

18th MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE MINE BAN TREATY
STATEMENT BY GREECE ON STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION
GENEVA 16-20 NOVEMBER 2020

Mr President,

As it is the first time I take the floor, allow me to congratulate you, your team and the ISU, on the impeccable organization of this very important meeting, despite the hurdles posed by the pandemic restrictions, and to assure you of our delegation's full support in your endeavors to lead the 18MSP to a positive outcome.

Mr President, Dear Colleagues,

As we stated during the 4th Review Conference in Oslo, the Hellenic Defence Systems (HDS) stopped the destruction process at their facilities in Lavrio Plant, due to environmental compliance issues. The HDS and their subcontractor took steps in an effort to resolve these issues. However, as we were recently informed by the HDS, it was not possible to ensure environmental compliance during the demilitarization process and had to consequently terminate the cooperation with their subcontractor.

In this context, we would like to refrain from providing, at the present phase, a time-bound plan, since we must assess the current options under consideration during the deliberations between the competent departments of the Ministry of National Defence and the HDS, including the conduct of an international tender procedure for the destruction of the remaining APLMs stockpile.

Mr President, Dear Colleagues,

Greece has already destroyed more than 1.2 Million APLMs, but has not yet entirely fulfilled its obligation for the destruction of its stockpile due to unforeseen circumstances that are beyond its control, such as the deadly explosion in 2014 at VIDEX facilities and the legal dispute with the HDS which led to a pause in the destruction process for almost 2 years.

I would also like to mention the COVID-19 pandemic consequences over the last year, which have violently affected our daily life and have forced, among others, a lot of companies to reconsider their production priorities and co-operations in order to overcome the current financial challenges.

Moreover, the need of industry to adjust to new working protocols in order to ensure the workers' health as well as the restriction of movement even between cities of the same country is also a reality that we cannot ignore, and, of course, had an impact on the lack of progress in the stockpile destruction over the last year, since we had to give to the HDS the necessary time to adjust to the current conditions.

However, despite of the hurdles posed by the pandemic restrictions, we must do our utmost to address the growing challenges. Challenging times require innovative working methods, persistence and perseverance. In this regard, I would like to reiterate that Greece fully recognizes its obligation stemming from the Mine Ban Treaty and despite the challenges which we have encountered we have never wavered from our commitment to implement the Convention's obligations, and we have handled the issue with the utmost transparency and sincerity and, of course, we will continue to do so.

Thank you