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BELARUS

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STATEMENT
BY Dr. ALEKSANDR BAICHOROV,
HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY &
ARMS CONTROL DEPARTEMENT,
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

*AT THE FIFTH 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, SEPTEMBER 15-19, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting takes place at a very important juncture of the Ottawa Process. In a year time there will be the first Review Conference in Nairobi, which should take stock of what has been achieved so far and introduce some ways or mechanisms that would ensure a broader universality of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Landmines. It is very important that so many experts from all over the world meet here in Bangkok to share their views on further implementation of the Convention. It is also my pleasure to say few words about the Belarusian participation in the Ottawa Process.

The Republic of Belarus is a State Party to almost all international agreements in the field of international security, non-proliferation and arms control. By implementing these agreements Belarus makes its' impact on strengthening of regional and global security and stability.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Today I have a privilege to inform you that on September 3, 2003, Belarus has deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General its instruments of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

At the national level we conducted a most thorough analysis of the provisions of this document and relevant international commitments. According to this analysis, even under the most favorable conditions Belarus will need substantial financial and technical resources to carry out the destruction of its stockpiles of more than 4 mln. anti-personnel mines, our unwanted heritage from the Soviet Union. 3.6 million of them are the mines of PFM type. The safe and secure destruction of the stockpiled PFM-1/1S mines is still the object of a number of technical questions, that the international community as a whole needs to find answers to.

According to provisions of the Ottawa Convention, our country has to eliminate its mine stockpiles within 4 years period. Last year we destroyed more than 22 000 APM's. This year up to date of joining the Convention Belarus got rid of 100 000 more. While the non-PFM mines can be destroyed by open burning or open detonation, these destruction techniques cannot be applied to the PFM-1/1S mines out of ecological concerns.

Under these circumstances we appeal to Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, to assist the Republic of Belarus in its stockpile elimination efforts. All kinds of technical, technological and financial assistance will be warmly welcomed.

In this context the Republic of Belarus perceives with satisfaction the mechanism, incorporated in the Ottawa Convention, on the international cooperation and rendering financial and technological assistance in demining and destruction of stocks of anti-personnel mines between its participants.

Belarus welcomes a positive and important role the non-governmental organizations play in the international movement to ban APMs. On our way to the membership of Ottawa Convention the Belarusian section of ICBL has always been a reliable partner.

The Republic of Belarus supports the Landmine Monitor project and provides necessary data. In our opinion, it represents a unique civil society control mechanism that gives an opportunity to all states to ensure compliance with the existing international arrangements in dealing with the APM-related problems.

Mr. Chairman, the first years of the Ottawa Convention implementation have revealed some expected and unexpected problems. But all things are difficult before they are easy. I hope, the developing practice and tradition of the strict implementation of the Convention will make all things easier in the future. The Ottawa Convention has become a powerful tool, that gives us an opportunity to complete a noble job - to achieve full elimination and full prohibition of anti-personnel mines, which were a cause of enormous human sufferings on all continents.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a successful work during the session.