

**STATEMENT BY THE TURKISH DELEGATION
DURING THE MEETING OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON MINE CLEARANCE, MINE RISK EDUCATION
AND MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES**

26 April 2007

Co-Chairs,

We will have to have a slightly different beginning to our statement. In a way, we will “build on” the statement of the previous speaker. This is because once again, we are gathered here for a technical meeting and once again, a Greek Cypriot representative has politicised the proceedings; same as last year and the year before. Why are we not surprised?

Since time is a precious commodity and because the Mine Ban community is aware of the traditional antics of the Greek Cypriot delegation, we will not go into the details of the Cyprus issue. Instead we will focus on mine clearance. However, before we do, due to the fact that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is not represented in this forum, my delegation would like to make a few additional points for the sake of clarity.

Madam Co-Chair,

I have heard many points of order up until now. The intervention by the Greek Cypriot representative was not one of them. I will address those comments at the end of my statement. I am now returning to my statement.

Demining along the Green Line was in fact brought on the agenda with the initiative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the 24th of July 2003. Negotiations were held between the Turkish Cypriot authorities and the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) regarding mine clearance in the buffer zone in Lefkoşa and its vicinity. An agreement to this end was successfully concluded on the 5th of August 2005. The fact that work on this issue did not commence earlier, is the result of circumstances beyond the control of the Turkish Cypriot side.

Turning now to the actual work being conducted by the Turkish Cypriots, as a result of mine clearance conducted from 11 August 2005 to 8 January 2007 under the coordination of the UN, 13 minefields in the Lefkoşa vicinity of the buffer zone have now been cleared.

From these 13 minefields, 202 anti-tank mines, 70 M-48 flare mines, 14 M-49 flare mines, 3 MK-2 flare mines, 372 anti-personnel mines, 49 unexploded ordnances, 2 smoke grenades and 1 hand grenade were removed. Apart from 20 M-48 flare mines and one 60mm mortar round, all removed mines and UXOs have been destroyed.

Let us point out that the mine clearance activities are being carried out in accordance with international mine action standards.

My delegation would also like to assure delegates the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is doing everything in its power to rid the Island of the scourge of landmines and have being

doing so since 2003. Interested delegations may contact competent Turkish Cypriot Authorities for further updates.

Coming back to the intervention by the Greek Cypriot representative, the Greek Cypriot Administration does not represent the Turkish Cypriots; hence, it has no right or the legitimacy to claim to act on behalf of the whole island. The problems we face today emanate from the claim of the Greek Cypriot Administration to be the legitimate successor of the government of the “Republic of Cyprus” of 1960.

Madam Co-Chair,

There must be something wrong with that nameplate. It keeps banging back there.

If I may continue, Turkey continues to hold the view that there is no Government by consent in Cyprus representing the whole island.

Moving onto the mine clearance presentation Turkey had originally planned to make, as requested, we will focus on updates and new information only, and refrain from repeating previous statements. For this presentation, I would now like to give the microphone to our expert from capital.

Co-Chairs,

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to provide some updates on Turkey’s mine clearance activities.

As elaborated in more detail with our statements during the Seventh Meeting of States Parties, the “Specialized Mine Clearance Unit” of the Turkish General Staff continues its mine clearance activities. This unit has protective outfits, mine clearance dogs as well as manual and mechanical clearance equipment at its disposal.

In the light of additional surveys conducted in 2005, Turkey reported 984’313 emplaced mines in 2006, which included also 164’497 anti-vehicle mines on the Syrian Border.

According to Turkey’s “Mine Action Plan” plan, the 510 km long minefield on the border with Syria will be cleared under the management of the Ministry of Finance, in conformity with the related Governmental Decree. Subsequent approaches with related bodies include NAMSA. Let me underline that close contacts are underway to get this highly competent agency involved, to the maximum extent possible, in the efforts to fulfil our obligations under the Convention.

In the meantime, 1147 additional landmines were cleared by manual and mechanical techniques during 2006. They were destroyed by the “Specialized Mine Clearance Unit” by on-site detonation. Accordingly, the number of emplaced anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines are 819’669 and 164’497 respectively; the total figure currently standing at 983’166.

I thank you, Madam Co-Chair.