

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENT

BY

THE HEAD OF THE ALBANIAN DELEGATION DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE MR. ARIAN STAROVA

AT

THE SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE AP MINE BAN CONVENTION

CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, 3-4 DECEMBER 2009

Madame President,

Allow me, at the beginning of my address and on behalf of the Albanian Government, to Thank You for your able leadership and the Government of Colombia for hosting this Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in perfect conditions of warm hospitality and excellent working arrangements.

Madame President,

Distinguished Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special honor for me that, on behalf of the Government of Albania, I have the opportunity to take the floor in this very important Conference which is being held in the 10-th anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention, entered into force in March 1999. These days, we are

here together, representatives of 156 states signatories to the Mine Ban Convention, or 13 states more since the Nairobi Summit and this is a success among many other successes we are discussing about these days. From year to year, we have been achieving big successes in stopping the production of landmines, destroying the stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, clearing the mined areas, assisting the mine victims and, above all, we are achieving huge progress in making peoples and governments more conscious of the mine threat on the way to reaching our common noble goal of a mine-free world. Albania welcomes all these achievements by congratulating all the states for their respective contributions and it will remain fully committed to the principles, goals and obligations of the Mine Ban Convention.

This Second Review Conference is held in a key moment for the mine action program in Albania. After 10 years of devoted work and commitment, which were also years of loyal support by many countries, and I use this occasion to thank them, Albania could finally complete the clearance of its contaminated areas with landmines. All this has been achieved in compliance with Article 5 of the Convention. This great accomplishment means a safer living for the people in northeast Albania, who had to live for many past years in the daily presence of this constant threat. Albania has ratified the Convention on Cluster munitions and in this regard I'm also happy to announce that Albania has cleared all cluster munitions in the contaminated areas of its territory, a long process completed only last week.

Albania's compliance with all its obligations, as required by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, is a clear testimony to our full support to the Convention and to its noble goal for a mine-free world. As a State Party, we are very determined to promote the full implementation and the universalization of the Convention.

Early October this year, the Government of Albania in cooperation with the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention and the financial assistance of the European Union, hosted a Regional Workshop for Southeast Europe, with the attendance of the mine action experts, contributors and mine survivors from the South-Eastern Europe region and beyond. While assessing the progress on meeting the goal of the Convention the Workshop concluded that the universal acceptance and implementation of the Convention in South Eastern Europe has helped heal the wounds of past conflicts in the region and ensure for ever the end to sufferings and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, as a possible and realistic target in the region.

Furthermore, Albania has made numerous efforts to provide the mine victims and their families with due care and assistance based on their specific priorities. Following a clear victim assistance strategy, the capacities of health care and medical facilities in conjunction with development of programmes for ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to equal opportunities in life with other people for healthcare, social services, sustained incomes, education and participation in the community have improved significantly.

Today, we can proudly say that the Albanian Mine Action Program is a success story and the key to that lies in partnership, transparency and national ownership.

We will continue to do more. The mine action capacities created in Albania can now be used not only within the country but also in the region and beyond in framework of joint programmes.

Madame President,

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that while being highly committed to the noble cause of ending the suffering caused by antipersonnel mines and creating a world free of mines, Albania welcomes the Cartagena Action Plan and the Cartagena Declaration and firmly shares its appeal to the world to join us in our common commitment to a mine-free world. We call upon those states that are still outside the Convention to join us in this cause.

Thank you for your attention!