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Convention*

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Belarus successfully completed its obligations under Ottawa convention (Mine Ban Treaty) by destroying the conventional antipersonnel landmines (APMs). Those APMs were eliminated within the framework of the joint project Belarus-NATO, sponsored by Canada and Lithuania.

The destruction of APMs of PFM type is considered as a unique problem within the Ottawa convention.

Destruction of PFM by a method of the open detonation creates harmful consequences for the population and environment. By now, international community has no experience of industrial destruction of huge numbers of mines of the given type with use of ecologically friendly technologies. Such an understanding was reflected in many documents, adopted by the meetings of the States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty.

We repeatedly stated that the Republic of Belarus had no possibilities to accomplish the destruction of the stockpiled PFM mines without the assistance of the international community.

In the end of 2004 the European Union took a political decision to assist Belarus in solving the mentioned problem.

However the project on destruction of PFM mines, offered by the European commission (EC), failed due to its complicated administrative procedures. Hence, Belarus could not carry out its obligations under Article 4 of the Ottawa convention and to complete the destruction of PFM mines by the 1st of March 2008 deadline.

At the same time the Belarusian side expresses its gratitude to the EC for its continuing support to Belarus and resolve to resume the project of destruction of Belarus' PFMs stockpiles. We respect a policy and procedures applied by the EC during realization of projects on rendering the technical and financial assistance to other countries.

Belarus has managed within a short time (for less than 2 months) to consider and approve the draft Financial agreement, proposed by the EC. On 22 of January 2008 the given document entered into force.

The Belarusian side repeatedly asks the EC to accelerate the preparation of the draft of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and awaits its early submission for the consideration to the Belarusian authorities. From our side we will make no hindrance to consider and approve this document within the shortest period of time.

The Belarusian side has always shown a flexibility and a constructive approach, while attempting to find the solutions, aimed at a successful realization of arrangements of the EU and Belarus on destruction of PFM mines. However, given that the process within the new EC project remains sophisticated there is no warranty that the project would be implemented successfully in reasonable time. In this connection we are not in a position to indicate any timelines for the project being started and finalized.

In the spirit of transparency the Belarusian side has informed in due time the State Parties of the Convention on the status of realization of the EC-Belarus project.

On 18 February 2008 the Non-paper was distributed, informing on Belarus' failure to accomplish by the deadline its Article 4 stockpile destruction obligations.

On 11 April 2008 with the initiative of Co-chairs of Standing committee on destruction of APM stockpiles the consultations were held in Geneva where the issue of PFM destruction in Belarus was highlighted.

We appreciate this initiative of Lithuania and Serbia. The Belarusian side is satisfied with the results of the consultations. We believe that fair discussion which took place during the mentioned meeting contributed significantly to resolving all arising problems.

Belarus is always ready to do its utmost for successful realization of the joint project, thus allowing us to carry out our obligation under the Ottawa convention.

In addition I would like to inform you that on 27 March 2008 Belarus deposited its Instrument of Accession to the Article 1 Amendment to the CCW. Furthermore the Belarusian parliament has ratified the Law on accession of Belarus to the 5th Protocol to the CCW. On 30 April 2008 this Law was approved by the Head of State and entered into force. The instrument of Accession of Belarus to the Protocol V to the CCW will be deposited to the UN Secretary General in the nearest time.