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**TIRANA REGIONAL WORKSHOP  
8-9 OCTOBER 2009**

**OPENING REMARKS**

***Deputy Minister of Defense/ Chairman of Albanian Mine Action  
Committee***

***Excellencies,  
Distinguished Workshop participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen***

It is my pleasure to welcome you in quality of the Deputy Minister of Defence and Chairman of the Mine Action Committee to the Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe.

From the outset, please allow me to thank the Member States of the European Union for their support which has enabled Albania to convene this workshop.

I would also like to thank the Albanian Mine Action Executive and the Implementation Support Unit for its substantive and organizational assistance.

Distinguished Participants,

We have accomplished a lot in pursuing a mine-free South Eastern Europe but much work remains.

As you already know, the purpose of the Tirana Workshop is to make an analysis of the progress made and challenges remaining in South Eastern Europe in pursuing the aims of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. By doing so, it is our hope that we will contribute significantly to the success of the Second Review Conference to be held in Cartagena, Colombia.

In this regard, this workshop is taking place in a very important moment for Albania.

The Republic of Albania has ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention since February 2000 and by doing so, has committed itself among others to complete clearance of anti-personnel mines in all its mined areas by August 2010.

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*It is with immense pleasure that on behalf of the Government of Albania and of the Albanian Mine Action Committee and I announce today one more achievement of Albania under this Convention: Just a week ago the last known mined area in Northeast Albania was cleared and is now in process of being handed over to the population. I believe, besides the compliance of Albania with Article 5 of the Convention, this is great news for the people in northeast Albania who had to live their daily lives in presence of this constant threat.*

With that said, I would first like to invite Mr. Gazmend Turdiu, General Secretary from the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide you with some more detailed information in this area and then I will pass the floor to the EU Presidency represented in the workshop by the Charge d'Affairs at the Swedish Embassy in Skopje, Ms. Elisabeth Stam; last but not least, in the Opening Segment I have Mr. Izet Ademaj, who is a mine survivor and will say a few words on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines;

Mr. Turdiu you have the floor.....