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STATEMENT

by Mme Rita Kazragiene,
Head of the delegation of the Republic of Lithuania
to the Eight Meeting of States Parties
To the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction

Dead Sea, 21 November 2007

Your Royal Highness,

As Lithuania takes the floor for the first time, let me congratulate you and the Vice-Presidents of the meeting on election / and thank Jordan for its warm hospitality. I would also like to commend the outgoing Australian Presidency and all the Coordinating Committee / for the work accomplished in between of the Seventh and Eighth meetings.

Lithuania aligns with the general statement by Portugal on behalf of the European Union / which has been distributed in written.

Mr. President,

Lithuania has already fulfilled its national obligations under Articles 4 and 5, and considers / cooperation and assistance as defined in Article 6 / to be its most important contribution to the Convention in the future.

In providing assistance / our guiding principles are determined primarily by the geographic and thematic foreign policy priorities of Lithuania. Another important principle is / that synergies between existing legal instruments, such as the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), shall be sought, experiences shared and duplication avoided. Lithuania is of the view that assistance seeking countries / shall identify mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) related problems / among their national priorities, establish relevant plans of action and contribute their own - even very limited - human, technical or financial resources.

Taking into account our expertise and resources available, in coming years it is planned to give preference / to mines and ERW stockpiles destruction and clearance within the above-mentioned frameworks. Aside of contributing financially, Lithuania has taken

the responsibility of serving as President of the Second Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V (on Explosive Remnants of War) under the CCW.

With regard to the geographic priorities / Lithuania will continue to focus on regional cooperation in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, as well as on Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

In 2007 / Lithuania took decision / to start contributing to the UN Mine Action Trust Fund. Our first contribution went in support of the mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance project in Afghanistan. In addition, within the framework of the Lithuanian led Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Province of Ghor, Afghanistan, Lithuanian explosives disposal team / continued clearing and neutralizing mines and unexploded ordnance / as well as raising awareness among the civilian population and local police forces.

Over the past year / Lithuania has also dedicated funds to the clearance of contaminated land and disposal of unexploded ordnance project in Azerbaijan coordinated by the NAMSA, / sponsored „A Guide to Cluster Munitions“ by the GICHD and / for the first time engaged with Geneva Call by co-sponsoring seminar „Towards an anti-personnel mine-free South Caucasus – including Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh“ taking place in Kiev this month. We provided financial support to the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention.

Mr. President,

We follow with interest the work of the new Contact Group on linking mine action with development. So far / our support to mine action has been funded from the regular budgets of the ministries of foreign affairs and defence. At this stage / we are still cautious about streamlining mine action into development / as in our case that might evoke decreased resources for mine action. As Lithuania has committed to significantly increase its official development assistance (ODA) levels in the next decade, we look forward to further discussion on this important topic / with the view of ensuring sustainable financing for mine action in the future.

Mr. President,

Lithuania has been providing assistance to the neighbouring countries Belarus and Ukraine for their vast munitions stockpiles destruction / and is ready to remain engaged. We see big potential in cooperation between those two countries / as in our view they are facing similar challenges.

Lithuania nationally and as an incoming co-chair of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction / supports the draft Dead Sea report / calling upon all States Parties which are in a position to do so, to provide assistance to States Parties with clearly demonstrated needs for external support for stockpile destruction, especially in response to appeals for assistance by those States Parties / which are in danger of not meeting deadlines under Article 4. Both – receiving and giving – parties shall cooperate to insure full and prompt implementation of agreed assistance programs.

Mr. President,

Lithuania looks forward to fulfilling its role in preparations for the Ninth meeting and assures you, our co-chair Serbia and nominated co-rapporteurs Italy and Zambia, other members of the incoming Coordinating Committee, all concerned and interested governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of its determination to address the remaining challenges in a collaborative and transparent manner.

Finally, Lithuania would like to take this opportunity to thank its all partners in mine action, in particular the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, the UNMAS, the ICRC and Geneva Call, for cooperation. Our special gratitude goes to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Canadian delegation and experts of International Campaign to Ban Landmines for sharing with us their knowledge and experience.

I thank you.