



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Intersessional Meetings, 27-30 June 2011

Statement on clearance of Cluster Munitions in Albania

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Albanian delegation let me express my thanks to Australia as the friend of the President for compressive presentation and the excellent job done on Art.4 of Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The Albanian Government joined the Oslo process from the very beginning by signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008, and deposited the Instrument of Ratification, in June 2009, by being so among the first 10 countries to ratify the Convention. We have already proved to be seriously committed to observe all the obligations deriving from the Convention. In addition, Albania fully supports the Vientiane Action Plan and will remain committed to meet its obligations.

Albania suffered the contamination with cluster munitions as a consequence of the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. An area of about 2,1 million square meters was identified initially contaminated only with cluster munitions in the north-eastern region of Albania.

The types of cluster munitions found in those areas included: BL-755, and KB-1 submunitions.

This contamination not only had a humanitarian impact, but the development of these already poor areas was hampered due to the presence of cluster munitions.

Clearance of cluster munitions was firstly initiated by an EOD unit of the Albanian Armed Forces during 1999 and 2000 and supported by NATO, which contributed to reducing drastically the number of civilian casualties. This was a "visual surface clearance" and thus not according to humanitarian standards, therefore all those areas were re-cleared.

Since 2002, various humanitarian international organizations including Swiss Foundation for Demining (SFD) and DanChurchAid (DCA) have carried out clearance operations in accordance with the International Humanitarian Standards for Mine Action.

These operations were conducted within the framework of a Mine Action Programme and under monitoring and coordination of the Albanian Mine Action Executive. The financial support required for these operations were ensured by various international donors such as: the USA through the International Trust Fund of Slovenia, the European Commission, UNDP, Germany, United Kingdom (DfID), Switzerland, Czech Republic, Denmark and Canada.

At the same time, parallel with the clearance process, Risk Education activities took place in all contaminated areas with cluster munitions. Activities organized with affected communities were provided to boys, girls, man and women. Due to the progress in clearance and Risk Education activities, provided to all inhabitants, the number of injured people was reduced to ZERO since 2005.

As a result of clearance operations, in November 2009 the Government of Albania could finally declare the country free of both landmines and cluster munitions. Some 4,869 cluster munitions were identified and destroyed in the contaminated areas by rendering these areas safe for the people. In addition, Albania has complied so with Article 4 of the Cluster Munitions Convention.

Lastly, I would like to use this occasion to formally thank and express our gratitude to the donors and partners who made this remarkable achievement possible.

Thank you for your attention.