



STATEMENT BY TÜRKİYE
INTERSESSIONAL MEETING
ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

Geneva, 18-20 June 2024

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

The Greek Cypriot side's long-standing claim that it cannot fulfil its obligations stemming from Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Convention, is hardly convincing as it has habitualized to disseminate inaccurate and misleading information in the relevant international platforms. The ultimate aim of the Greek Cypriot side is to divert the attention of the international community from its rejectionist policy regarding Turkish Cypriot proposals for a mine-free island.

Landmines constitute a serious danger to human lives all around the world and it is of utmost importance to address the challenges posed in order to achieve a world free from the land mines.

In this respect, the Turkish Cypriot side has put forward comprehensive proposals in 2014, 2015 and 2018 as well, with the sole purpose of clearance of all remaining minefields on the island of Cyprus.

Most recently, on 8 July 2022, H.E. President Ersin Tatar, has 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 and pursuant to the calls by the Secretary-General in his reports for cooperation between the two sides.

Up to date, the Greek Cypriot side has ignored all these proposals, despite readiness of the Turkish Cypriot side to discuss the start of demining activities in the whole island provided that these activities will be conducted simultaneously, proportionally and on the principle of reciprocity.

On the other hand, as part of its false allegations, the Greek Cypriot side 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, as well as regularly requesting an extension to fulfil its obligations claiming that the only impediment to clear all the minefields throughout the island is its lack of access to the Turkish Cypriot side.

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

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 Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), on 20 January 2023 laid by the national guard, that were located in the buffer zone.*

However, our 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 (three National Guard and one Turkish Forces) in the buffer zone. While the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces expressed 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, by 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 administration had not fulfilled its obligations under the Ottawa Convention as it claims, because the areas under its jurisdiction, namely the Greek Cypriot side, has not been cleared of mines.

All these clearly show that the Greek Cypriot administration’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. Hence, the request of the Greek Cypriot side for the three-year extension is of without merit and such request should not be honoured.

The Turkish Cypriot side is determined to continue its efforts to contribute to reaching a mine-free island and continue to believe that making Cyprus a mine-free island would be the right step. They will continue carry on their efforts to this end provided that they are reciprocated.

We hope that, the Committee will 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.

Lastly, let me recall 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 now defunct Republic of Cyprus by the Greek Cypriots since 1963.

Thank you.