



## The Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe

7 - 9 October 2009

### Chair's Summary

1. The Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe was held from 7 to 9 October 2009 in Tirana, Albania. Financial support for the workshop was provided by the European Union through its "Joint Action" in support of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and with organizational and substantive support provided by the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE) and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit (ISU). The purpose of the Tirana Workshop was 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 was intended that the workshop would contribute significantly to the success of the Convention's Second Review Conference to be held in Cartagena, Colombia from 30 November to 4 December 2009.
2. The workshop, which was chaired by His Excellency, Petrit Karabina, Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Albania and Chair of the Albanian Mine Action Committee (AMAC), with the support of Arben Braha, Director of the AMAE, Gregor Sancancin, Project Manager of the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF), and, Anesa Kundurovic of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The workshop featured the participation of representatives of the following: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Kosovo Mine Action Centre, Macedonia (the FYR of), Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Slovenia, the United States of America, the Albanian Red Cross and several Albanian non-governmental organisations, the European Commission (EC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and several of its member organizations including Handicap International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled, the ITF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
3. The workshop featured a high level opening session, the highlight of which was the announcement by Petrit Karabina, the Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Albania, that Albania had completed clearance of all known mined areas, thus ensuring that Albania would be in a position to declare completion of implementation of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention at the Cartagena Summit. Also delivering addresses during the high level opening were Gazmend Turdiu, General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, and, Izet Ademaj on behalf of the ICBL.
4. The ISU and the ICBL set the scene for the workshop's thematic items by providing, respectively, an overview of the Convention and its status and views on the pursuit of the Convention's aims in South Eastern Europe. These presentations highlighted the leading role played by the States of South Eastern European in pursuing an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. For several years there has been universal acceptance of the Convention in South Eastern Europe. The States Parties in the region have all fulfilled their obligations to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines with over 3 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines having been destroyed. Macedonia on 15 September 2006 and Albania on 8 October 2009 have indicated that they have fulfilled their mine clearance obligations and





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Serbia is poised to soon announce the same. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have charted a course forward to clear all mined areas by 2019. In addition, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia are taking steps to fulfil their responsibility to significant numbers of landmine survivors.

5. The workshop highlighted that national ownership and partnership are essential to ensuring the full implementation of the Convention. Through a focus on these matters in the context of Albania's implementation efforts, a number of matters were highlighted, including the importance of Albania itself having taking full ownership over its implementation challenge, including by establishing an effective national authority and reinforcing existing State 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 (i.e., the ITF), with a non-governmental operator (i.e., Danish Church Aid) and the UNDP was emphasised. It was noted by these actors that success in the Albanian context has been fuelled by partners sticking together through good times and bad, all partners contributing to national plans and donors remaining committed until the job is done. As well, it was highlighted that Albania led the way in demonstrating effective partnerships in the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines with Albania being the first case where a NATO Trust Fund was used as a means to channel funds and support implementation of this aspect of the Convention.
6. National ownership and partnership with a wide range of actors was also illustrated by others in the region that are involved in addressing all mined areas. In particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted that while considerable challenges remain, impressive progress is being made each year in demining and in applying all available methods to release with confidence suspected hazardous areas. In addition, the EC, the ITF and the UNDP each noted how they have worked to support national efforts in the region.
7. The significant challenge faced by States in the region in meeting the needs and guaranteeing the rights of landmine survivors was highlighted by presentations provided by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Achievements in this area were also noted including in Albania which has improved the delivery of services in the region most affected by mines and other explosive remnants of war. Through a visit to the Kukes Regional Hospital on 7 October 2009, workshop participants were able to see firsthand how the effort to meet the needs of land survivors reinforced an existing State structure in such a way that the wider community is now benefiting. In addition, the workshop featured a parallel programme for experts in the areas of medical and physical rehabilitation, psychological support and other aspects of assistance. This parallel programme provided an opportunity for an exchange of experiences between experts and highlighted that, just as has been the case with respect to mine clearance, partnership has been instrumental in South Eastern Europe in victim assistance.
8. Workshop participants were provided with an update on other matters essential for achieving the aims of the Convention, including transparency in implementation and measures to ensure compliance. States Parties in the region were both commended for their rate of compliance with the Convention's reporting obligations and encouraged to use both formal and informal means to share information on their mine clearance efforts relative to benchmarks they have established, to the analyses of their Article 5 extension requests and relative to decisions of Meetings of the States Parties. In addition, the ICRC highlighted that primary role in ensuring compliance with the Convention rests with each individual State Party through the legislative and other measures taken in accordance with Article 9 of the Convention.



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9. Workshop participants were reminded that 39 States have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention. The participation by Azerbaijan, a State not party to the Convention, was welcomed by workshop participants. It was recalled by Canada, the Coordinator of the Convention's informal Universalisation Contact Group, that all States Parties have a role to play in promoting universalisation. In addition, it was emphasised that not controlling part of what one considers to be one's sovereign territory, or not controlling what one assumes will be part of one's territory once there is a resolution to a border dispute, has not served as an impediment to accession to the Convention by many States. It was noted that if a State wishes to abide by the Convention's obligations, including the obligation never under any circumstance to use anti-personnel mines, there is no impediment to implementing the Convention in areas under a State Party's control. It was equally noted that if a State Party believes that it is unable to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in all mined areas under its jurisdiction or control in a 10 year period, it may submit a request for an extension.
10. Ambassador Susan Eckey of Norway, the President-Designate of the Second Review Conference – the *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World* – presented to the workshop the President-Designate's vision for the event. It was noted in particular that the Cartagena Summit and the year leading up to it present the States Parties with a variety of opportunities, including to:
  - Communicate the impressive progress that has been made towards a mine free world and focus on the remaining challenges for the full implementation of and compliance with the Convention.
  - Focus the world's attention on the humanitarian essence of the Convention: the rights of people and our commitments to survivors and to mine-affected communities.
  - Remember that anti-personnel mines is a living problem with socio-economic consequences which cause great suffering and pain to people in several countries.
  - Make sure that women, men, girls and boys affected by landmines are heard and involved.
  - Reinvigorate national implementation and compliance efforts and enhance national ownership.
  - Promote the international norm created by the Convention that use of anti-personnel mines is prohibited and unacceptable, continuing the universalisation efforts.
  - Encourage further international cooperation towards strengthening human security.
11. It was noted that in order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Cartagena Summit, States Parties and others are encouraged to participate in it at the highest possible level, to make the relevance of the Cartagena Summit known to a wide audience around the world, and to work tirelessly to ensure progress in universalisation, stockpile destruction, mine clearance, victim assistance, transparency reporting and national legislation in time for the Summit. In addition, through a presentation delivered by Colombia, the host country of the Cartagena Summit, all delegates to the Summit were encouraged to arrive in Cartagena on 28 November 2009 in order that they can participate in a day-long series of events in support of the Cartagena Summit on 29 November 2009.
12. The Chair concluded that the Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe had indeed succeeded in fulfilling the aim of generating a regional contribution to preparations for the Cartagena Summit. The chair remarked that South Eastern Europe was a region that illustrates some of the Convention's greatest successes, in terms of the achievements that have been made in mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and partnership and transparency in implementation. The Chair also remarked that, in the region, compelling challenges remain, particularly with four States Parties in the region having reported the responsibility for significant numbers of mine victims and with



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

13. The Chair further concluded that 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, 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.
14. In addition, the Chair concluded that the lessons learned from successful implementation in Albania and elsewhere in South Eastern Europe may have broader applicability by States Parties elsewhere. The Chair reiterated the central importance of both national ownership and partnership, offering that Albania would be pleased to share its experiences elsewhere.
15. Finally, the Chair concluded that the universal acceptance and implementation of the Convention in South Eastern Europe had helped heal the wounds of past conflicts in the region and had helped ensure that an end, for all time, to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines was indeed possible and realistic to achieve in the region.