

**The Tirana Workshop “For a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe”**

**(Tirana, 7-9 October 2009)**

**Intervention by the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT)**

**Mr. Hans Risser, UN Development Programme (UNDP)**

On behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team, I wish first of all to thank the Government of Albania for hosting this workshop, in preparation for the Cartagena Review Conference of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). We also congratulate the European Council, the European Union and the Implementation Support Unit for supporting this initiative.

South Eastern Europe has been one of the worst affected regions by the presence and use of landmines. The extensive use of landmines and other explosive ordnance during the conflicts of the 1990's not only generated an enormous humanitarian impact on the people and communities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, but also continues to hamper reconstruction and development efforts. The threat unfortunately persists, but South Eastern Europe as a region has seen many positive developments towards achieving a region free of the impact of mines through effective clearance, risk education and victim assistance.

Due to the size of the problem and the number of challenges faced by countries in the region, significant support and attention has been provided by the United Nations system. A number of members of the United Nations Mine Action Team are still assisting in the region, including UNDP, UNICEF and UNMAS. This assistance bears in mind the commitment by countries here to the APMBC, which forms part of the legal framework for mine action within the United Nations system. The Mine Ban Treaty provides countries with an excellent framework for their mine action and victim assistance activities.

The United Nations is assisting mine action in the four states in the region for which Article 5 remains relevant: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have requested deadline extensions, which were granted by the 9th Meeting of States Parties. UNDP has provided support to the national mine action authorities in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and is committed to assisting these countries in implementing their plans for the completion of their Article 5 obligations during the extended period. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the Integrated Mine Action Programme (IMAP) UNDP has, furthermore, assisted the creation of a clear link between mine clearance priorities and national/local long-term economic development as well as maintain focus on the

institutional capacity building of mine action structures in BiH to effectively coordinate mine action in the long-term. With regards to Albania, as we heard today, UNDP has continued to support the capacity development of the Albanian Mine Action Executive to coordinate and monitor mine action activities in accordance with international standards. We look forward to an Albania Free of the Impact of Mines before the end of the year, as announced here and during the June Intersessionals in Geneva.

UNICEF has provided assistance in Mine Risk Awareness activities in Albania in co-operation with ministries of defence and of education and science, Albanian Mine Action Executive, and civil society as well as NGOs. In support of the national plans and strategies, mine risk education is being integrated through pilot projects into extra-curricular activities in compulsory education.

UNMAS is providing funding for mine/cluster bomb/UXO clearance and technical survey in support of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Management Section in Kosovo and in support of the Office of the Kosovo Security Forces, with the aim of complementing and enhancing the existing Mine Action Programme. UNMAS has managed in the past the mine action programme in Kosovo in the context of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as well as one short-time mine action programme in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Despite progress in clearance, victim assistance is still relevant to these four countries. They all have identified themselves as states responsible for having a significant number of victims from antipersonnel mines. We congratulate Azerbaijan, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia for ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which in the views of UNMAT constitutes an appropriate and relevant framework for addressing the rights of survivors and implementing victim assistance, within the broader disability context at national level.

We also commend the countries of the region, who have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and, in particular, Albania, Croatia and Slovenia for their speedy ratification. The CCM represents an appropriate framework for ameliorating the threat posed by Cluster Munitions.

Last but not least the United Nations Mine Action Team takes this opportunity to commend the efforts made by countries in South Eastern Europe to fulfill their obligations with the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. We hope to witness in few years a South Eastern Europe Region Free from the Impact of Mines.

We look forward to a successful Second Review Conference in Cartagena, Colombia, later this year. We commend the efforts of the Host Country as well as of the President

designate, Ambassador Susan Ekey, in preparing for a successful Conference. We look forward, in particular, to the adoption of the Cartagena Action Plan, which should guide the work of all mine action stakeholders, including states, the UN system, Civil Society and the ICRC, for the following five years.

Thank you,