



Statement by Türkiye

21th STATES PARTIES MEETING OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION (10b Clearing mined areas and MRE)

20-24 November 2023

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Chairperson and distinguished participants,

On behalf of Turkish Mine Action Center (TURMAC), I would like to extend our appreciation for facilitating this significant conference where States Parties to take the floor.

Key advancements and updates regarding Turkish Mine Action Center's efforts to accomplish its obligations under the Convention, Oslo Action Plan and the humanitarian mine action activities conducted within 2023, respectively, are summarized below;

Within the scope of Eastern Borders Mine Clearance Project Phase-3, a demining contract was signed in March 2021. The project has been managed by UNDP and TURMAC and its activities were conducted by commercial contractors. As of November 2023, project has been finalized and more than 3,6 million square meters of hazardous land have been addressed and almost 50.000 mines were found and destroyed making Türkiye leading state destroying landmines in 2022 according to the recent monitoring reports. Finalization of the project has prepared the ground for an additional section along Türkiye's eastern borders for installing multidimensional border security and surveillance system.

Another vital component of this project was to conduct Non-Technical Survey on Türkiye's mined areas with a contracting modality. With this component, the precise perimeter of all mined areas in Türkiye were identified and this will enable TURMAC to prepare a robust and reasonable new work plan for the remaining challenges by 2025. In addition, the data obtained by the consultation with the affected communities during the field visits will be used to determine the mine action priorities.

With the finalization of the NTS component by November 2023, 3.451 NTS reports have been approved and transferred to TURMAC's database. The amount of change in gross suspected and confirmed hazardous areas will be reported in the following years' Article 7 report.

Apart from the project, almost 1.250.000 square meters of hazardous land were addressed and more than 11.500 mines were destroyed by military demining units in 2022, particularly along Türkiye's eastern borders where mined areas were preventing construction of the new border surveillance systems and around former military positions that are no longer in use.

With regards to humanitarian mine clearance activities on Türkiye's southern borders, these activities were impeded by the dreadful earthquake disaster that happened in southern Türkiye, affecting more than 10 provinces. Military Demining Teams were among the early response structure and were assigned for search and rescue operations aftermath of the disaster. On the other hand, TURMAC estimates progress along southern borders as to mine clearance as the security situation on the Syrian side improves and the region is cleared from the YPG terrorist organisation, which is an offspring of the PKK terrorist organisation. In this context, Turkish Armed Forces C-IED teams contributed to the safety of civilians by finding/neutralizing more than 150 mines, 2000 IEDs and 30.000 munitions laid by terrorist organizations in 2023.

As stated in Türkiye's 2023 Article 7 Report, Explosive Ordnance Risk Educations have continued through different assets trained and certified by TURMAC with the principle of "leaving no one behind". As a part of the Non-Technical Survey field visits, 495 mine-affected community residents participated in ad hoc risk education during 2022-2023. In addition to NTS Project, Gendarmerie risk education teams started their activities in 2022 and they have delivered risk education to 1.699 residents in various provinces until now.

Improving and ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the mine clearance activities, capacity development of its assets and seeking innovations have remained as principal objectives for Türkiye. In this context, Military Demining Teams have reached a number of 50 in 2023, also 6 nationally manufactured mechanical demining machines (certificated by TURMAC in compliance with international CWA 15044 standards), and 4 mine detection dogs added to squad, have augmented demining capacity.

Following to its accomplishment under the Article 3 of the convention previously, Türkiye retains reasonable number of anti-personnel mines with the justification of developing new demining equipment, training its new established military demining teams and dogs as well as providing continuity trainings to remaining teams it was declared by Türkiye's 2023 Article 7 Report.

Türkiye aims to address an area of approximately 17,5 million square meters of hazardous area throughout 2024-2025 by means of military demining units, whose capacity is being increased.

TURMAC also would like to take this opportunity to express Türkiye's gratitude for all national and international stakeholders, particularly;

- Implementation Support Unit of convention, for their tireless and precious collaboration with TURMAC to improve our efforts towards Article 5 obligations,
- European Union and its Delegation to Türkiye for their funding through IPA funds between 2016-2023,
- United Nations and its Development Programme in Türkiye for their implementing partnership,
- and GICHD for providing guidance to all mine-affected states in various ways.

Mr. Chair, before concluding my speech, I would like to greet you and all the committees with full respect, and I would like to emphasize once again that; Türkiye is fully committed to the Convention and keeps striving to fulfill its obligations in a dedicated manner by working in collaboration with relevant committees of the APMBC and ISU.

Thank you,