



STATEMENT BY TÜRKİYE

THE SIEM REAP ANGKOR SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD FIFTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF STATE PARTIES TO THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

Siem Reap, 25-29 November 2024

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Landmines constitute a serious danger to human lives and today continue to kill and injure civilians, destroy livelihoods, prevent land use and disrupt access to essential services all around the world. Therefore, it is extremely important to address the challenges posed in order to achieve a world free from the land mines.

The Turkish Cypriot side is fully committed to achieving a mine-free island through fulfilling its obligations under the relevant international instruments. With a view to honouring its commitment, the Turkish Cypriot side has ensured the clearance of various minefields along the buffer zone between 2005 and 2011. In accordance with the International Mine Action Standards, the Turkish Cypriot side, together with international mine action organizations, has completed the clearance of minefields numbered 211 in 2017. Furthermore, the Turkish Cypriot side completed in 2019 the clearance of nine suspected hazardous areas identified by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force In Cyprus (UNFICYP).

The Turkish Cypriot side is in favour of a mine-free Island and is ready to discuss the demining activities on the whole Island, provided that these activities will be conducted simultaneously, proportionally and on the principle of reciprocity. However, the Greek Cypriot side's long-standing claim that it cannot fulfill its obligations stemming from Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Convention by putting forward a series of extension requests since 2012 and claiming that the only impediment to clearing all the minefields throughout the Island is its lack of access to the Turkish Cypriot side, is hardly convincing as it has habitualized to disseminate inaccurate and misleading information in the relevant international platforms.

Needless to say, the ultimate aim of the Greek Cypriot side is to distract attention of the international community from the realities by resorting to disinformation campaign regarding Turkish Cypriot proposals for a mine-free island.

Pursuant to the calls by the UN Secretary-General for cooperation on demining activities between the two sides, the Turkish Cypriot side put forward comprehensive proposals in 2014, 2015 and 2018 with the sole purpose of clearance of all remaining minefields on the island of Cyprus, which clearly demonstrates the commitment and dedication of the Turkish Cypriot side to mine clearance.

Most recently, on 8 July 2022, H.E. President Ersin Tatar made a new proposal for a mine-free Island, in line with the understanding outlined in the previous proposals for the clearance of all remaining minefields on the Island pursuant to the calls by the Secretary-General in his reports for cooperation between the two sides.

It should be emphasized that the Greek Cypriot side has not only ignored all these proposals, despite readiness of the Turkish Cypriot side to discuss the start of demining activities, but also claims that it has cleared all anti-personnel mines as of 2013 as part of its obligations stemming from the Ottawa Convention and that the only other mined areas that contain, or are suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines are located in the areas north of the buffer zone.

This allegation of the Greek Cypriot side is a blatant falsehood.

The United Nations Secretary-General confirms that there are “29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the Island” most of which are on the Greek Cypriot side. The Greek Cypriot side has no right of say or jurisdiction on the mine clearing activities that take place in the Turkish Cypriot side, which are under the sole responsibility of the authorities of the Turkish Cypriot side. The main aim of such baseless allegations by the Greek Cypriot side is to refrain from cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot authorities on this very humanitarian matter.

The Greek Cypriot side, in response to the “Questionnaire on Anti-Personnel Mines 2022” of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) claimed that *they have concluded the clearance of all the minefields, in cooperation with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), on 20 January 2023 laid by the national guard, that were located in the buffer zone.*

However, the Turkish Cypriot authorities confirmed with the UNFICYP authorities that this information does not reflect the truth.

The United Nations Secretary-General, in his latest Report regarding the United Nations Operation in Cyprus dated 3 January 2024, states that “No progress was made during the reporting period regarding the clearing of the 29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the island, including the four minefields in the buffer zone. While the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces expresses potential interest in the subject if it were to involve reciprocity from the other side, the National Guard did not wish to discuss the matter”.

Furthermore, the United Nations Secretary-General, referring to the buffer zone, openly states that “the active national guard minefields in the south” still remains uncleared.

It is evident that the Greek Cypriot side had not fulfilled its obligations under the Ottawa Convention as it claims, because the areas under its jurisdiction, namely the Greek Cypriot side, have not been cleared of mines.

All these facts clearly show that the Greek Cypriot side’s submissions as regards the minefields in South Cyprus are questionable. The repeated requests of the Greek Cypriots for an extension to their deadline is a delaying tactic to avoid cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot side, even on such a humanitarian issue.

Considering these realities on the Island, our expectation from the Summit is to take into account repeated representations of the Turkish Cypriot side, verify the information provided by the Greek Cypriots and urge the Greek Cypriot side to start sincerely cooperating on the issue of demining.

The Turkish Cypriot side is determined to continue its efforts to contribute to reaching a mine-free island despite Greek Cypriot side’s uncooperative and tactical stance and continues to believe that making the island of Cyprus a mine-free island would be the right step. The efforts of the Turkish Cypriot side towards this end will continue.

Last but not least, it should be recalled that none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate Turkish intervention of 1974 as “invasion” or the subsequent presence of the Turkish troops on the island as “occupation”. In fact, the only occupation in the island is the occupation of the government of the then Republic of Cyprus by the Greek Cypriots since 1963.

Thank you.