equipment to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 76.000 Euros to the voluntary Trust Fund for assistance in mine clearance.

In addition to the above, and concerning the territory of Greece specifically, allow me to recall as we have done on similar occasions in the past, that Greece has already demined its frontier with Bulgaria and is conducting similar actions on other segments.

Finally, Mr. President

Greece has accomplished its internal procedure of ratification of the Treaty and we are in consultations with Turkey so that both countries will deposit their respective instruments of ratification in a simultaneous manner. We hope that this event will take place soon.

I thank you Mr. President.