



## ALBANIA MINE ACTION PROGRAMME

### GOAL

1. Albania free from the effect of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO).

### BACKGROUND

2. The extent of the MA problem includes minefields on the Albanian-Kosovo border laid by former Republic of Yugoslavia forces during the Kosovo crisis, 120 km long and up to 400m deep in the districts of Kukes, Has and Tropoje. Added to this are UXO remnants of Serbian artillery clusters strikes and even remnants of ordnance released by NATO aircraft up to 20 km inside Albania. This represents 85 suspected areas covering approximately 1400 hectares. In order to respond to the landmines and UXO-s threat, in October 1999, an inter-ministerial body - the Albanian Mines Action Committee (AMAC) - was formed. The intention is that this body will be the overall executive and policy - making body for mine action. At the same time, an operational body - the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE) - was established to carry out the mine action programme under direction of the AMAC.
3. The continued presence of mines and UXO on Albania's North-eastern border with Kosovo has a significant effect on the people in that area. Since 1999 there were 197 mine accidents in which 211 persons were injured and 25 killed. This threat not only poses a physical threat to the population, but also has a major impact on the already harsh lives of those who live in the affected areas of Tropoje, Has and Kukes. Nearly 120,000 people, mostly living in abject poverty, whose livelihood depends on farming, herding, gathering firewood and other subsistence activities and also obtaining essential supplies across the border, are profoundly affected by the presence of mines and UXO. A grave consequence of the mines threat is the added difficulty of patrolling this part of the border, where trafficking and other crimes take place on a cross-border basis. It is worth noting that none of this had been the doing of the Albanian people, which puts a moral obligation on the international community to assist in the solving of the problem. Furthermore, it is reported that the former Yugoslav forces did not keep records of the minefields laid in Albania, which is a gross contravention of the Geneva Convention.
4. The Albanian Government's commitment to address the mines and UXO problem is evident in:
  - EOD response to Yugoslav bombardment of the North-eastern border area.
  - Survey of the area by the AAF in 1999.
  - Their signing and ratification of the Ottawa APM Ban Treaty on 29 February 2000 and the fact that all AP mine stockpiles were destroyed by April 2002, 2 years ahead of time.



- Support to and maintenance of AMAE.
5. Funding was sporadic and there were difficulties in coordination due to:
- The legal status of AMAC and AMAE.
  - The limited ability of AMAE.
6. Until now very little of the mines and UXO threat on the Albania-Kosovo border has been cleared, approximately 42.42 hectares with 1762 mines lifted and 179 UXO destroyed. In the past RONCO, HELP, the Swiss Federation for MA (SFMA) and CARE International were involved in demining, while the ICRC, Albanian Red Cross and UNICEF supported mine risk education (MRE) and victim assistance. Currently DCA-ACT and the Swiss Federation for MA are deployed for demining in 2002. SFMA will also employ a mechanical demining capability provided by UNDP. A realistic estimate indicates that Albania can be rid of the effect of mines within 3 years for a modest budget of USD5-7million. This needs, however, to be confirmed by impact and technical surveys.

#### **AMAE/UNDP ALBANIA MA PROGRAMME**

7. UNDP Albania implemented a 2-year capacity building programme of mine action structures with the Government of Albania. AMAC will be assisted in the formulation of policy, strategy, a National Mine Action Plan and priorities for MA. Assistance to AMAE will entail the establishment of a sustainable structure capable of coordinating all MA in Albania. This will include:
- An operations department.
  - Information department collecting, collating and distributing MA information to all clients.
  - A quality management department conducting external monitoring of all MA activities.
  - Establishment of a regional office in Kukes.
  - Administrative support.
  - Training of all staff.
  - Implementing impact and technical surveys.
  - Conducting a feasibility study on the establishment of a military demining capability and implementation if necessary.
  - Resource mobilisation for capacity building, surveys, demining, MRE and victim assistance.

#### **FUNDING**

8. Past donors include the American State Department, DFID and the Governments of Canada and Turkey.
9. Capacity building, demining, MRE and victim assistance are funded until September by UNDP, ITF, UNICEF, the EU and the Swiss, German and Danish



Governments. The shortfall for capacity building and demining for the remainder of 2002 are \$300,000 and \$250,000 respectively, while \$ 5,6 million is needed to achieve the goal by 2004.

## **CONCLUSION**

10. There is a significant mines and UXO threat in Albania. There is, however, a commitment and increasing awareness of the problem and Albania can be rendered free from the effect of mines and UXO in a reasonable time with a reasonable budget.