

**Dear Co-Chairs**

**Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me first to express my pleasure to address this meeting on behalf of the Government of Albania and to reconfirm the commitment to continue our efforts towards fulfilling the objectives the Cartagena Action Plan with regard to Victim Assistance.

I wish to use this opportunity to inform you that the Albanian Government on 3 December 2009, became a signatory to the "Convention on the Rights of People with Disability", which provides a new dimension to human rights standards concerning persons with disabilities.

In view of fulfilling our commitments with regard to victim assistance, the **Cartagena Action Plan** has been translated into the Albania language and distributed to the line ministries, to the local government institutions and NGOs working in the disability issues. This document serves as an important guide to them.

In line with the *action 31 of the Cartagena Action Plan*, a Vocational Training project started in December 2009, aiming to assist 20 mine survivors. Once they successfully finalize the vocational training courses, they are assisted with free loans and technical expertise, to establish their own businesses.

In line with the same *action of the Cartagena Action Plan*, as part of Promoting Inclusion Week, from 1-5 March 2010, a series of activities were carried out in various regions in Albania. These activities included: panel debates, addresses from the disabled people, with experiences and challenges they face in their daily life. The activities organized by Albanian Disability Rights Foundation have been a very good opportunity for the disabled people and their organizations to raise their problems and challenges in the presence of high level government representatives and the donor community.

An humanitarian event called "Night of Thousand Dinners 2009" was held in November 2009. It raised over **\$ 12,200** from the individual donors and private sector in Albania. This amount was matched by donor funds and it is being used to support the socio-economic reintegration activities for 8 children/mine UXO survivors.

The monitoring report on "The Implementation of the National Action Plan of the National Strategy on the people with Disabilities" was launched in Albania on March 2009. The strategy defines the objectives to be achieved in the period 2010-2014, as well as the respective responsibilities of the Albanian central and local government to carry out specific tasks.

In April 2010, at the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance, the local NGO ALB-AID supported by active participation and contribution of mine survivors, organized an awareness activity on the rights of the people with disabilities. A special appeal was made to the representatives of the local government in order to pay more attention to the survivor's problems.

Lastly, I would like to inform that Albania is planning to hold a Victim Assistance Workshop in October 2010. The aim of the workshop will be to analyze the progress, needs and future plans on Victim Assistance in line with the aims and orientations of the Cartagena Action Plan. The VA Workshop will intend to bring together all actors involved in providing services to assist mine survivors and other people with disabilities.

***Dear Co-Chairs,***

I would like to reaffirm our strong commitment to further advance on the support and care provided to the mine survivors in Albania and the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan.

Thank you for your attention.