



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Secretariat**

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Conference Services

Please find attached the statement by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Costas Papacostas, delivered to the 36th Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) and the Permanent Council (PC) on 29 October 2008.



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Thank you Mr Chairperson,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me, to be present here today and address this important joint Permanent Council (PC) and Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) meeting, within an organization that primarily promotes peace and cooperation between countries.

The relations between the Republic of Cyprus and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe date from 1975 in Helsinki, when Cyprus initially joined the Organization. From then until today, Cyprus has participated energetically in all the bodies of the Organization, implementing all of its legal obligations with a great determination.

Recently, the Republic has successfully hosted an O.S.C.E conference in Larnaca, on the 18th and 19th of September 2008, regarding the Regional Cooperation on Combating Human Trafficking and Money Laundering in the Mediterranean Ring Region.

Cyprus, despite its small size, has always maintained a vital position at the crossroads of three continents, thus playing a crucial role within international developments. Its geostrategic position in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, provide the island with a significant advantage that could be used constructively to promote peace, security and stability in the region.

A fair and viable solution to the Cyprus Problem, would provide the opportunity for Cyprus to play a leading role to this end.

The efforts and the primary targets of the Republic of Cyprus regarding peace and Stabilization are currently focused in two major areas:

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The first effort involves the substantive negotiations that reignited in Nicosia on the 3rd of September this year, aiming to end the violent division of the island, which has led to its current form for over 34 - years.

The leaders of the two communities Mr. Demetris Hristofias and Mr. Talat, have begun intense discussions under the shield of the United Nations, in an effort to resolve the Cyprus problem, based on the existing United Nations Resolutions, on human rights, European principles, but also on a righteous compromise, which could stand the test of time and lead to prosperity and progress for all Cypriots in the context of the European Union. The Republic of Cyprus, within the context of good faith and collaborative spirit for the outcome of these negotiations, has recently canceled the large scale military exercise of the National Guard , Nikiforos.

However, since the purpose of my address today is not a political one, allow me to not elaborate further on this.

The second effort of the Republic of Cyprus regards the full compliance with and implementation of all international treaties, agreements and arrangements that promote peace, security and stability.

To begin with, in the military sector all the required standards and procedures are implemented for the stockpiling and destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Conventional Ammunitions of all types.

In 2002 a primary step was made towards this goal, when approximately 4,500 Small Arms and Light Weapons were destroyed. These arms included both pistols and rifles that were imported in early 1972 and were stockpiled in appropriate warehouses, which complied with all the safety specifications, until their destruction took place. This endeavor was undertaken in close cooperation with the United Nations Peacekeeping force in Cyprus, who also provided invaluable technical assistance and aid for this cause.

Secondly, the Republic of Cyprus, due to the sincere willingness to reduce tension and promote mutual confidence on the island, but also recognizing the pain and suffering that these weapons inflict on innocent people, has:

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- Signed the Ottawa Convention on the 3rd of December in 1997, regarding the prohibition of Anti – Personnel Mines, which also came into effect on the 1st of July in 2003.
- Put forward in January 2002, an official proposal to the United Nations for the clearing of all minefields within the Buffer Zone, which was signed in 2004.

Within the context of the Ottawa Convention, a National Plan was drawn up by the Republic, through the collaboration of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, containing in detail all the necessary actions for the timely fulfilment of the Government's obligations.

According to the time schedule of this Plan:

- All the Stockpiles of Anti Personnel mines (48475) were destroyed before the 1st of July 2007.
- 3,224 Anti Personnel mines laid in 10 minefields under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus, are being destroyed according to the time schedule, and their destruction must be completed by the 1st of July 2013. Until today we have already destroyed 1094 mines from 8 minefields, which represent 34% of the total amount of mines that were laid in minefields.
- In addition, all the minefields under the effective control of the National guard within the Buffer Zone, have been completely removed since July 2005, with a total of 2226 mines destroyed.

Thirdly, in 2007 – 2008, 5000 rifles, 130 automatic rifles and 2000 machine guns were dismantled according to international standards, and will either will be totally destroyed or disposed for use in military museums.

Fourthly, from April 2008 a destruction program for corroded artillery projectiles is in progress, with a monthly destruction rate of 4000 projectiles. We believe that by the end of 2009 this program will have reached its completion.

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The next point to note is that the Republic of Cyprus has applied to become a full member to the Open Skies Treaty in June 2002 and to the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2003, but accession is still pending to both. Nevertheless, despite the numerous, yet unsuccessful attempts of Cyprus to enter the Wassenaar Arrangement, we have to underline the firm willingness and belief of the Republic, to implement on a voluntary basis all the provisions of the arrangement, until our justified request is achieved.

Finally, coming towards the primary purpose of my address today in front of you, I would like to inform you that the Republic of Cyprus has decided to proceed with the destruction of 324 man-portable air defence systems, 2SA - 7.

Recognizing the threats from the unauthorized proliferation and use of MANPADS, which in the possession of terrorists can be used in harmful activities, capable of incurring casualties of innocent human beings and disturbance of world peace and stability, the Republic is determined to assert its commitment to withdraw these missiles.

Thereupon, after carefully studying the Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) decision 5/08, concerning the updating of the principles of export control of MANPADS, and also taking into consideration the important provisions of the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, the Republic of Cyprus is in the pleasant position today to announce its intention to destroy these dangerous weapons.

For this cause, I would like to formally request the aid of the OSCE, taking into account Section IV of the OSCE document on SALW, in providing expert technical assistance to Cypriot specialists before they undertake this task.

But first, allow me to provide you with some details on the missiles that are intended to be destroyed. Our Stockpiles are completely secured in small quantities, within different locations and in appropriate facilities. Of course, they are strictly safeguarded with all the necessary safety and security measures. More importantly, all of these missiles have expired.

Thus, our vital concern at the moment is to destroy these stockpiles according to all international standards and data, taking into account both the issues of safety and environmental protection.

The Republic of Cyprus is ready to welcome any preparatory visit to Cyprus, by the Forum for Security Coordination Support Section, or by any other expert of the OSCE, so that we can jointly evaluate the technical assistance that is needed for the destruction of these MANPADS.

Concluding, Mr Chairperson, Your Excellencies, I would like to thank the OSCE for its hospitality, and for providing this unique opportunity to the Republic of Cyprus, to address this joint meeting, of an Organization with such a highly respected mission.

Thank you once again.