

CYPRUS STATEMENT on 29.02.2002

AIDE MEMOIRE

Re : Mine-Clearing in the buffer zone

1. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus, bearing in mind the importance of the international effort against mine proliferation and the clearing of existing minefields, and in full support of the United Nations Policy of Mine Action and Effective Coordination and the provisions of the Ottawa Convention, has decided to put forward a proposal for the clearing of all minefields laid within the buffer zone monitored by UNFICYP in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions.

The Ottawa Convention, signed by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus on 04.12.97 has been submitted to the House of Representatives of the Republic for ratification on 17.01.02, and it is expected that will be ratified soon.

2. This proposal, through of general importance, acquires a special significance in the context of Cyprus. It must be recalled that the Security Council Resolution 1062 (1996) called upon the military authorities on both sides "to clear all minefields and booby-trapped areas inside the buffer zone without delay, as requested by UNFICYP" ( para.6 (c) ). Furthermore, Security Council Resolution 1251 (1999), called upon "both sides to take measures that will build trust and cooperation and reduce tensions between the two sides, including demining along the buffer zone" (para.5).

3. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has expressed its readiness to cooperate with UNFICYP, with the aim of successfully achieving this goal. It expects that the Turkish side will approach this proposal with the same spirit and, sharing the same objectives, will also lend its assistance and cooperation to UNFICYP, for the successful demining of the buffer zone.

4. Although the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is looking forward to a positive response from the Turkish side for the implementation of this importance project, it does not consider such a response a precondition, and it has expressed its willingness to proceed unilaterally in cooperation with UNFICYP, with the clearing of the National Guard minefields within the buffer zone, in accordance with modalities and in an order mutually agreed with UNFICYP.

5. Pending the exploration by UNFICYP of the intentions of the Turkish side on this proposal, and irrespective of its outcome, the Government has proposed that consultations begin the earliest, between

the Government of Cyprus and UNFICYP in order to work out the modalities and the order to be followed in the process of clearing the National Guard's minefields within the buffer zone.

6. It has been brought to the attention of UNFICYP that foreign Governments expressed in the past their interest in providing practical assistance and/or funding for the implementation of this project. The Government of Cyprus is ready to engage in discussions with these Governments and their relevant agencies in order to define the extent and nature of their assistance, so as to be in a position to devise a specific plan of action, on the basis of the modalities agreed with UNFICYP, and with UNFICYP's cooperation.

7. The Government of Cyprus is confident that the United Nations, UNFICYP and member States of the Organization share its belief that the implementation of this project will reduce tension along the buffer zone and put an end to the threat against innocent human life, thus contributing to the return of the areas within the buffer zone to conditions of relative normality and safety and at full peace upon reaching a final settlement.

8. It is also the conviction of the Government of Cyprus that this move will have its positive impact on the political climate in Cyprus with beneficial effects on the process of intercommunal talks for the solution of the Cyprus problem, which have recently resumed within the framework of the United Nations Secretary-General's good offices mandate.

9. It is noted that the Government of Cyprus has since 1983 cleared ten (10) minefields adjacent to the buffer zone, and during the last two years destroyed more than 11.000 mines of various types.