EXCELLENCIES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

DISTINGUISHED CO-CHAIRS,

ALLOW ME TO GIVE YOU A BRIEF UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS THAT ALBANIA HAS MADE, SINCE THE NINTH MEETING OF THE STATE PARTIES, IN IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5 OF THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION.


States, Germany, the European Commission, Switzerland, France, Turkey, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Canada and the International Trust Fund of Slovenia.

In 2009 only, as of May, some 96,979 square meters of land have been cleared while 45 anti-personnel mines, 2 anti-tank mines, 6 unexploded ordnance and 125 cluster munitions have been found and destroyed.

The residual contaminated area in northeast Albania as to date is about 0.76 square kilometers, out of which 0.27 square kilometers are contaminated only with landmines divided in 11 mined areas. The clearance capacities this year consist of 1 technical survey and 7 manual clearance teams. The operations are funded by the US Department of State and Germany through the International Trust Fund of Slovenia with equipment support from the European Commission through UNDP.

The Albanian Government through the Ministry of Defense continues to support the programme by providing free of charge explosive materials and stand-by medical evacuation service by helicopter in order to ensure safe clearance operations in accordance with the International Standards for Mine Action.

The strategic objective of the National Plan for Completion is to complete the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in the mined areas in Albania by the end of 2009 and the Programme is fully committed to achieve this target, which is well ahead of our August 2010 deadline under Article 5.

_Distinguished Co-Chairs,_

I would like to use this occasion to remind again that Albania will be hosting on 8-9 October 2009, a South East Europe Regional Workshop in preparation of the Second Review Conference. The Workshop is part of the Initiative of the European Union Joint Action. We are honored to invite the States of South East Europe, donors and relevant international and non-governmental organizations, so please mark this event on your agenda.

Lastly, on behalf of the Albanian Government I would like to express our appreciation to the international community for the continuous support and trust to the Albanian Mine Action Programme. Thanks to this support we can soon accomplish our main mission to "Return a mine free land to the people" and also be proud of contributing to another success for the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.