

Oslo, September 2012



Cooperation and Assistance Session

Cluster Munitions Convention/3-rd Meeting of States Parties

Mr. President

Dear Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to share with you few thoughts relevant to this session and resulting from the Albanian experience in dealing with the landmines and cluster munitions contamination problem.

The mine Action Programme in Albania culminated in 2009 with the achievement of its main goal of clearing the landmine and cluster munitions contaminated areas within the respective conventions' deadlines. Since its establishment in 2000 the Programme has gone through various phases, challenges and success stories, until the achievement of its ultimate goal: declaring a mine and cluster munitions Free Albania.

Today we can say, that based on our experience, the road is not easy, but the success of a mine action programme depends first on the commitment and strong will of the national government to take ownership and deal with the problem and second but not less important, the success largely depends on the cooperation of all affected and interested parties and the steady support of the international community, being this technical, financial or institutional.

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As it is the case for other mine action programmes, when the programme in Albania was established more than ten years ago, the Government had very scarce resources to deal with many competing national priorities.

It was required therefore a clear understanding and awareness about the size of the problem in order to obtain a serious engagement and commitment from the Government, and to then develop a clear and realistic plan of action. A plan, which comprised all elements of mine action and was based on humanitarian grounds.

From the outset, we tried to ensure the involvement of our stakeholders: from the affected communities and local authorities of the affected areas to the national and international implementing partners and programme donors in all the mine action processes, including the formulation of the national mine action plan, establishment of national mine action standards, setting of the clearance priorities. This cooperation helped to guarantee the transparency of the programme and build the reciprocal trust among the parties involved, which were both very important in overcoming various challenges during the implementation.

The continuous assistance from the international community in particular with funding and technical expertise was also a key to success especially in building the local mine action capacities, where the role of UN is crucial in supporting, evaluating and protecting this capacities. Let me mention here the benefit of the regional cooperation. Structures like the SEEMAC and ITF in our region are very valuable in terms of sharing information and expertise but also providing the required funding support. This has ensured the continuity of the programme and as a result we have now embarked into the new challenge of clearing all unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war hotspots throughout Albania. We are convinced and determined to succeed even

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though we are facing currently with a significant decrease of financial resources.

Assistance and cooperation is not only about funding but it is mostly about the efficient and effective use of the available resources and our experience has shown that this can be achieved if there is commitment, ownership and transparency from all parties.

Thank you,

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