

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GREGOR ZORE, HEAD OF THE SLOVENIAN DELEGATION AT THE CONVENTION OF THE STATE PARTIES TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION

GENEVA, 10 MAY 2001

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me contribute a short report on the actual status of the stockpile destruction process in Slovenia with the updated figures.

Our latest Article 7 report, concerning the period from May 2000 to April 2001 was delivered to the Secretariat in New York in early April, so that the latest figures may not have appeared in the tables yet.

Mr Chairman, let me first say a few sentences in a way of introduction. The Ottawa Convention entered into force for Slovenia on April 1, 1999, just over two years ago. At that time some 172.000 mines were accounted for in stockpiles. That rather large amount for a country of our size was due not to our particular needs or security requirements but rather to the fact that that was what the former Yugoslav Peoples Army left behind at the time of its retreat from Slovenia in October 1991.

An execution plan for the destruction of the entire stockpile was then designed and adopted by the General Staff of the Slovenian Army well before April 1, 1999, the time when Convention entered into force for Slovenia.

However, the actual process of mine destruction which started in May 1999, was somewhat slower than previewed, essentially for two reasons. First, lack of adequate mine destruction facilities and, second, an insufficient number of adequately trained personnel. In addition, environmental concerns and problems with the local communities near the initial destruction sites were not helpful either.

Still, during the first reporting period (i.e., the 12 months ending April 30, 2000), some 18.000 mines were destroyed, and in the second 12 months period ending April 30, 2001, over 15.000 mines, with an additional 4.500 destroyed during the four weeks since our report was handed to the Secretariat in New York.

Let me conclude with good news. By the end of the year 2000 the new mine destruction facility of our own design was completed at the destruction site near Postojna, some 50 km west of the capital Ljubljana and the applicable destruction technology was tested. Also, additional personnel is being trained. So, a systematic carrying through of the execution plan is now underway and will be completed in due time. Let me add that we will be able to manage the task with our own means and resources.

To recapitulate, out of the initial stock of 172.000, 18.200 were destroyed in the first year, 19.600 in the second, a total of close to 38.000, which leaves the remaining stock at some 134.000 mines.