

Presentation
by Major General S. Luchina,
Chief of the Engineering Troops
of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus
at the Session of the Standing Committees

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the course of a short period of time the idea of a total ban on the use of APM and their destruction has become explicit upon coming into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines and Amended Protocol II to the CCW.

The Republic of Belarus fully shares the goals of the mentioned international documents, aimed at stopping human sufferings, protecting peaceful citizens and, first and foremost, our children from the “mine plague”, technologically engendered by the 20th century. Our people were destined to undergo all sufferings associated with these ammunitions, in the course of the two largest world wars that took place in the Belarusian territory. Still hundreds of mines and munitions from war times are excavated from the ground. These insidious munitions still bring about human suffering, and peaceful people die. In 2005 three Belarusian civilians died as a result of UXO explosion, over 25 000 explosive items, including 36 APMs, were deactivated and destroyed by sappers.

The Republic of Belarus does not stand aside from the internationally supported process of APM prohibition.

The Republic of Belarus joined the Ottawa Convention in accordance with the Decree by the President of the Republic of Belarus of 28 July 2003 #330.

In the Republic of Belarus the Convention came into force on 1st March 2004. A number of legal acts, shown on **Slide 2**, were issued to fulfil the obligations ensuing from the Convention (*Decree by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 6 May 2004 #525 “On Fulfilment of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction”, Order by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Belarus of 1 September 2003 #742 “On Organisation of Fulfilment of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction”, as well as orders by the Minister of Defence #851 of 6 October 2003 and #138 of 25 February 2003 “On Discarding from Service of Certain Types of Munitions within the Armed Forces”*).

During 2004-2005 agreements with potential donor states were concluded on financial and technological assistance for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention in the Republic of Belarus.

In February 2006 the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Belarus and NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency signed a NAMSA Purchase Order (Contract) on the Destruction of TNT-containing POMZ-2, POMZ-2M, POM-2 PMN and PMN-2-series APM.

The Contract was signed by Major General Ivan Dyrman, Deputy Minister of Defence on Armaments – Chief of Armaments of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus and Susan E. Hays, NAMSA Senior Procurement Officer.

On March 1, 2006 the implementation phase of agreements between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Belarus and NAMSA on disposal (destruction) of TNT-containing APM with the use of donor states' funding (Canada and Lithuania) through NATO Trust Fund in the framework of Partnership for Peace Programme was launched.

NAMSA provided financial assistance to the Belarusian MoD on the basis of Annex "B" to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Belarus and NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency, which in the course of cooperation in maintenance and supply area, stipulating for exemption of all types of goods, works and services from customs and tax payments in the framework of realisation of the Contract.

The total cost of the Contract is 84 500 euro. NAMSA transfers this sum to the special account of the Ministry of Defence of Belarus by stages.

According to the Contract, TNT-containing PMN (45 425 pieces), PMN-2 (114 384 pieces), and POM-2 (57 324 pieces) APMs shall be destroyed by detonation at the demolition site of the Engineer Munitions Base of the Ministry of Defence (in Rechitsa); and POMZ-2 (12 799 pieces) and POMZ-2M (64 843 pieces) munitions shall be destroyed by moulding of their cases at the Belarusian industrial plants. The destruction of APM stockpiles in Belarus is verified by the NAMSA auditor.

Additionally, the Contract envisages for inspection by the NAMSA auditor of MON-series APM (5 536 pieces – 5% of the total amount) and OZM-72 (200 826 pieces – 100%), in the course of which auxiliary parts (designed for making fragmentation APM victim-activated) are removed and destroyed.

Destruction of APM should be completed in the course of 2006 according to the plan of activities aimed at realisation of the Contract.

As of 6 May 2006, 131 MON-type mines were inspected and auxiliary parts were extracted from 12 515 OZM-72 mines; 14 159 POMZ-2 mines were destroyed by moulding and 4 450 PMN mines and 16 POM-2 mines were destroyed by detonation.

The problem relating to the destruction of 3 371 984 PFM-1 cluster mines with liquid explosive is the most difficult task for Belarus from technological and ecological points of view. To solve this problem, on May 6, 2006 the Ministry of Defence signed a Statement of Endorsement to accept the European Commission technical assistance for the destruction of PFM-1 mines.

Signing of this Statement of Endorsement enables the European Commission to launch an international tender for the selection of the Contractor to carry out works aimed at disposal of the these mines through the ecologically sound technology and to start implementation of the project until the 1st January 2007.

In addition, 720 dangerous PMN-2 and 2 880 PFM-1 APM were destroyed during 2005.

In accordance with the Ottawa Convention Belarus retained for training purposes 6 030 APMs, including 1 500 PMN mines, 1 512 PMN-2 mines, 1 518 POMZ-2M mines and 1 500 POMZ-2 mines.

On April 20, 2006 Belarus submitted its annual report under Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention.