



**Republic of Albania  
Ministry of Health**

“Tirana Regional Workshop on achieving a Mine-Free Southeastern Europe”

**Z. Arben Ivanaj  
Deputy Minister of Health**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear Participants,**

Allow me to welcome you on behalf of the Albanian Government and thank you for your participation in the Victim Assistance Parallel Programme, which is being held in the framework of the **Tirana Regional Workshop on achieving a Mine-Free Southeastern Europe**.

The Tirana Workshop is one of the six regional workshops of this kind that are being held in advance of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of the Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction.

As you are aware, Albania has been affected by the problem of mine contamination since the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Mine/UXO contamination in southeastern Albania directly affected the lives of more than 25,000 people living in 39 villages. From 1999 up to date, 34 persons have been killed and 238 others have been injured as a result of mine accidents.

The participants of this workshop, and especially the mine survivors, are the best witnesses of the grave sufferings and consequences that mines and other ordinance can cause to human life.

In 2000 Albania ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. In accordance with the obligations deriving from this Convention, the Albanian Government, with the support of international and local donors, has undertaken a series of initiatives to improve the medical and rehabilitation capacities in the country. In addition, other projects have been undertaken to enhance the social and economic integration of the mine victims. Yesterday, you had the opportunity to visit the Kukës Regional Hospital and observe some of the equipment that has been acquired as part of the health structures and will be upgrade in the future. Additionally, the physiotherapy branch was opened in the Faculty of Nursing in

Tirana and other training courses are being provided to physiotherapists and prosthetic technicians through the PMR programme (phase I&II) in accordance with the modules that are used in the best EU schools.

Throughout this period, the Ministry of Health has placed an emphasis on the major reforms undertaken in Albania's health system with the aim of empowering and expanding the physiotherapy and prosthetic services all over the country and providing accessibility to patients in need. In order to address the needs of persons with disabilities and other injured people, one of the priorities of the Ministry of Health has been the establishment, organization, empowering and expanding the medical emergency service, for which many investments have been made, as well as improving the quality of the physical rehabilitation service.

Later today, you will analyze the progress made and existing challenges in the region to improve the lives of people that have been unjustly affected by mines, thus fulfilling the Convention's towards mine Victim Assistance. I am confident that today you will exchange your positive experiences from your daily work which will surely serve as a means to reinforce your collaboration at regional level and beyond.

I am confident that this is the ideal forum where you - mine/UXO survivors from different countries in the region - will express your needs, your problems and your priorities. Your participation and inclusion in the decision-making processes has proved to be a necessary and positive experience. In this respect, we will have the opportunity to solve your needs and problems in more effective ways. We have had, and we hope to have in the future, the support of the donor countries in fulfilling the promises and obligations to the mine victims.

Finally, by wishing you success with your discussions and hoping in your valuable contribution, I would like to conclude my speech by thanking as well our local and international partners for their joint commitment and a special gratitude to the donors of the Albanian Mine Action Programme. Without their contribution, any progress would have been impossible.

In the mean time, we commit to a close collaboration in the future because as working together we can ensure a better life for the mine survivors, thus fulfilling the promises and obligations towards them.

Thank you for your attention