

19 Eylül 2006

**“MINE CLEARANCE”
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YAPILABİLECEK KONUŞMA**

Madam President,

As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, let me begin by congratulating you on your Presidency and the excellent way in which you are conducting our deliberations. I am confident that, with your wise guidance and diplomatic skills, this Meeting will be a success.

Allow me also to emphasise the importance Turkey attaches to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, so as to rid the world of the scourge of landmines.

With this introduction, let me now provide you and the distinguished representatives of this meeting with some updates on Turkey's mine clearance activities.

A Specialized Mine Clearance unit has been created within the Turkish General Staff to carry out mine clearance activities. This unit has protective outfits, mine clearance dogs, manual and mechanical clearance equipment at its disposal. In 2005, the number of personnel responsible for mine clearance has risen from 325 to 461.

Turkey had reported earlier of plans to create a Mine Action Centre. I would like to inform you that work on the establishment of a “National Mine Action Centre” under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister, commenced in 2005. The envisaged “National Mine Action Centre” includes representatives from relevant authorities at national level, such as Ministries of Justice, Interior, National Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance, National Education, Health, Transport, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Labour and Social Security, and Environment, as well as the Undersecretariat of Customs, the Administration of South-Eastern Anatolia Regional Development and the Turkish General Staff. This work is progressing and I hope we will soon inform you of its successful completion.

In order to meet its 2014 deadline, Turkey has a Mine Action Work Plan in place. In accordance with this plan, the 510 km long minefield with 615'149 mines on her 905 km border with Syria will be cleared under the management of the Ministry of Finance. Seventeen million US Dollars have already been earmarked for this project to clear a strip that was mined between 1956 and 1959 against illegal border crossings.

Madam President,

In 2005, Turkey had reported 919'855 emplaced landmines. In its 2006 report, this figure was reported as 984'313. The difference between the reported figures is a result of additional surveys that were conducted during 2005. Areas suspected of containing mines, indeed, turned out to be minefields. However, I should underline that this revised figure of 984'313, also includes 164'497 anti-vehicle mines on the Syrian Border, as we indicated in Turkey's 2006 Article 7 Report.

We had informed in our third Article 7 Report, which was submitted in April 2006, that Turkey had cleared and destroyed 17'866 anti-personnel mines by way of on-site destruction. Since then, this figure has risen to 18'577 anti-personnel mines. In this context, one of the important challenges faced regarding mine clearance is harsh winter conditions. To illustrate, due to such harsh conditions, mine clearance activities for 2006 could only be commenced in May.

Madam President,

Let me take this opportunity to inform you that close contacts with NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency or NAMSA are underway to get this highly competent agency involved, to the maximum extent possible, in Turkey's efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

Thank you, Madam President.