

**Statement**

**given by Mariusz Handzlik**

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**Republic of Poland**

**“Poland’s position on the ratification of the Ottawa Convention”**

*(Permanent Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention, 1February, 2002, Geneva)*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for granting me the opportunity to present a statement reflecting Poland’s position on the ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

Poland is one of those countries that have not yet ratified the Convention. Despite political support expressed on various occasions, we are still not completely prepared to withdraw from possessing the anti-personnel mines. According to our Military Forces they are one of the most important components of our defence system. In order to comply with anti-personnel mines policy set out, both by the Ottawa Convention and Second Amended Protocol to the CCW Convention, we need to find adequate alternative means. This process requires time. Nevertheless

Poland would like to be seen as a state which strategic position and painful historical experiences justify the delay in withdrawing from that type of weapon. At the same time we are ready to declare that the ratification of the Ottawa Convention by our country is a matter of near future.

At present Poland already complies with the provisions of the Ottawa Convention concerning the prohibition of production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Recently we have created an interagency group of experts. Its task is to find the possibility of equipping the Polish Armed Forces with weapons alternative to landmines and to set up guideline with a possible date of ratifying the Ottawa Convention.

Furthermore, we are an active promoter of the values set out by the Convention among the States of our region. A good example of this promotion was the organisation in Warsaw in June 2001 an international conference entitled “Understanding the Ottawa Convention”. The conference, co-hosted by Poland and Canada, gathered the representatives of 20 countries - mainly from North-Eastern and Eastern Europe – as well as main NGO’s actors dealing with mine-related issues. The aim of the conference was to exchange the views and experiences in the field of implementing of the Mine Ban Treaty as well as proper understanding of the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

Poland represents a view in which the success of the Ottawa Convention cannot and should not be measured only in terms of the number of Signatory States. We are convinced that the Ottawa Convention provides each State with a good framework for solving the mine question. A framework, which doesn't only rely on introduction a political ban, but also on setting out the principles of de-mining and survivor assistance.

The Republic of Poland constantly supports all efforts, including those within the framework of the UN, the Conference of Disarmament and CCW Review-Conference-mechanism, aimed at achieving a total ban of export of anti-personnel mines and in other restrictions on other types of mines.

Poland is also one of the co-sponsors of the Danish-U.S. proposal on mines other than anti-personnel mines. Being a state actively involved in peace missions, we cannot ignore the threat posed by such weapons.

Poland also favours the initiatives in this field set out by the EU and EAPC. We are politically and financially engaged in two projects within the framework of PfP NATO Trust Fund concerning the destruction of stockpiles of APL's in Ukraine and Moldova.

Finally, Poland has been supportive of the international community's efforts to deliver assistance to post-conflict recovery areas while contributing troops,

including a substantial portion of de-miner units to peace-keeping missions. For the last 5 years more than 700 polish de-miners took active part in numerous international operations. Being a NATO member and active participant of Antiterrorist Coalition, we have prepared a group of close to half a hundred of polish de-miners to be sent to Afghanistan.

Let me stress once again the assurances that Poland will continue its efforts to contribute to peace and stability, both regionally and globally, in all fields and will continue to give full support to international efforts aimed at that direction.

Thank you for your attention.