

Statement by Albania

Geneva, 23-27 April 2007

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

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Distinguished Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

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

Since the Kosovo conflict from 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 at least, throughout Albania who were injured as a result of the ammunition depots looted throughout the country during the 1997 uprising.

A broad integrated victim assistance strategy was adopted in 2002 with the goal of building a sustainable Albanian capability for victim assistance. These goals are in line with the goals set forth in the Nairobi Action plan and the Albanian Government is committed in working towards their fulfillment with the much appreciated support from the international community.

The main objectives are:

- Fitment of prostheses to lower limb amputees and rehabilitation of sight impaired in Albania and upper limb amputees and difficult cases abroad.
- Building the capacity of Albanian institutions to fit all types of prostheses and orthoses in Albania by the end of 2007.
- Economic reintegration of mine victims through vocational training and a micro-financing scheme for establishing home-based economies.
- Building a capacity in Northeast Albania to surgically treat trauma and amputee victims and serve as a level three medical facility for victims of demining accidents.
- Building a capacity in Northeast Albania to improve mine victims' access to, and quality of, medical, social, and rehabilitative services.

At the 7MSP in September 2006, a short comprehensive presentation on the victim assistance programme in Albania was provided. Now, I would like to provide an update on the progress and work done in victim assistance in Albania since then towards achieving the goals set forth in the Nairobi Action Plan;

- The project “Access to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) in Albania- Phase I” has been progressing well in all its components; (1) Training is ongoing for 6 prostheses/orthotic technicians from Kukes, Pogradec and Tirana, (2) It is established a programme for training physiotherapists at the Faculty of Nursing in Tirana. Regarding the developments in the (3) physical rehabilitation in Kukes, the Prostheses Support Center established in 2005, is fully operational within the Hospital structure. The center will be upgraded in equipments and training under the HI PMR project. Kukes Regional Hospital has provided additional space within the main building of the hospital and Ministry of Health just provided \$ 35 000 usd needed to enlarge this workshop, with the aim that in the end of 2008, not only to repair, but to produce the prostheses for lower limbs. The time frame for the PMR- Phase I project is 2006-2008, and it is being funded by USDoS through ITF, the Albanian Government and HI.
- With funds made available from the EC through UNDP, raw materials and equipments/supplies are provided in December 2006, to the National Ortho-Prosthetic Center in Tirana and the Prostheses Support Center in Kukes.
- In March 2007, with funds from the Government of France and the EC are delivered to Kukes Hospital a full set of equipments for the physiotherapy unit. In addition 30 medical kits will be delivered in May 2007 to 30 nurses of CBR network in mine affected villages. This will improve emergency/ongoing medical care and the physical rehabilitation of mine survivors as well as other PWD from the mine affected areas.
- In early 2007 the Albanian Government provided \$ 250 000 to construct totally new National Ortho-Prosthetic Center in Tirana. It is expected in May 2007 to start the construction process.
- UNDP with EC funds has provided to 30 mine/UXO survivors with vocational trainings jobs such as small electronic repairs, hairdressing, computers, etc. The project has been very positive up to now.
- Just recently on 11-12 April 2007 was held in Tirana the Victim Assistance Workshop named: *“Achievements, needs and future plans on Victim Assistance in Albania”*. The VA Workshop brought together more than 40 actors involved in providing the services to assist mine survivors. Participants from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Rehabilitation providers at national and district level, donors and mine survivors, reviewed in two days the existing action plan for mine victim assistance, in conformity to the aims of the Nairobi Action Plan. The workshop was very good opportunity in reviewing all the objectives in the action plan and to guarantee that activities will be fully integrated into long-term public health and social services plans. A great support to the workshop was the participation of Mr. Markus Reiterer, Austrian Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Reintegration, Ms. Sheree Bailey- Victim Assistance Expert, Implementation Support Unit-GICHD and Representatives from International Trust Fund Slovenia. More details about the workshop are going to be posted within 10 days at the Albanian Mine Action Programme website; www.amae.org.al

- In line with the plans and commitment for victim assistance portrayed in Zagreb as well as the main objectives listed above, the specific plans and activities to be taken in order to build this capacity in Albania will include: construction of the new National Orthopedic Prosthetic Centre (NOPC); provision of medical equipment and supplies for the new NOPC and hospitals/health centres in Kukes region; refresher training of medical specialists (doctors and nurses) from Kukes region in provision of emergency and ongoing medical assistance, some level of first aid courses to be provided to most people in risk-was identified as a need during the VA workshop; improved rehabilitation facilities and capacity in Kukes region; training prosthetic/orthotic technicians to other modules including the upper limbs ; provision of vocational training for more mine survivors; establishment of a daily care and social center in Kukes from MoLSA; reinforcement and sustainable revolving loan fund; and advocacy raising for the rights of people with disabilities.

I would like to thank the donors of our programme including the US State Department, the International Trust Fund, UNDP, DfiD, the Albania private sector (N1KD), the Governments of the Czech Republic and France, ICRC-SFD, and the EC

Lastly, I would like to reaffirm once again the commitment of the Albanian Government to ensuring the well-being of the Albanian citizens injured by mines and our work forward in order to achieve the goals set forth.

Thank you very much for your attention.