



**Tirana Regional Workshop
8 October 2009**

**Mrs. Vibeke Risa
Deputy Country Director
UNDP Albania**

Distinguished Chairman of the Conference
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to kill or injure many people each year and most often as you well know victims are innocent civilians. Landmines are an obstacle to development, they contaminate land, create fear in the population who have the right to live in a safe environment.

As my predecessors emphasized, Albania too as other countries in the South-east Europe had to deal with the serious consequences of the contamination with landmines and unexploded ordnance. This contamination seriously impacted the lives of people living in already poor conditions in villages of Northeast Albania by causing deaths and injuries among the inhabitants.

After the Kosovo conflict, back in 2002, the Albanian Government having to deal with many priorities requested the support of UNDP to assist with the consolidation the national Mine Action structures just established by the Government and still in a fragile state. UNDP Albania, in line with its mandate and with international donor support, agreed to be actively engaged in the development of sustainable capacities of the Albanian Mine Action Executive through direct financial and technical assistance, in order to carry out its main functions as mine action coordination and monitoring national body. In addition, UNDP undertook to provide an advisory role to the Albanian Mine Action Committee in its role as the Policy-making body for mine action in developing the required policies for the implementation of mine action.

In order to achieve this, UNDP has deployed since 2002 several international advisors, who have provided technical expertise to the AMAE national staff in several areas such as programme management, mine victims assistance, quality management of demining operations, etc. The capacities of AMAE national staff have been progressively improved through various management and technical

training. In addition, AMAC and AMAE were assisted with the formulation of the relevant mine action strategic plans. This ensured that the mine action operations in Albania were conducted in accordance with the respective international standards and as a result AMAE since the end of 2007 can run the Mine Action Programme with fully local capacities.

In order to ensure a proper integration of Mine Action activities with the development projects in the region, the Mine Action Project was included as part of the UNDP Area Based Development Programme (ABD) that started operating since Oct 2004 and based on the Kukes MDG Regional Development Strategy 2004-2015.

Furthermore, UNDP has provided its support in coordinating with AMAC and AMAE, the resource mobilization efforts for mine action operations, which was done successfully through various mechanisms such as the UN Mine Action Portfolio, donor trips to the mine action operation areas, etc. The efficiency of operations and transparency of using the funds and reporting ensured to UNDP a sustainable support from donors such as the European Commission, United Kingdom, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, France, etc. throughout the programme lifetime. Currently, the funding of AMAE operations has been ensured through UNDP by the European Commission until the end of August 2010.

I would like to emphasize again that UNDP wouldn't be successful in its efforts of developing a fully sustainable mine action programme, if it wasn't for the great support of the donors, the cooperation of the local and national institutions and the commitment of our partners.

In addition to coordination and monitoring, the UNDP support in Mine Action in Albania covered other Mine Action components such as Mine Clearance and Victim Assistance.

- In mine clearance, UNDP through two EC funded Projects implemented in the field by DanChurchAid, has trained and equipped 6 national demining teams, which carried out mine clearance operations in northeast Albania; In addition, UNDP just finished in September another clearance project funded by DfID and implemented by DCA.
- In victim assistance, support has been provided to local and central health structures and socio-economic reintegration initiatives have been promoted, with several donors funding such as France, Sweden, United Kingdom; This has been achieved through: provision of raw materials, training and equipment for the prosthetic workshop in Kukes, improving surgical capabilities in Tropoja Hospital and vocational training for landmine survivors and their family members.

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Distinguished Workshop participants,

I'm more than pleased to be present in this workshop where Albania could finally make the long-awaited statement to be free of landmines and show that the challenges posed by the explosive remnants of war can be won. I would like to congratulate the Government of Albania in this great achievement and on its compliance with the Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Thanks to the joint efforts of all the stakeholders, the communities in North East Albania can rejoice their lands and natural resources and have the peace of mind that they deserve with knowing that their environment is protected.

As a matter of fact, UNDP Albania is implementing in cooperation with the Kukes Regional Council, a major project funded by the European Commission, on development of the tourism and promotion of environment in the region.

Our next task is to make sure that a proper transition strategy of the above mentioned established capacities is formulated, in order to make use of not only the management and technical expertise but also the equipment and infrastructure established during the past years in the course of the Mine Action Programme, in potentially other ammunition stockpile destruction programme in Albania.

Many thanks for your attention.