

Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria

CCM 11MSP

**Agenda Item 10b. Review of the status and operation of the Convention and other matters important for achieving the aims of the Convention**

***(b) Storage and Stockpile Destruction***

Mr. President,

Since this is the first time the Republic of Bulgaria is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you for the assumption of your duties and assure you of my country's full support for your endeavors and commitment towards the goals of our Convention.

Bulgaria fully aligns with the statement made by the European Union, and would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

First of all, we would like to join those welcoming Nigeria and South Sudan as new States Parties to this Convention.

We would also like to underline that, to our deepest regret, this year's MSP again takes place in a situation when the use of cluster munitions continues to harm civilian population and civil infrastructure during ongoing armed conflicts and wars, and will continue long after hostilities cease.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Bulgaria is a firm believer and supporter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which is in force for us since October 2011. As we all know, under CCM's provisions, each State Party is obliged to ensure the destruction of all cluster munitions (CMs) as soon as possible.

We invested a lot of efforts at national level in order to proceed with the fulfillment of our CCM obligation. As a reminder, last year, during the

10th Meeting of States Parties, States Parties to the Convention responded positively to the Bulgarian extension request under Article 3 of the Convention by taking a decision to grant Bulgaria additional time for the destruction of its cluster munitions by 31 December 2023.

Mr. President,

The destruction of cluster munitions is a complex process with its technological and logistical specifics. Organization, collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders involved is not a process marked by lesser complexity or higher predictability levels. There were five stakeholders engaged in the destruction process of the Bulgarian cluster munitions. This pentagonal structure was definitely not an easy one to supervise and coordinate.

Thanks to committed efforts by the Bulgarian institutions in charge, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and in close and constructive cooperation with the NATO Supply and Procurement Agency (NSPA), as of 28 June 2023, the Italian company “Esplosenti Sabino” had officially confirmed the completion of the destruction of Munitions and Sub munitions of Lot 1, Lot 2 and Lot 3. **With this, we are happy to report that** the process of the destruction of all cluster munition stockpiles in possession of the Bulgarian Armed Forces was officially completed.

In conclusion, I mentioned this complexity in order to underline the fact that this recent Bulgarian experience also provided important lessons learned, which might be of use to others. Members of the Bulgarian delegation both in capital and in Geneva stand ready to share experience, views and observations with all interested States Parties with pending Article 3 obligations.

I would now like to give the floor to my colleague from the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence Mr. Stoyan Karastoyanov, who will share further details regarding the process and the latest state of affairs.

Thank you, Mr. President.