

Workshop: Enhancing implementation of article 3 & 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) in South East Europe.

(Session 3) Albanian experience in developing “Concept of coalition countries”

As was presented Albania has never used, produced, stockpiled or transferred cluster munitions. Alongside of the northern border of Albania at Kukës region directly bordering with Kosovë, a large number cluster munitions of Serbia were located in considerable distance inside of Albania territory (10–15km) after a war in Kosovë 1999.

The Kukës region was that time one of the poorest area in north Albania with high rate of unemployment and extremely limited economic opportunities. Serbs use cluster munitions in the routes which the locals used to exchange their goods with Kosovars in adding a threat not simply because of the physical harm they inflict, but also because of the extra socio-economic burdens to their place on families and communities by denying access to land (for example for grazing, crops, or resources), access to water springs and wells, destroying their economy by killing or injuring of their livestock.

Albanian experience compare to article 3 of the CCM which we are discussing today, in my point of view has started directly right after the war of Kosovë, which have a great humanitarian and socio-economic impact.

Albanian Government starts the work of clearance of cluster munitions, in tribute to the local people in the area which provide a great support to the war in Kosovë and as contamination posed an great impact in the area of 15,25 million m², which covered 39 villages.

The clearance process was first initiated by a newly formed EOD unit of the Albanian Armed Forces during 1999 and 2000 with support and training provided by the NATO Explosive Ordnance Disposal Ammunition and Storage Training Team (EODASTT).

By the end of 2000 these estimated total surface contaminated were around 2 km² with Cluster Munitions of type Kb-1, BL-755, BLU-97, Mk-118, which affected directly more than eight thousand people in thirteen villages.

During the year 2000-2001 Albania government through new center Albanian Mine Action Center developed a strategy in ensuring the necessary regulation for the donors and providing total support the cleaning in order to return of the area clear and safe to local population.

The first donors which were joined to the cleaning process in ensuring their funds through organizing a charity event as NIKD.

The great support to the Albanian cleaning strategy has been given by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), US DoS, UNICEF, DiFD, Sweden and France mainly ensuring the funds which were executed by Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, Danish Church Aid and Norwegian People Aid, and by the end of cleaning process were identified/destroyed 4,969 Clusters Munitions.

In Albania people still interact with these munitions out of economic necessity, even if they are aware of the dangers involved. For example, contaminated land often must be used for farming, and submunitions are deliberately handled to extract scrap metal and explosives for sale.

As of September 2005, the overall number of mine/unexploded ordnance (UXO) casualties was 52 injured and 9 deaths and a 35 livestock had been killed or injured. Seven cluster munitions casualties were under 20 years of age at the time of the accident which showed that the victims are a new generation which came after the war and didn't have the appropriate risk education, as the first risk education campaign was developed during year 2000.

National and international agencies working in Albania on mine clearance, risk education and survivor support fully and seamlessly integrate action aimed at cluster submunitions. The drop in incidents since 1999 was attributed by

those in Albania to two factors: risk education, which was provided to the all schools of the affected area and making signing visible of the dangers areas.

The first mine risk education activities began in November 1999 and it is important to note that 25 submunition casualties occurred before any formal mine risk education which were conducted by Care International with support from the United Nations Children's Fund. The Albanian Red Cross, with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Albanian Government has continuously paying attention to Victims of Mines and Weapons Association in running different programs for the socio-economic reintegration of survivors and the improvement of local social services for survivors. As all the area was under extreme poverty, lack of an alternative economy to near-subsistence farming, and the general poor level of education.

As the all efforts of Albanian government, International donors and local authorities in case of Albania in achieving of the success in making that happens in return to all piece of land to the agricultural, happens only through that which we are discussing today as a close cooperation of Albanian Government with international community, in communication directly to the contributor states and in making a coalition of countries in working together, with as US DoS, UNDP, ITF, NPA, DCA.

And so by the time when Albanian ratified and deposited CCM in 16 June 2009 all the process of cleaning was totally fulfilled by the end of October 2009.

Again the key in achieving of the success in cleaning and destroying of cluster munition was consider the great will, close and open cooperation of Albanian Government with donors and in using of all means available to make that happens.

Thank you,