

## **ALBANIA AND MINE VICTIMS ASSISTANCE**

Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the people of Albania, I thank you for this opportunity to state the case of the mine victims in our country.

The mines and unexploded ordnance problem in Albania emanated from the emergency of 1997 in Albania, which resulted in the looting and damage of military storage sites, and the Kosovo crisis, which saw a large area of North-east Albania contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Since 1999 there have been at least 27 people reported killed and 359 injured in mines and UXO accidents.

The Government of Albania, and its implementing partners in victim assistance, regard the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of these victims a high priority. Despite acute funding shortages we have, with our partners and benefactors including the US State Department, the ICRC, the International Trust Fund of Slovenia, the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation and the Tirana Orthopaedic Centre, treated and fitted with prostheses 209 victims so far. The Tirana Orthopaedic Centre was rehabilitated and some technicians trained, while limited assistance to reintegrate victims and distribution of food and non-food items took place as well.

The challenges for this year and the future are now the treatment of the remaining victims, improving Albanian capacities to deal with mine and UXO victims, as well as the reintegration of the victims into society.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to those who assisted our victim assistance programme thus far and appeal to State Parties to assist us in reaching our future objectives in this regard.

I now hand over to Mr. Jab Swart, Chief Technical Advisor to the Albanian Mine Action Executive, to present more detail on the programme.