

**Statement by Greece to the Meetings of the Standing Committees 27-30 May 2013-**

**Article 5**

Mr. Co-Chairs,

I have taken the floor to briefly update you on an issue which was raised in the past by ICBL concerning a previously mined area in the island of Rhodes.

Greece carried out the clearance of the previously mined area in Rhodes for the first time in the late 1970s. However, given that some of the registered mines were never located, Greece continued to carry out extensive verification efforts until 2011.

The area was searched again during the course of 2012 following initial queries from the Non-Governmental Organization Norwegian People's Aid. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012 a representative of the NGO Norwegian People's Aid, visited Rhodes, and was briefed by the local civilian and military authorities on the area near the bridge of KREMASTI. It must be noted that verification efforts in the said area had gone well beyond the relevant international standards, while in addition the area was cordoned off. Verification operations continued during 2012 and the beginning of this year, reaching completion on 8 March 2013 without any findings. At this point, we would like to highlight that the verification operations were undertaken in a much larger area compared to the original minefield, given that, for public safety reasons, the Greek Armed Forces wanted to exclude the possibility that these mines had been washed away, due to the original minefield's proximity to a natural stream.

In any case, following the most recent verification efforts, it became evident that this area is considered safe for civilian and commercial use. As a result, on 21 March 2013 the area in question was handed over to the municipal authorities in Rhodes, thus bringing this issue to a definite conclusion.

In closing, Greece would like to thank partners and civil society for the interest they have shown in this issue.

Thank you for your attention.