

**THE DIRECTORATE FOR PROTECTION AND RESCUE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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**SEVENTH MEETING OF THE STATE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PEROSONAL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

ITEM 11 (a): Clearing Mined Areas

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Mrs. Blaga Cvetkovska
Head of the Training Department

GENEVA, September 19, 2006

Madam President,
Co-chairs,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to begin this presentation by reiterating that, as of the 15th of September 2006, the Republic of Macedonia has fulfilled its Article 5 obligation on the territory under its control and jurisdiction.

For the early fulfilment of the obligations under article 5 of the Convention, the Republic of Macedonia undertook several intensive activities in two phases.

The First Phase of de-mining activities started in the second half of October 2001 and lasted until May 2004. The North and the part of Northwest regions of the country were searched and cleaned by teams of STOP MINES, Mine Tech, CARE Mine Teach, Handicap International and the Macedonian de-mining squads. In this phase, the total area of around 2,5 millions sqm affected of AP Mines has been cleaned. The list of specific locations may be found in the documents distributed today in the Conference Room.

Actions undertaken have been carried out with financial assistance from country donors, international institutions and partly by the government of the Republic of Macedonia.

The signing of the Ohrid agreement was additional impetus to begin with intensive activities by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for the implementation of provisions of the Convention. More specifically, as a result of the conflict in 2001, we had been left with several suspected minefield regions in the North-Western parts of the country. The last phase of implementation of the National De-mining Action Plan practically included those areas.

The last phase is consisted of search and cleaning the regions around the villages Vejce, Granicani i Tanusevci, which was realized in the period between the 17th of July and the 15th of September 2006. The First stage, between 17th and 24th of July 2006, emphasising on the preparation and training of the Macedonian de-mining team. The second one was practical execution of the Operational Plan for Technical Search and De-mining of the above-mentioned areas, in accordance with the guidelines, standards and operational procedures for humanitarian de-mining, and supervised by a representative of ITF-Slovenia.

The financial support, 41.000 USD, for these activities was provided by the Government of the United States of America and with involvement of the ITF - Slovenia.

As you may see from distributed documents, in cleaning the areas around the vilage of Vejce, which covered an area of 41.600 m2 the BAC method (battle area clearance) was used. While, in the area around Gracani and Tanusevci, which covered 2826 m2 and 2800 m2 we used similar method.

Together with all relevant parties that have been involved in different stages, we have developed specific model that endorses detail preparations, planning, and efficient implementation of the Operational plans.

That is a model that relies on the practical realization of the experiences of the foreign de-mining teams, close cooperation in the preparation process, and exchange of experiences in phase of the realization of the operations undertaken in the Republic of Macedonia.

Since the start of our activities in the Republic of Macedonia, we have searched and cleaned nearly 7 million sqm. We have revealed and we have destroyed 558 anti-personal mines.

As the result of the commitments of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the efficient and effective cooperation with country donors and international institutions like GICHD, ITF-Slovenia, ISU, ICBL, the Republic of Macedonia we have achieved present-day results.

I would like to stress that the achievements resulting from this implementation are numerous. In our view, the most important are: the fulfilment of the obligations anticipated in the provisions of the Ottawa Convention; Confidence building amongst the countries in the region in the field of disarmament, Contribution towards the regional initiative **SEE zone free of anti-personal mines by 2009**, Improvement of the safety in the border zones, Strengthening the stability in the region, Normalization of the life in the area and a contribution towards the improvement of the preconditions for the further local economic development.

Our intentions are to continue with same pace in the future. Bearing in mind that the Republic of Macedonia's territory is scattered with large number of UXOs, which represent security threat for our population, we are committed to undertake action to search and destroy the explosive remnants of war.

In 2005, expert group searched the South part of country, alongside the border. They concluded that the area of around 8 million m², has a large presence of UXO's. Cleaning of territory from these UXO's is also one of the future planned activities.

We are committed to implement underwater mine-cleaning of the Ohrid Lake; One very complicated task - having in mind that both the city of Ohrid and the Lake are protected by UNESCO. This action is planned to take place in April-August next year. Further financial support from the donor countries will be necessity for this stage, as well.

In conclusion, once again I would like to extend our gratitude to all Governments for their valuable financial support that helped us to implement our obligations in accordance with the Convention.

Thank you Madam President.