

Statement of Bulgaria under Art. 4 (Stockpile destruction)

The Republic of Bulgaria would like to take advantage of the kind invitation by the Presidency to provide information on recent developments on the anti-personal mines transferred from the Hellenic Republic to the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of destruction.

As we have previously informed, on October 1, 2014 there was an explosion that occurred at the installations of the demilitarization factory "Midzhur" owned by the Bulgarian private company "Videx". The company facilities are located near the village of Gorni Lom, Bulgarian Northwest. At the time of the incident the company was in process of demilitarization of Greek APLM under contract from July 10, 2008 between "Videx" and the Greek company-broker "Akmon S.A."

The Utilization section of the factory was totally destroyed and therefore no further destruction of the Greek APLM's is possible. In addition, the Republic of Bulgaria has no capacity to assume the responsibility for the destruction of the remaining 190 572¹ APLMs. Acting under the provisions of the Convention, in May 2015 we made an official request to the Hellenic Republic for transferring the remaining APLMs back to their territory since the Republic of Bulgaria doesn't have any justification to hold Greek APLMs.

In July 2015, a delegation of Greek experts visited the storage sites in Bulgaria and verified the numbers and the condition of the APLMs. On two occasions, in September 2015 and in April 2016, the Republic of Bulgaria has requested official information on the progress of the preparation of the Greek side for the transfer back to Greece of the APLM's. We appreciate the fact that our Greek colleagues provided such official information in their statement under this Agenda item. We took note of the challenges that the Greek authorities should overcome in order to continue with the destruction process. Nevertheless, we would like to stress that the process of transferring back the mines and the licensing issues of the factory in Lavrio are not directly interrelated. In addition, our understanding is that the States are responsible for the implementation of the Convention's provisions regardless of the fact that the contract is signed between private companies.

We would like to underline also that if the transportation begins later than 31 August 2016, it will be highly doubtful that the whole process will end by the end of 2016. The village where the company's facilities are located is in a mountainous area which makes the access after 1 October by specialized trucks for transportation of APLMs practically too risky.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's strong commitment to the Ottawa Convention. Bulgaria was amongst the first States Parties to implement Article 4 obligations. We continue to improve the implementation measures including by further strengthening the relevant national legislation. A new Law on the Implementation of the Convention on Cluster

Munitions (CCM) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction entered into force on 8 December 2015. In our Annual Declaration we have provided additional information on the content of the new legislation including on victim assistance.

¹ The difference between the previously declared number of Greek APLMs and the current number is due to the fact that 42 APLMs have been used for forensic experiment during the investigation process.