



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

S T A T E M E N T

BY

MR. IVAN PIPERKOV

**HEAD OF "GLOBAL SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT" DEPARTMENT
"NATO AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY" DIRECTORATE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**AT THE FOURTH 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**

*16–20 SEPTEMBER 2002
GENEVA*

Mr. President:

- Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as the President of the Forth Meeting of the States-Parties to the Ottawa Convention. I should like to take this opportunity to assure you that Bulgaria will render its full support for the successful conduct of this meeting.
- Our country has already aligned itself with the statement of the European Union at this forum and fully shares its great satisfaction that the number of countries, which have formally accepted the obligations provided by the Convention, is steadily increasing. We welcome and fully support this tendency which will hopefully lead to a complete universalization of this very important instrument of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, we call upon States who are not parties – to abide by the Convention’s principles and to start a procedure for its formal acceptance as soon as possible. In this respect the Republic of Bulgaria welcomes the steps undertaken by our good neighbors and partners Greece and Turkey to start a procedure for accession to the Convention. In May this year the Agreement between the governments of Bulgaria and Turkey on Non-use of Anti-personnel Mines and Their Removal from and Destruction in the Areas Adjacent to Their Common Border came into force. We consider this bilateral agreement with a country not yet a party to the Convention a positive step in the same direction.
- As one of the first countries to ratify the Convention and to complete all its obligations in a timely manner (in less than two years after the ratification Bulgaria cleared all its minefields and completely destroyed the APM stockpiles), Bulgaria has gained experience and expertise and possesses technology in the field of mine destruction which will readily share in all relevant initiatives aiming at the complete and universal abolition of antipersonnel mines.
- Mr. President, allow me to express special gratitude to the NGOs, and in particular to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their invaluable work in the process of elimination of APMs. Bulgaria acknowledges the fact that it was through the active role of the NGOs that a quick and effective instrument for the abolition of a whole class of weapons with indiscriminate effect was created. We grant our full support to the NGOs in their efforts to render practical assistance for the implementation of the Convention, especially in the most mine-affected regions which at the same time have the least resources to solve the problem.

- Led by the understanding that collaboration with NGOs is essential in the combat against the landmines threat, Bulgaria has always provided information to the Core Group of organizations from the Land Mine Monitor system on its implementation of the Convention thus contributing to the transparency and the more efficient monitoring of the compliance with the Convention's principles.
- Now let me concentrate on some practical issues of this meeting. The Intersessional Work Program and the work of the Standing Committees are a very efficient instrument for the fulfillment of the objectives of the Convention and in order to make it even more effective, stronger emphasis should be put on the humanitarian aspect of the destruction of APMs. In this respect the establishment of the Implementation Support Unit, based on the agreement with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining, has given excellent results during its first year of functioning and Bulgaria is ready with its expertise and rich experience in the various mine action activities to contribute to its work for even more efficient results.
- My country welcomes the proposal made by the President for the introduction of a cover sheet for facilitating the reporting under article 7 of the Convention of countries which have completed their obligations. Thus the exchange of information will be easier and more efficient.
- As for the candidacy of Thailand to host the Fifth Annual Meeting of the States-Parties, Bulgaria favors the idea of conducting such events in countries, seriously affected by mines because this is an opportunity to draw the attention of the international donors toward the problem and to put the issue of APMs on the agenda of a broader international community.
- Next year's meeting can be regarded as a prelude to the First Review Conference and Bulgaria considers that forum as a suitable one for conducting informal consultations on its preparation. In this regard we shall consider with respect and due responsibility all candidatures for hosting the Review Conference in 2004.
- Lastly I would like to join the appeal made in the draft-declaration to the countries non-Parties to the Convention which are considered producers of APMs to immediately discontinue their production. We are all well aware of the humanitarian consequences of the use of APMs and that is why the problem should be solved at its roots. Once the production is stopped, the international community will not have to deal with the issue of APMs accumulation in the future thus making the objective of a world free of landmines more visible.

Thank you, Mr. President.