

**The Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe,
7 – 9 October 2009**

**Statement by Ambassador Susan Eckey, President Designate of the Second Review
Conference of the Mine Ban Convention**

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends of the Mine Ban Convention,

It is an honour for me to address this meeting of landmine experts and practitioners. Your dedication and hard work has moved the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention forward. *You* make a difference! I would also like to thank our host Albania for organising this meeting (and the very nice dinner last night), and the ISU and the EU for supporting it.

First of all I would like to join others in congratulating Albania having cleared all mined areas. It is a major accomplishment, and I think it deserves an applause! I would also like to commend Albania for their dedication and great efforts in the area of victim assistance. Also other countries in this region are committed to strengthened and improved victim assistance. In the parallel workshop yesterday examples and lessons learned were presented that show us that the call from mine victims for more and better assistance is taken seriously. Key ingredients for success are inclusion of survivors and their families as well as national ownership. We also know, though, that many victims are still not heard or assisted. It is my hope and goal that the second review conference of the Mine Ban Convention gives victim assistance work all over the world the inspiration and *push* it needs.

Given the great hospitality, the idyllic setting here in this beautiful country, and the outstanding late summer weather, it may be easy to forget that it was in large part South Eastern Europe that brought to the world's attention that the use of anti-personnel mines has devastating humanitarian and socio-economic consequences.

And it was in large part South Eastern Europe that led the way in pronouncing that what was required was a conclusive end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

It was States like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia that took part in the Convention's signing ceremony in 1997 in Ottawa at a high political level and made it clear that half measures were not good enough.

Rather, what was required was a ban on anti-personnel mines, the destruction of stocks, the clearance of all mined areas and assistance to the victims.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and FYR Macedonia were part of the group of the first 40 States to ratify the Convention in 1998, thus ensuring its rapid entry into force.

Others in the region followed and for some years now South Eastern Europe has been universal in its acceptance of the Convention.

The States of South Eastern Europe signed up to the Convention knowing that they were accepting sizeable tasks.

You have, however, acted upon your obligations in a commendable manner.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have for some time had in place national structures that have taken ownership over the implementation of demining in their respective countries.

In Croatia, the funding required to carry out demining largely has been derived from national sources.

FYR Macedonia, in reporting completion in 2006, Albania, with its declaration yesterday, and Serbia, with the possibility of completing later this year, have shown us that fulfilling the Convention's mine clearance obligations is not only necessary, but it is also realistic and possible.

States Parties in South Eastern Europe have also led the way in complying with the obligation to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines.

This has been no easy task, with Serbia and Albania each having destroyed well over one million mines and with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and FYR Macedonia each having destroyed tens of thousands of mines.

In joining the Convention, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia also acknowledged a responsibility to significant numbers of landmine victims that have added to the numbers of persons in each country who are living with disabilities as a result of other causes.

In fact, the numbers of survivors in this region measures into the thousands.

However, the States of this region have taken charge of their responsibilities. I understand that a first class demonstration of this has been the efforts undertaken by Albania in the Kukes region.

At the Kukes regional hospital on Wednesday, you saw that the attention and resources generated in the context of this convention have been used to reinforce existing State structures and service delivery.

In doing so, the Convention has not only benefited landmine survivors in one of the poorest places in Europe, but it has enhanced the capacity of a State to respond to the physical rehabilitation needs of a much wider population.

What South Eastern Europe demonstrates overall is the larger story of this Convention.

This story is:

After a decade of implementation great progress has been made, lives are being saved, and communities are benefiting.

After a decade of implementing the Convention, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

But after a decade of implementing the Convention, great challenges remain and the landmine issue is very much alive, here in South Eastern Europe and elsewhere around the globe.

This story is exactly what the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World is all about.

Dear friends,

The Mine Ban Convention is in many ways the “mother” of the development of modern, international humanitarian law and humanitarian disarmament instruments. Their aim is to protect and assist civilians. The unique partnership among states from different regions, and between states and the UN’s field based organisations, the ICRC and civil society continues to be a hallmark of the landmine efforts and continues to bring results that would otherwise not have been achieved. I would particularly like to point out the value of cooperation between affected states, including in the area of victim assistance. At the Cartagena Summit on a Mine Free World, the Mine Ban Convention’s second review conference, the Convention’s pioneer role and the extended and *results* oriented partnerships must be our points of departure. A Mine Free World is, as the motto says: “A shared commitment”!

So – what do we want to achieve in Cartagena? We want to get the world’s attention to the continued challenges caused by anti-personnel landmines. We need to reaffirm and recommit to the humanitarian nature of the Mine Ban Convention. We need to commit to appropriate and timely action for survivors, victims and their families and communities. The highest international standards should give us guidance. We need to include a gender perspective in all mine action. We need to commit to continued cooperation and assistance, inter alia by looking at new approaches. And we need to confirm our commitment to comply fully with the Convention. Article 5 compliance on mine clearance and article 4 compliance on stock pile destruction are key to this. We also want the world’s attention in order to obtain universal adherence to the Convention.

A review document, and action plan and a political declaration will be adopted in Cartagena. These documents will express the lessons learned, future action and renewed political commitment to the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. After consultations in the two preparatory meetings as well as through other input from states and partners, we have finalised the review document and most of the action plan. These documents will be sent to the UN for translation today. We are still working on the declaration and the victim assistance chapter of the action plan. In Cartagena, we will have three days of substantive discussions before we have a high level segment on Thursday and Friday, 3 – 4 December. This means that we need to complete our work in three days instead of the usual five at meetings of the states parties. So we will need to get straight down to business Monday morning. From Thursday, all delegations may take the floor during the high level segment by giving general statements of no longer than six (6) minutes. I also wish to remind you that a sponsorship programme is in place, so please contact the ISU for further detail. I know that our host country, Colombia, is making every effort for us to work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Dear colleagues, I hope I have succeeded in conveying what we agreed to during the two preparatory meetings on the road to Cartagena. I look forward to continue to working with all of you. Thank you very much for your support so far. I am sure that our joint efforts will make the Mine Ban Convention the living instrument we need also in the future.

Thank you very much.