

**Statement**

**BY**

**Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania**

**H.E. Mr. Selim Belortaja**

**At**

**The Opening Ceremony**

**OF**

**The 10th Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction- the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or Ottawa Convention.**

**Geneva 29 November 2010**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Albania, it is a great pleasure for me to address this esteemed audience and to wish you all full success in the proceedings of this 10th Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Let me first extend my deep gratitude to the host country - Switzerland, which as before has done a commendable job in organizing this meeting.

I would also like to show my deepest appreciation for the Norwegian Presidency for preparing this meeting, to praise the professionalism and responsibility it has demonstrated while running all Convention – related events, from the Cartagena Summit onwards and, particularly, its wisdom, leadership and cooperation with all stakeholders in this process.

In this context, let me express the confidence of my country's Government that the Albanian Presidency of the 10th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention would be a follow up of the previous Presidency. Building on the achievements of the Norwegian Presidency, the support by States Parties and civil society stakeholders, Albania will do its utmost, so that the efforts by international community are guided to the further promotion of the objectives of the Convention.

We expect that during the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting, the State Parties will assess the progress made in ending the sufferings caused by anti-personnel mines and the remaining challenges, in view of achieving the goal for a world free from anti-personnel mines.

Excellencies,

It is a well-known fact that under the Convention, the Member States should never and under no circumstance, use, produce, stockpile or transfer anti-personnel mines. It also requires that existing stocks be destroyed, that all areas containing anti-personnel mines be cleared and assistance be provided to mine victims and survivors.

The accomplishments during these 11 years of implementing the Convention are indeed encouraging; 156 states have already ratified the Convention; all States Parties taken together have destroyed nearly 44 million of stockpiled mines; sixteen, out of 54 States Parties with mined areas have reported the completion of the clearance of all mined areas under their control or jurisdiction; we are working all together to promote the Convention and make it universal; the countries have also been working to reduce the sufferings caused by landmines, including risk education activities and victims assistance; there has also been generous funding for mine clearance and related activities; however, we would like to eye-witness a continued support in terms of cooperation and assistance.

These results are visible in two main areas: disarmament and humanitarian assistance. We are convinced that the Convention provides a major contribution in the elimination of a category of weapons, which have caused great sufferings in many world regions. The endeavors for the full implementation of the Convention have also led to substantial improvements in terms of the humanitarian assistance for affected people worldwide.

In Cartagena, we adopted a high level political declaration, reaffirming our commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the Convention and to the Cartagena Action Plan, also pledging to undertake specific actions for the period 2010-2014. Now time has come for action; it is the right time, not only to assess the progress made following the Cartagena Summit but also to be fully engaged in the implementation of the Convention.

We share the vision that joint efforts aimed at making the Convention universal remain one of our main challenges in meeting the final goal for a world free of mines. Less than a quarter of UN Member States are not Parties to the Convention yet. We are aware that some of these countries are actively supporting the mine clearance, the destruction of stocks, the risk education of affected people, the victims assistance and other humanitarian activities, which are closely related to the Convention goals.

We believe that the implementation of the Convention has had a significant impact worldwide. Therefore, we do believe that this meeting will reinforce our appeal to these countries, particularly to those that have been lending an active support to the activities for the implementation of the Convention, so that they would revise their position, in view of signing and ratifying it as soon as possible.

Universal adherence to the Convention is vital in ensuring that mines being stockpiled or produced are never used and the mine ban standards become truly universal.

Likewise, we strongly believe that all States Parties must contribute to meet the current challenge of complying with the deadline for the stockpile destruction, including international cooperation and assistance.

Progress is also made by mine-affected States Parties in fulfilling their mine-clearance obligations: thousands of square kilometers have been cleared, reducing in this way the threat to civil population and freeing up land for productive use. Action#16 of the Cartagena Plan of Action urges the States Parties to take full ownership of their Article 5 obligations through the ongoing elaboration, implementation and revision of their national mine action strategies. We commend the work done by Nicaragua, which informed the States Parties, on 22 of June this year, that it had fully implemented Article 5 while overcoming enormous obstacles.

The priority of the Albanian Presidency of the 10th MSP will be the victims assistance, continuing in this way the work of the Norwegian Presidency. We have to continue the work on providing assistance for care, rehabilitation and the socio-

economic reintegration of mine victims. Assistance to mine victims and those wounded, injured or disabled by means other than mines should become an integral part of the national public health and social services system. However, much more needs to be done in this area; meanwhile, the State Parties have undertaken major steps to address the needs and safeguard the rights of survivors, since the individuals, whose lives are affected by mines are still facing serious challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the clearance of mined areas and the destruction of the stockpile, Albania is working on preparing the necessary legislative and administrative framework, with a view to extend the mission of Albania's Mine Action Program into other relevant areas, such as the stockpiled ammunition disposal, since as you may all know, Albania has a surplus stockpile. This action is taken under Paragraph 97 of the Cartagena Review Document, which recommends to States Parties that, after the completion of mine clearance, they should use their national capacities for the implementation of Article 5 of the Convention in other required fields and by addressing weapons' contamination in broader terms.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we are at the outset of our deliberations of the 10th MSP, let me assure you that we are certainly going to achieve even more positive results in our shared endeavors. The Cartagena Declaration and the Cartagena Action Plan are both ambitious documents, setting high standards for the work lying ahead. A mine-free world can be only an end- result of mine-free countries. Accordingly, we appeal to all States Parties to render their contribution to this end.

The Republic of Albania does highly appreciate the performance of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining, the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, the United Nations Mines Action Team, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as all donor countries and organizations alike, which are so much committed to international cooperation and coordination. This is a global problem which requires global solution. Certainly, by working together and remaining fully committed, we shall be able to overcome the challenges lying ahead of us.

Thank you for your attention.