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Albania: Intervention on Victim Assistance
(Mozambique, Belgium, Chile, Italy)

Geneva, 22 May 2019

-Check against delivery-

Thank you Chair,

We would like to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance for their presentation and preliminary observations regarding the progress, achievements and challenges of States Parties on victim assistance commitments.

Albania aligns itself with the EU Statement on Victim Assistance (to be) delivered earlier (latter) on this topic. Let me offer a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

As it has already been recognized, Albania's National Mine Action Programme has been a major success by achieving its main goal of declaring Albania free of landmines and cluster munitions within the deadlines set by the respective conventions. We owe a great share of this success to the significant contribution given by the international community involved in the mine action programme in Albania.

It is due to the strong commitment and support of all parties involved in this programme that Albania has now embarked into the last challenge, that of clearing the ammunition hotspots contaminated with unexploded ordnances (UXO) identified throughout Albania. The aim is to declare Albania free from the ammunition threats by 2020.

At the same time, Albania remains committed to offering support and fully addressing the needs of survivors of landmines or unexploded ordnances. Regarding victim assistance, the Government has continued its engagement in implementing the Maputo Action Plan, to further integrate victim assistance into the broader disability and development policies at the national level, and to tangibly contribute to the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society. In this context, we continue to closely cooperate with donors and other partners to support the rights of persons with disabilities, whether through improving the health care, rehabilitation capacities, education and the socio-economic empowerment of the victims and members of their families. These services are equally available to men, women, boys and girls, both at local and national level.

Another aspect relates to awareness rising activities focused on the rights of people with disabilities, including survivors of mines or unexploded ordnances, which are

organized with the active participation of civil society organizations active in the field of disability in the country.

The generous support of the donor community has been instrumental in assisting public institutions to ensure steadily improving healthcare capacities in Albania. Necessary medical equipment has already been provided to Kukës, a northern region previously affected by landmines and unexploded ordnances. A rehabilitation unit has been established, properly equipped to repair and produce prostheses. At the same time, the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Programme provides a sustainable national response to the needs of mine/UXO victims.

I also wish to mention the establishment of the “National Centre of Continuing Education”, which is a public institution that functions as a technical agency of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. This centre focuses its activities on planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the continuing education activities of health professionals, including those dealing with the specific needs of survivors of landmines or unexploded ordnances.

With regard to the physical barriers for people with disabilities, the national legislation stipulates that new buildings, roads and sidewalks must be constructed according to known accessibility standards. There is work in progress to make old buildings as well, accessible for persons with disabilities.

In terms of socio-economic development, the Government, with the support and technical assistance of partners, has opened vocational training schools designed to attract young people, including survivors of landmine and unexploded ordnances and their family members, who are encouraged to enrol in these schools. These vocational training centres are available almost in every region in Albania.

Our progress notwithstanding, we remain aware that much needs to be done to successfully address the needs and rights of survivors of landmines or unexploded ordnances.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Albania’s readiness to continue our close cooperation with the Committee on Victim Assistance.

Thank you.