



## HELLENIC REPUBLIC

### Intercessional Meetings of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty Geneva, 8-9 June 2017 Statement on Stockpile Destruction

Mr President,

As it is the first time we take the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties and to assure you of our delegation's full support in your endeavour.

Since our accession to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Hellenic Republic has spared no effort to comply with all its obligations. As we have stated in the past we completed mine clearance 4 ½ years ahead of the deadline under Article 5, a task we considered more important from a humanitarian perspective.

With regards to the APLMs retained under the provisions of Article 3, the Hellenic Army General Staff (HAGS) in the last 4 years has destroyed 508 APLMs, reducing thus the stockpile to 5.650 APLMs from the initial amount of 7.224 we had declared.

Nevertheless, regarding our obligation under Article 4, unforeseen circumstances such as the fatal explosion at Videx facilities in Bulgaria and the subsequent legal obstacles which have arisen have rendered the process of the destruction of the APLMs very complicated.

For this very reason and from the very outset we have stated that legal hurdles emanating from the implementation of domestic legislation must be first overcome in order for the Hellenic Defence Systems (HDS) to undertake and complete the destruction of the remaining stockpile of APLMs at their plant in Lavrio.

With this in mind, allow me to provide you with the most recent developments in our ongoing efforts to fulfill our obligation emanating from Article 4 of the Mine Ban Treaty. .

Mr President,

Since the 15th Meeting of States Parties in Santiago, the Legal Council of State concluded that from a legal perspective there is no apparent hindrance in order for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to sign a revised contract with the HDS.

Therefore, the HDS submitted to the competent department of the Hellenic Army General Staff (HAGS) a technical description for both the demilitarization of the APLMs stockpile and the management of the inert materials deriving from it. The aforementioned technical description has already been examined by a committee of experts of the HAGS which concluded that the demilitarization procedure of the APLMs covers the requirements set by the HAGS, based on recognized standards (NATO STANAG 4518).

The HDS, taking into consideration the pace of the destruction of the APLMs anticipates that the remaining stockpile will be destroyed over a period of 20 months after the signature of a revised contract with the MoD, notwithstanding of course any future unforeseen circumstances beyond our control.

Mr President,

We are in the final stretch for the completion of the internal procedures for the signature of a revised contract between the MoD and the HDS and we do recognize that the progress achieved on this issue is slower than we had initially anticipated.

Concerning the issue with the APLMs which are stored at the warehouses of the VIDEX Company in Bulgaria, the HDS will undertake all necessary initiatives in order to settle the issue as soon as possible. The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be informed of the way forward through the direct channel of communication which has already been established with the competent department of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this purpose. It goes without saying that the mutual acceptable planning of actions will be provided to the ISU and to you, Mr President, through the Permanent Mission of Greece in Geneva.

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.

With reference to the discrepancy of the number of the APLMs which have already been destroyed, as they have been reported in the 2015 report and those reported in 2016, allow me to provide the necessary clarifications on this matter. The amount of APLMs that we have declared under Article 4 provisions is 1.568.167, of which 643.267 have not been destroyed yet, thus making the amount of the destroyed APLMs to 924.900. The divergence you noted Mr President is due to a typing error.

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