

STATEMENT BY
THE HEAD OF DELEGATION OF CYPRUS
AMBASSADOR ANDREAS G. SKARPARIS TO THE 5TH MEETING OF THE STATES
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE,
STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION
BANGKOK, 15-19 SEPTEMBER 2003

Mr. President,

We would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the Chairmanship of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention.

Cyprus has aligned itself with the Statement of the European Union. As the distinguished representative of Italy, which holds the current Presidency of the EU, has said, we are delighted that the number of States that have ratified or acceded to the Convention is steadily increasing, that the production of and trade in anti-personnel mines has fallen significantly, and that the existing stocks are also being destroyed. As a result the number of victims in the countries most affected is decreasing; and this is of the utmost importance.

However, we also fully agree that more needs to be done if the global eradication of anti-personnel mines is to become a reality.

Mr. President,

As you know Cyprus has ratified the Convention on 17 January 2003 and since 1st July 2003 is a full party to the Convention, despite the division and occupation of almost half of Cyprus and the necessity to safeguard the territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Cyprus.

This is the first time that Cyprus attends the Meeting of the States Parties as a contracting state party. In the past, as concrete demonstration of our political will and as part of our commitment we have attended, as signatories, the previous annual meetings of states parties and we followed closely the work of the Standing Committees. At the same time we have established a close working relationship with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. We greatly value the Centre's expert assistance in our efforts to ratify the Convention.

We maintain close contacts with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and other leading NGOs working with landmines. We also consult with the ICRC, and, through our Permanent Mission in New York, with UNMAS.

In the context of the United Nations Policy of Mine Action and Effective Coordination and within the spirit of the Ottawa Convention, the Cyprus Government has put forward to the United Nations Peace-keeping Force (UNFICYP) in Cyprus, in 2002, a proposal for the clearance of all minefields in the buffer zone. The buffer zone is the area between the cease-fire lines of the Turkish forces and the National Guard i.e. the forces of the Republic of Cyprus. This area is monitored by the UN troops.

This proposal stems from our goodwill to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1062 (1996) which calls upon the military authorities on both sides "to clear all minefields and booby-trapped areas inside the buffer zone without delay, as requested by UNFICYP [para.6(c)].

Furthermore, Security Council Resolution 1251 (1999) calls upon both sides to take measures that will build trust and cooperation and reduce tensions between the two sides, including demining along the buffer zone" (para.5).

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has expressed its readiness since last year to cooperate with UNFICYP, with the aim of successfully removing minefields within the buffer zone. Recently the Turkish side declared that it accepts to cooperate with UNFICYP for the implementation of this primarily humanitarian project but only with regard to the area around the capital, Nicosia.

As far as the implementation of the Convention is concerned we are glad to announce that the Council of Minister has decided to set up a three member Committee which will draft the National Plan of Implementation of the Ottawa Convention and will supervise its timely implementation. Since 1983 Cyprus has cleared ten minefields adjacent to the buffer zone and during the last two years destroyed more that 10,000 mines of various types.

Mr. President,

In concluding our statement we would like to express our deep appreciation for the ground-breaking work of all those governmental and non governmental actors who have embraced the cause and have pioneered efforts to rid the world from the scourge of landmines. In particular we praise the outstanding contribution of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Thank you Mr. President.

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