

**STATEMENT BY
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**at the Meeting of the
Standing Committee on the
General Status and Operation
of the Ottawa Convention**

As delivered

- Geneva, 9 February 2004 -

Distinguished Co-chairs,

On behalf of the Romanian delegation, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of these tasks and to assure you of my delegation's full support in all your endeavours in assessing the status and the operation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

I think - and, certainly, I'm not alone - that the successful outcome of the First Review Conference to be held in Nairobi, on 29 November – 3 December 2004 largely depends on the two sessions of the Standing Committees of the Ottawa Convention. These two sessions are critical in assessing what has been done so far, as they might prove instrumental in urging the decision-makers at all levels - from Governments to local officials, in the media and elsewhere - to do more in order to diminish and, eventually, do away with this insidious danger to the human beings.

Distinguished Delegates,

In taking the floor today, I'll briefly refer to one of the major aims this Standing Committee's activity, namely the universalization of the Convention. Six years have passed since this document was adopted and four since its entry into force: 150 states would have, hopefully ratified the Convention by the time of the Nairobi Conference. This shows the world's increasing awareness of the need to curb sufferings caused by this type of weapons and the urgency to solve this humanitarian problem.

Romania is playing an active role in the movement for APLs ban, by means of the national policy and actions. Even before becoming a state party to the Ottawa Convention, our Government imposed a moratorium on APLs transfer and production. We were engaged in de-mining activities, in the framework of several peacekeeping missions carried on under UN and NATO mandate, in Angola and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Humanitarian medical assistance to mine victims was also provided in the Romanian field hospital units deployed in Angola, Somalia and Kuwait.

After the entry into force of the Convention, Romania initiated the process of stockpile destruction, which will be officially completed

next month. The Romanian authorities set in place and are consistently implementing the proper legal framework for compliance with the provisions of this international instrument.

Furthermore, our country is interested in extending mines prohibition, by codifying rules of regulations for the use of mines, other than antipersonnel mines (MOTAPM). Romania is one of the 30 co-sponsors of the proposal to negotiate and convene an international instrument, within the Group of Governmental Experts of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

At multilateral level, Romania brought its contribution to the work of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction, in the capacity of Co-rapporteur, and Co-Chair, together with Switzerland, for the 2001 – 2002, respectively 2002 - 2003 mandate, as well as at regional level, through the Chairmanship of the Reay Group for Mine Action in South Eastern Europe.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

In this capacity my country has I would like to draw your attention to the fact that all states in South Eastern Europe became State Parties to the Convention, following the depositing of the instruments of ratification/accession to the UN Secretary General by Serbia and Montenegro on 18 September 2003 and by Greece and Turkey on 25 September the same year.

The event was adequately marked on the occasion of the 2004 Reay Group Workshop on "Progress in meeting the aims of the Ottawa Convention in South Eastern Europe" that took place in Bucharest, on 2 – 3 February 2004. On this occasion, several participants underlined the prerequisites of such an accomplishment: mutual trust, good neighbourliness relationship, common goals in the area of stabilizing the region and developing sustainable social and economic development policies.

One of the conclusions the workshop reached is that membership to international instruments, in general, and to the Ottawa Convention, in particular, is not a goal in itself. This is but a first, yet essential, step towards fostering international cooperation and promoting a coherent and comprehensive approach with respect to future challenges and needs to be supported by donor's assistance.

The Reay Group workshop provided the best framework for identifying progress in implementing all aspects of the Ottawa Convention by the States Parties to it in South Eastern Europe (SEE). Having in mind the Convention's First Review Conference, the workshop featured an assessment of future challenges with respect to mine clearance, to victims' assistance, destruction of stockpiled mines, and setting up national implementation measures.

Other conclusions are available in the Chair's summary of the workshop outside this room. In the context, we would like to thank the Netherlands and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for the financial and logistical support they provided for the Bucharest Workshop.

We trust that the process of universalization of the Ottawa Convention is more than ratification/adhesion procedures; the States Parties belonging to the Reay Group will remain involved in the process, with the hope that - after successfully championing membership - the South Eastern Europe would become a region free of APLs stockpile by 2008, one year before the second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention. Similar achievements are expected also in connection with victim assistance, economic and social reintegration and rehabilitation.

We applaud the efforts of other international for a for promoting the spirit and scope of the Ottawa Convention. I would like to recall here the very suggestive fact that, in the last three years, the Resolution on APLs introduced in the First Committee not only has steadily continued to gain support, but has never opposed by any country. We do hope that we'll reach the stage when this 'no-opposition' status turns into overall consensus; South-East Europe has truly achieved a 'regional universalization' - if I may say so; this may a step in turning the Convention into being really universal.

Thank you.