

**Distinguished Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me first to express my pleasure of taking the floor on behalf of the Albanian Government in the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of states parties of the convention on Cluster Munitions.

To this purpose, I would like to express also our satisfaction in witnessing that the Convention has strengthened further its significance and that more State Parties have joined our great family.

Albania has suffered the consequences of the cluster munitions which caused the loss of many lives and injuries and blocked access to good productive land in already the poorest areas in northern Albania. As you know, Albania completed clearance of all its contaminated areas in 2009 and people in northeast Albania can now live and work in a safe environment.

It is never enough to emphasize that this great achievement came first as a result of the commitment and strong will of our Government to take ownership and deal with the problem and second, but not less important, our success owes a great deal to an all-inclusive cooperation of the affected and interested parties but also to the steady support of the international community, being this technical, financial or institutional.

It is for this reason, that we commend and encourage other states to continue their tireless endeavours in order to end the harm caused by cluster munitions while strongly condemn the use of cluster munitions in any conflicts by causing unacceptable harm to innocent civilians.

Our efforts in implementing the obligations under the Convention are not over though with the clearance of the contaminated areas. We are still working hard on alleviating the effects that these deadly weapons had on the innocent people who have to live still every day with the consequences of the cluster munitions.

Various projects have been undertaken to support directly the injured people and at the same time build sustainable capacities especially of the health structures at local and national level to better assist them. In addition, initiatives aiming to promote the socio-economic re-integration of mine and cluster munitions' casualties in the affected communities have been implemented in Albania.

Lastly, as you might already know, the Government is making use of the valuable capacities created during the implementation of the Mine Action Programme into the other country priority of clearing all the UXO/ERW hotspots contaminated areas with unexploded ordnances and explosive remnants of war throughout Albania.

It is our hope and belief that with the same determination, support and assistance we will continue until we finally declare Albania free from the ammunition threat.