

Opening Remarks

22 June 2011

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As most of you know Albania declared itself free of mines and unexploded ordnance at the end of November 2009, complying with Article 5 of the AP Mine Ban Convention well ahead of its deadline.

This marked the successful finalization phase of a decade-long of demining work characterized by strong commitment of the Albanian Mine Action Programme and its local and international implementing partners.

A contributing factor to the success of this programme is that a great emphasis throughout these years has been placed in building local capacities not only for demining but also in other relevant areas such as the coordination and monitoring of mine action activities, assisting the mine survivors and providing awareness to affected communities about the risk of mines and UXO.

The Government of Albania though is currently facing another challenge which is posed by the large stockpile of aging weapons and ammunition in possession of the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF), as a legacy of the communist era.

The Ministry of Defense has outlined a Plan of Action for the Elimination of this surplus ammunition with the aim to utilize all

available and capable national capacities to dispose those ammunitions by 2013.

In this regard, we would like to express our strong belief that the valuable experience gained during the implementation of the multi-dimensional programme of mine action, could and should be utilized for this other important and ambitious mission of the Albanian Government to destroy the dangerous surplus munitions by 2013.

We support the active involvement of the Albanian Mine Action Executive in this new endeavor.

As it is also stressed in paragraph 97 of the Cartagena Review: “The States Parties have come to see that the lessons derived from fulfilling Article 5 obligations are applicable in addressing related challenges associated with other explosive remnants of war. In many instances, the organizational structures, the capacities that have been built and the standards that have been established largely as a result of the need to implement Article 5 are also being applied to address weapons contamination more broadly. States Parties that have worked tirelessly to complete implementation of Article 5 as soon as possible can benefit from these gains.”

Therefore, taking into account that the hazards presented by the surplus explosive ordnance and scattered unexploded ammunition have many cross-cutting and wider implications for human security and sustainable development in Albania and elsewhere, we express our hope that we can still count on the support of the donor countries and the international community to overcome these remaining challenges by also making best use of all established local capacity and infrastructure such as the Albanian Mine Action Executive.

For more I am passing now the floor to our expert from Albanian Mine Action Executive, Mr. Veri Dogjani to give you a more clear picture regarding the efforts on **Transition of Mine Action Capacities to Clearance of ERW/AXO and Stockpiled Ammunition Disposal**

Thank you for your attention.