

Statement by Greece

Thank you Mr President,

Since our last update during the Intercessional Meeting last June, we would like to inform participants on recent developments pertaining to Greece's implementation of Article 4.

The remaining stockpile of APLMs (Anti Personnel Land Mines) amounts to 643.265. From the above mentioned quantity, 452.695 APLMs are stored in military warehouses in Greece and 190.570 in warehouses of Videx company in Bulgaria, according to the latest information provided by the Bulgarian authorities.

Mr. President,

As we outlined during the June meeting, the company, Hellenic Defense Systems (HDS), contracted by the Ministry of Defence, decided to destroy the quantity of Anti Personnel Land Mines that remain, in Greece at their facilities in Lavrio near Athens. However, the ongoing financial crisis has affected the smooth operation of the company and has delayed the infrastructure preparations and the procurement of the necessary equipment for this purpose.

In the light of this situation, the Ministry of Defense, having received a request for the extension of the relevant contract, is taking all possible actions to conclude this process at the earliest time possible, taking into consideration the preparatory process at the Lavrio plant.

Upon completion of the facilities, a military committee of the Hellenic Army General Staff, will inspect the plant in Lavrio in order to certify that the destruction process will be in accordance with the provisions of the contract and to estimate the pace of the destruction procedure in order to provide a realistic timetable for the destruction of the remaining quantity of Anti Personnel Land Mines.

Mr President

Concerning the issue that has been raised with regards the 190.570 Anti Personnel Land Mines that are still stored at Videx facilities in Bulgaria, their destruction in Bulgaria was not provisioned by a bilateral intergovernmental agreement but instead by a commercial contract concluded between 3 companies, namely EAS-AKMON-VIDEX.

Nevertheless, it goes without saying that the Hellenic Republic fully recognizes its obligations stemming from the provisions of the Article 4 of the Ottawa treaty. In this context, we are in close cooperation with the relevant Bulgarian authorities.

Mr President,

The Hellenic Ministry of National Defence has to address a complicated legal issue because on one hand it is our obligation to proceed with the destruction of the APLMs and on the other one there is a need to fully comply with the internal legislation which governs the procurement procedures, and the protection of the environment.

Therefore and taking into account the reasons of the delays we had in the past, we strongly believe that we have to avoid further obstacles which may arise due to legal issues.

Last but not least, we would like to inform the participants that despite the challenges that we have encountered in fulfilling our obligation to destroy all the stockpiled anti-personnel mines, challenges which pertained to financial constraints, unforeseen circumstances, contractual and legal issues, we have never wavered from our commitment to implement the Convention's obligations, and we will continue to handle the issue with the utmost transparency and sincerity.

Thank you Mr. President.