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Lessons Learned – Demilitarization of the Albania APM Stockpile

Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen good afternoon.

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My name is William Hunt and I am the Project Supervisor for the Albania stockpile anti-personnel mine destruction project. My small team and I are resident in Albania for the duration of this project. Before addressing lessons learned, I think it would be useful to describe my role in the Albania project and to provide you with a quick overview of the Albania situation.

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The primary roles of my team are as follows:

- Coordination of the various agencies involved in this project.
- Capacity building and technical assistance to ULP-Mjekës, the destruction agency.
- Providing internal verification and the monitoring of technical standards in the transportation, storage and destruction processes.

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The various agencies involved in the project are as follows:

- The NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency as the executing agent of the NATO PfP Trust Fund.
- The Albanian Armed Forces as the transportation agency.
- The Albanian MoD as the owners of the mines and coordinators of the transportation.
- Suppliers of specialist demilitarization equipment.
- ULP-Mjekës as the destruction agency.

The activities of all these agencies have to be very closely coordinated and monitoring to ensure progress, safety and transparency in a country where these key issues are not institutional.

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Here are some key facts regarding the Albania situation:

- Albania has more than 1.6million APM located in 57 storage areas throughout the country. Many of these storage sites are tunnels in mountainous areas.

- The APM destruction project is being funded by the NATO Trust Fund for APM, SALW and ammunition. The principle sponsor is CANADA and the executing agency is NAMSA.
- Albania has more than 200,00 tonnes of old and surplus ammunition. The APM stockpile represents only 2% of the overall demilitarization challenge.
- The APM destruction project is an element of the National Plan of Action for ammunition demilitarization in Albania.

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- Albania is recovering from 50 years of isolation from the rest of Europe along with financial collapse and a period of anarchy in 1997 during which much of the governmental infrastructure was destroyed.
- The Albania Armed Forces have very limited capability in terms of logistical assets.
- Albania has no previous experience of ammunition demilitarization other than by open detonation.

All of these key facts present a variety of challenges to the destruction process.

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Moving on to lessons learned you may be forgiven for imagining that this particular project is not mature enough for feedback on this subject. However, we have learned some useful lessons that I wish to share with you today.

I have separated the various issues into 5 areas; Planning, Logistics, Verification, Indigenous Capacity and Emerging Issues.

The first topic is **Planning**.

- Allow sufficient time to overcome bureaucracy with donors and beneficiary country.
- Consider timeframe for equipment design, procurement, shipping and installation.
- Consider timeframe for capacity building of destruction agency where required.

Sound planning is essential to the success of all destruction operations and sufficient time must be allowed in order to administer all financial and contractual requirements.

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Logistics is an extremely important element of the destruction process. Key issues here are:

- Consider the need to capacity build the transporting agency to UN/NATO standards (ADR) and the resources required to achieve this.
- Consider local constraints including security and political situations.
- Ensure transportation agency understands contractual obligations.

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Moving on to **verification**, which is an essential transparency element I have the following points to offer:

- Consider existing storage and accounting standards. These will impact upon the project monitoring and accounting procedures.
- Consider the need for independent storage examination as a post-destruction transparency measure.
- Monitoring and verification systems need to be uncomplicated but effective.

Verification is the key to transparency. Monitoring and accounting systems developed for destruction programs need to be effective, simplistic but tempered to the local situation.

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Fully utilizing local resources in terms of manpower and facilities will in general prove to be of economic advantage to the project and provide socio-economic rewards to the beneficiary country. Therefore in terms of **Indigenous Capacity:**

- Consider local, improvised solutions for technology and equipment manufacture.
- Consider the need to train and develop skills of local personnel for a sustainable facility.

In the case of Albania it has become apparent that the ULP-MJEKËS engineering staff has greater capabilities that we had originally estimated.

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Lastly **Emerging Issues**

It is expedient to attempt to peek into the future and predict the potential effects of national issues such elections, inflation and the security situation. In the case of Albania, an emerging issue is the forthcoming **General election**

- During the period of the forthcoming General Election there is likely to be a ban on the movement of ammunition and weapons by road during the electoral campaigns.

Predicting future threats to destruction projects can buy you time to develop mitigation solutions.

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Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman in summary of these points:

- Allow **TIME** for planning and project start. (This process may take much longer than you imagine especially if a number different donor organizations are involved)
- Don't underestimate the **LOGISTIC** effort that is required to transport and store the APM. (In many counties where assistance in stockpile destruction is planned transportation and storage standards and regulations are likely to be rudimentary if at all existent).
- Develop a **VERIFICATION** system that is appropriate to the local situation. (Consider accuracy and validity of existing accounting systems and the available resources to implement your system)

In the case of Albania some of the issues described in this short presentation caught the project management team off-guard and others were predicted. So far none have been insurmountable and the target completion date of the project remains unaffected.

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Thank you for your attention.