

**SEVENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

Geneva, 18-22 September 2006

**Statement by Albania
on the status of implementation of victim assistance in the context of
the Convention and the *Nairobi Action Plan***

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*Madame President,
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Allow me firstly to express my pleasure to address this meeting on behalf of the Government of Albania and to reconfirm the Government's strong will and commitment to continue the progress in Victim Assistance in Albania.

Since the Kosovo conflict started in 1999, **238** people have been injured and **34** deceased as a result of the mines laid along the Albanian/Kosovo border. In addition to those injured from the mines laid during the Kosovo conflict, there are an estimated **480** mine/UXO survivors, throughout Albania who were injured as a result of the ammunition depots looted throughout the country during the 1997 uprising.

Albania has adopted a broad strategy that aims to build a sustainable Albanian capability for victim assistance. As time is limited I will be brief but a more detailed presentation of our strategy and activities is available.

Now, I will just provide an update on the progress and work done in victim assistance in Albania since the last report at the intersessional meetings in May 2006 towards achieving the goals set forth in the Nairobi Action Plan;

- With the support of the French Government in May 2006, the sole 2 physiotherapists from Northeast Albania received training in Slovenia for a period of 3 weeks. Also 6 nurses from the mine affected villages (2 from each district) received training in Slovenia in first-aid and rehabilitation as a follow up to the previous training already done for the 30 nurses of the Community Based Rehabilitation network.
- This month, UNDP with funds from the Government of France and the EC is finalizing the contract to procure basic medical equipments/supplies for the 30 nurses of the CBR network and for the physiotherapy units in Northeast Albania. This medical equipment will improve emergency and ongoing medical care for mine survivors as well as other inhabitants of the mine affected areas.
- Regarding the physical rehabilitation, at the end of May 2006, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in cooperation with Handicap International and the medical faculty in Tirana has launched the project for building a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation capacity in Albania. The time frame for this project is 2006-2008, and it is being funded by USDoS through ITF, the Albanian Government and HI. The project will provide training to prostheses/ orthotic technicians, according to

International Standards and upgrade them to level II category, as well as establish a programme for training physiotherapists at the Faculty of Nursing in Tirana and establish a Rehabilitation Centre in Kukes Hospital.

- With funds made available from the EC through UNDP, raw materials and supplies will be provided in September 2006, to the National Prosthetic/orthotic Center in Tirana and the Prostheses Support Center in Kukes.
- 2 sight impaired mine survivors received specialized medical treatment with funds from the Night of a Thousand Dinners 2005.
- Another 30 mine /UXO survivors have benefited from the financial and technical assistance in establishing home based economies in animal husbandry through a revolving loan fund implemented by the local NGO "Victims of Mine & Arms- Kukes Association" - VMA (funded by USDoS through ITF)
- UNDP with EC funds has commenced in implementing a project with VMA to provide 30 mine survivors with vocational trainings in jobs such as small electronic repairs, hairdressing, computers, etc. This training started in July 2006 for 15 beneficiaries and is already exceeding our project expectations as the beneficiaries are not only benefiting from the training but the change in their attitude regarding what they are capable of achieving is proving to be significant. Additionally, the beneficiaries are staying together in Kukes town during the trainings, which is also enriching their experience in education and support to each other.
- The EC is funding UNDP 2.5 million euros for small scale infrastructure development of the Kukes region such as drinking water supply systems, health centres and irrigation canals. The needs of the mine affected villages are prioritized in this project.
- The humanitarian event " Night of Thousand dinners" was hosted by the US Embassy in July 2006 and raised over \$ 15 000 from the individual donors and private sector in Albania, which will be used for victim assistance in Albania.
- A Conference of Ministers was held in June 2006 during which all Ministries reported on the progress made towards achieving the goals set forth in the National Strategy on Persons with Disabilities (approved in 2005), which mine survivors are a part of.
- During a press conference organized in August 2006 to launch the "study and assessment of legislation on disabilities in Albania, The MoLSA and Albanian Disability Rights Foundation stressed that the National Strategy on Disabilities (which sets goals and targets>2015) will be updated on a yearly basis and resources will be allotted to ensure the achievement of the priorities.
- A secretariat has been developed within the MoLSA to support the needs of people with disabilities with the various Ministries and the Government has ensured that the head of the secretariat is a person with disability himself.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all implementing partners of our programme and the donors and reaffirm once again the commitment of the Albanian Government to ensuring the well-being of the Albanian citizens injured by mines and UXO and our work forward in order to achieve the goals set forth.

Thank you very much for your attention.