

CLOSING REMARKS

Please allow me to thank you once again for travelling to Tirana – as well as to Kukes – to take part in this workshop.

It has been a real pleasure for Albania to host our neighbours as well as others who have come from outside of the region to engage in three days of good work.

The purpose of this workshop has been to take stock of progress made and challenges that remain in South Eastern Europe in pursuing the aims of the Convention.

In doing so, it has been our hope that the workshop would contribute significantly to the success of the Convention's Second Review Conference to be held in Cartagena, Colombia.

I would conclude that the Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe has succeeded in fulfilling its aims.

I am pleased in particular that Albania has helped create momentum towards a success Cartagena Summit through the announcement I made yesterday that Albania has completed the clearance of all known mined areas.

This achievement and the accomplishments of our neighbours have enabled us to illustrate that the Convention is a success in South Eastern Europe.

We have achieved a great deal in mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and partnership and transparency in implementation.

However, compelling challenges remain in our region.

Four States Parties in the region, including Albania, are responsible for significant numbers of mine victims.

And up to a decade more is required to complete the effort to clear all mined areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia.

The Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World provides an opportunity for the States Parties in South Eastern Europe to take pride in what has been accomplished.

In addition, Cartagena is our chance to contribute to a stocktaking of what remains to be done, and, to adopt a strong, forward looking action plan to make progress in overcoming remaining challenges in the years ahead.

I would note that the lessons learned from successful implementation in Albania and elsewhere in South Eastern Europe may have broader applicability by States Parties elsewhere.

This workshop has highlighted in particular that national ownership and partnership are essential to ensuring the full implementation of the Convention.

In the context of Albania's implementation effort, a number of matters were brought to light at this workshop, such as the importance of a State Party taking full ownership over its implementation challenge, including by establishing an effective national authority and reinforcing existing State structures.

In Kukes you saw firsthand how we have reinforced existing structures, particularly in the areas of medical care and physical rehabilitation.

In addition, the importance of strong partnership with donors, with a regional funding channel and implementing entity, with a non-governmental operator and with the UN was emphasised.

We are grateful for the strength of our partnership with Danish Church Aid, the ITF, the UNDP and our many donors.

It was noted that in the Albanian context implementation has been fuelled by partners sticking together through good times and bad, with all partners contributing to national plans and with donors remaining committed until the job is done.

With implementation of Article 5 now complete, we would be pleased to share our experiences elsewhere.

Let me say as well that the universal acceptance and implementation of the Convention in South Eastern Europe has helped heal with wounds of

past conflicts in the region and has helped ensure that a end, for all time, to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines was indeed possible and realistic to achieve in the region.

Let me close by thanking the team from the Albanian Mine Action Executive as well as the staff of the ISU, particularly Monika Froehler who has worked so hard to ensure the success of this event.

My thanks also go to the Member States of the European Union whose funds have enabled us to convene this workshop.

I wish to thank all of you who have travelled to Tirana for this event, and if you permit, I would like to single out Ambassador Eckey, our friends from Colombia and well as Colonel John MacBride from Canada, who has been a friend of mine action in Albania for many years.

I wish you safe travels home.

The workshop is adjourned.