

CYPRUS

**STATEMENT BY  
H.E. AMBASSADOR ERATO KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
OTTAWA CONVENTION  
AT THE NAIROBI SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD  
3 DECEMBER 2004**

Mr. President,

Cyprus fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Dutch Presidency of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to bring to the attention of this important Conference certain developments which are central to my Government's policy.

In an official ceremony a year ago from today, the Republic of Cyprus was honored to host the launch of the process leading to the Nairobi summit on a mine-free world. In your concluding remarks during the launch ceremony you Mr. President said: "I am grateful for the dedication demonstrated by this country's highest level leaders to the pursuit of the aims of this Convention. The acceptance of the Convention by Cyprus is an important illustration of both the disarmament and humanitarian imperatives of the Convention. By accepting the Convention's prohibition on anti-personnel mines, you are building confidence and promoting international security. And by accepting the obligations to destroy your stockpile and to clear your mined areas, you are doing your part to ensure that these weapons do not claim additional victims".

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jody Williams speaking at the launch ceremony also commended the Republic of Cyprus for its "courageous step in joining the Mine Ban Treaty given the current difficulties". "Your decision to join the Treaty", she added, "symbolizes the importance of peaceful resolution to the problems and the validity of International Humanitarian Law. I am glad we can be here to personally congratulate you, particularly in the beginning, important first steps of implementation of the Convention and launching the Road to Nairobi".

The Official launch ceremony coincided with the commencement of the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines by the Republic of Cyprus, as a first step to fulfill its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. Even before ratifying the Convention in January 2003, Cyprus had already demined ten mixed minefields and had destroyed more than 11,000 mines of various types, while in December 2003 alone 4,000 stockpiled anti-personnel mines were destroyed.

At the same time and in a parallel process, the Government of Cyprus put forward to the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus a proposal for the clearing of all minefields within the buffer zone, including eight minefields laid by the National Guard and twenty seven by the Turkish Forces. The proposal stemmed from a

variety of commitments that my Government had undertaken: First and foremost, its obligations under the Ottawa Convention, as well as its willingness to join the international effort against mine proliferation, in full support of the United Nations Policy of Mine Action. In addition, my Government was committed to the implementation of confidence-building measures, with a view to defusing the situation on the ground and minimizing its potentially explosive character. And finally, my Government's proposal stemmed from Cyprus's goodwill to fully implement the relevant Security Council Resolutions which call upon both sides to clear all minefields and booby trapped areas inside the buffer zone.

With that in mind, Mr. President, and despite the unwillingness of the other side to cooperate, Cyprus decided to proceed unilaterally with the demining process by agreeing to clear the minefields laid by the National Guard. In June this year, following two years of technical preparation and consultation, the Government of Cyprus and UNFICYP reached an agreement which stipulated the terms of reference for the execution of the project. The demining project which is funded by the EU with 2.5 million Euros through the UNDP program "Partnership For The Future", officially commenced on 16 November 2004 and is expected to be completed in one year's time.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's gratitude to the UN and UNFICYP for their invaluable assistance in promoting our demining proposal, to the European Union for financing the project and to the Government of Canada and the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance for their generous contributions.

My Government is in full cooperation with UNFICYP for the success of this program taking all appropriate measures to ensure that mine-clearance is executed in a smooth and safe manner. Towards that end, the Mine-Action Center of the National Guard of Cyprus has been entrusted with providing all technical assistance and support during the demining process.

Allow me to conclude with the words of UNFICYP's Chief of Mission when he officially launched the PFF Program: "Every mine removed leaves space for stepping-stones to mark the path of peace and reconciliation. Every mine absent is one less obstacle to crossing points. Every mine destroyed is a step forward on the road to normalcy. Let us begin that journey here today".

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, we in Cyprus have proudly begun this noble journey. Together and in full unity in purpose with all of you, our partners in this peace-building endeavor, we are determined to bring it to a successful conclusion: a mine-free Cyprus and a mine-free world.

Thank you Mr. President.