



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF ALBANIAN DELEGATION
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ALBANIA
AMBASADOR SEJDI QERIMAJ**

**Seventh Meeting of State Parties to the Ottawa Convention Meeting
Geneva, September 2006**

Madame President,
~~Mr. Chairman of the Conference,~~

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

Allow me to express my pleasure in saying a few words on behalf of the Albanian Government on the progress that Albania has made in meeting the obligations deriving from the Ottawa Convention.

Albania inherited the mine contamination problem from the Kosovo crisis in 1999 where 15.2 million m² of border line between Kosovo and Albania were contaminated with mines and UXO-s by directly impacting more than 25,000 people in 39 villages. From 1999 to date, 34 people have been killed and 238 injured by this threat.

The Albanian Mine Action Committee and the Albanian Mine Action Executive have been in place since 1999 with the technical assistance of UNDP and the support of the international community, as USA, Germany, the European Commission, Switzerland, Denmark, France, Turkey, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic, United Kingdom (DfID), Canada and ITF, to the mine action activities in the country.

The strategic goal of the Albanian Mine Action Programme under the Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention is the clearance of all known mined areas in Albania by August 2010.. Taking into consideration the progress made so far we consider this objective fully achievable within the Treaty Deadline, assuming that the needed funding is provided.

As to date, more than 12.5 million m² of land, which means more than 80% of the total area, has been released through clearance and surveys by various international demining organizations working in Albania and

handed over to the communities for productive use. At the end of this year our objective is to release total surface of 1.4 million square meters to the communities thus remaining with a residual surface of 1,75 million square meters to be released in 2007 / 2009.

The Albanian Government is committed to support to the Mine Action Programme by taking several important steps.

The most important one is the ratification of the National Humanitarian Demining Law in implementing Article 5 and I would like to use this occasion to thank the GICHD and ICRC for the technical assistance provided in drafting this law.

In addition to this, the Ministry of Defense through the Albanian General Staff continues to provide free of charge the explosive materials and medical evacuation service by helicopter considered critical for safe clearance operations and in accordance with the International Standards.

In the area of victim assistance, the Albanian Government with support from ICRC-FSD has prepared a project proposal to have a new National Prosthetic/Orthotic Center, which aims to provide the mine survivors with improved conditions for physical rehabilitation and prostheses within Albania.

The main challenge of our Government for the year ahead is the consolidation of the local and national capacities and assuming full ownership of the Mine Action Programme in Albania. Therefore, I would kindly request the support and certainly the expert assistance of the donor community in order to facilitate this important process, to the successful completion of the programme.

Last but not least, the Albanian Government with the technical assistance of UNDP has formulated the National Mine Action Plan for Completion 2007-2010, which aims the elimination of the mine and UXO threat. This plan is included under the UNDP Completion Initiative and outlines in detail the implementation mechanisms and the capacities needed to fulfill the Article 5 obligation.

I'd like to emphasize again, that with our commitment and the support of the International Community Albania has all the potential to be listed among the states that will achieve the fulfillment of the treaty obligations within the set deadlines.

Thank you for your attention.