

Presentation (2) by the Turkish Delegation at the Second Intercessional Meeting of the Ottawa Convention

SUBJECT:

The prohibition of the use, stockpile, production and transfer of the anti-personnel land mines (APLM) and their destruction.

EXPLANATIONS:

1. General:

a. The use of APLMs by the Turkish Armed Forces was banned with a directive dated 26 January 1988, due to the changing defensive concept of border areas as well as the enhanced activities related to the prohibition of APLMs in the world.

b. In line with this policy, Turkey had declared a three-year moratorium banning the export, import and transfer of the APLMs in 1998. Turkey, sharing fully the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention, which entered into force on 1 March 1999, extended this moratorium indefinitely in January 2002. And declared its willingness to become a party to the Ottawa Convention regardless of its neighbors intentions concerning the Convention.

c. The legislation on the accession of Turkey to the Ottawa Convention was adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 12 March 2003, and it was ratified by the President on 14 March 2003. The national constitutional process of becoming a party to the Convention has been concluded on 15 April 2003. As it has been stated by our delegation earlier, Turkish and Greek Foreign Ministers have jointly reiterated their decision to simultaneously deposit their instruments with the Secretary General of the United Nations on 3rd May 2003.

2. Activities conducted together with other countries:

a. Even prior to the conclusion of the constitutional process of acceding to the Convention, Turkey has been spearheading a set of initiatives aimed at clearing the joint boundaries with its neighbors from the APLMs and total ban of their use in the future. In the framework of these initiatives, stronger measures and verification activities are included in comparison with the Ottawa Convention and other arrangements banning the APLMs, with Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia and Azerbaijan. In this context;

(1) A bilateral Treaty to demine the joint boundaries from APLMs, was signed with Bulgaria on 22 March 1999, it came into effect on 1 May 2002. In compliance with the provisions of this Treaty, the exchange of information on 1 August 2002, and the annual exchange of information for the year of 2003 have been concluded in April 2003.

(2) The similar type of bilateral Treaty with Georgia was signed on 29 January 2001. The process for the ratification of this Treaty is underway at the Turkish Parliament.

3. Mine Clearance Activities:

a. Abroad:

Turkey, attaching importance to the global humanitarian mine clearance activities, carried out projects in several regions around the world. Turkey also provides courses on mine clearance to foreign Armed Forces personnel in the context of the "Partnership for Peace" and bilateral agreements and contributes to the mine clearance efforts with personnel and equipment, and also provided financial assistance. In that context, Turkey has participated in the mine clearance activities in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and in regions where Turkish troops are acting under the command of the KFOR and SFOR. Turkey also provided financial contribution as 25,000 Euro to the NATO PfP Trust Fund for the project in the Ukraine, aimed at the destruction of mines and ammunition remaining from the period of former Soviet Union.

b. Domestic:

(1) Mine Clearance:

In Turkey, 900,094 antipersonnel landmines had been laid to prevent the illegal border crossings.

Between 1957-1959, 615,419 of those mines were placed along the Syrian border alone.

In addition to those mines, 39,569 mines were also used around the Security installations for safety reasons in the Eastern and South Eastern Turkey between 1989-1992.

These mined areas have been marked in accordance with the international norms and they are fenced. There has not been any mine laying activity either at the borders or around the security installations by the Turkish Armed Forces since 1992.

As a result of the resolve of Turkey on the subject of the clearance of APLMs, it started a comprehensive mine clearance activity in 1998, unilaterally. Firstly, the use of mines was banned; "Mine Clearance and Coordination Centers" and "Mine Clearance Teams" and a Working Group to study on the mine clearance and detection methods were established and a program on mine clearance activities was prepared in line with these efforts. By the end of 2002, 13,945 APLMs have been cleared. For the same period an area of 37234 m² have also been cleared from APLMs. Mine clearance operations are on going without interruption.

The removal of all mines at the Syrian border was planned and this plan was initiated in 2001. Following the completion of preparatory work related to this project, the clearance of 615,419 mines will start, and the cleared area of 306 millions m² will be gained for agricultural use.

Following the clearance at the Syrian border mine clearance at other border areas will be carried out according to plans, which are in the preparatory state.

4. Destruction of Anti-personnel Land Mines:

a. While continuing with the clearance of mines, Turkish Armed Forces have also started the planning of the destruction of existing Anti-Personnel Land Mines in stockpiles according to Article 4 of the Ottawa Convention.

b. In the planning stage it has been determined that the existing mines in storage can be destroyed within four years. Working on the destruction methods is going on. It has been determined to start the destruction process following the accession to the Ottawa Convention.

5. Conclusion:

In conclusion, Turkey has supported all initiatives carried out at bilateral and regional level in the context of Disarmament, Arms Control and Confidence and Security Building measures inter-alia within the context of mine clearance. Turkey, which sees her role in the region as a bulwark of stability, is also determined to support such initiatives in the future.