Republic of Albania

Statement
by
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Mr. Chairman,

Since this is my first time to take the floor, I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you on my delegation's support in your efforts toward a successful completion of this session.

Mr. Chairman,

Albania believes that action toward strengthening the international framework for the legal trade of the Conventional Weapons, as well as toward preventing and combating the illicit traffic of such weapons, constitutes a major contribution for a safer and more prosperous world. The year ahead is marked by a series of important events such as the negotiation of an Arms Trade Treaty, the Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Progress is expected to be seen also in the framework of the universalization and implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and the Convention of Cluster Munitions.

My delegation welcomes the progress achieved during the preparatory process on the elements of an Arms Trade Treaty under the valuable leadership of Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina. Such a treaty will establish a much needed legally binding international instrument with the highest common standards for the transfers of conventional weapons. We look forward to a successful UN Conference on an Arms Trade Treaty in 2012.

The illicit production, stockpile and trade of the Small Arms and Light weapons continues to pose a serious threat to the international security and the development everywhere in the world. Albania reiterates its commitment to the Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in
small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Following the positive results of the meeting of Governmental Experts in May this year, Chaired by Ambassador Jim Mc Lay of New Zealand, we look forward to a successful 2012 Review Conference of the UNPoA.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), Albania, as one of the Oslo signatories, welcomes its entry into force in August last year. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the Action Plan 2010-2015 adopted at the first Meeting of the States Parties in Vientiane, Lao PDR in November 2010, as well as the Beirut Declaration and the progress made during the second Meeting of the States Parties in September this year. To date, the Convention counts 66 Member States, while the total number of states that have joined the Convention, as States Parties or Signatories reaches 111. We are encouraged by the growing tendency of ratifications and accessions to the Convention and call upon the other non states party to do so.

Mr. Chairman,

The Mine Ban Treaty is another important element of the humanitarian disarmament. Beside the total ban of the production, use and stockpiling of the anti-personnel mines, it requires the destruction of all existing stockpiles, the clearance of all mine-contaminated areas and ensuring the assistance to the mine victims. Thanks to the Mine Ban Treaty, the use of antipersonnel mines has dramatically decreased, land is being cleared and released to local communities for normal human activity in dozens of countries, victims of mines are being assisted and there are less and less casualties each year.

Since its opening for signature in 1997, the MBT has achieved a great degree of universalisation. To date, the Mine Ban Treaty counts 157 State Parties, comprising more than 80 % of the UN membership. On the other hand, the majority of the remaining 39 States who are not part of the Treaty, do not use, produce or stockpile anti-personnel land mines.

While noting the increased support for the Convention, the international community has expressed its concern on the recent cases of use of anti-personnel mines. We call on those countries, as well as on all other countries, to refrain from ever using the anti-personnel landmines as they have devastating effects on civilians and they hamper the economic development of the affected areas long after conflicts are over. The success of the global ban on antipersonnel mines demonstrates that the
humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines and the damage they cause clearly outweigh the limited military utility they may have.

**Contribution of Albania to the implementation and universalization of the MBT**

Mr. Chairman,

After becoming Party to the Ottawa Convention in February 2000, Albania has done its utmost to implement the Treaty by destroying anti-personnel mines, clearing mined fields, assisting victims and survivors and promoting the universalization of the Convention. From January 2001 to April 2002, Albania completed the destruction of its almost 1.7 million anti-personnel mine stockpile. After the demining efforts that spanned almost a decade, in 2009 Albania declared itself a mine free country after the clearance of a total of 102 contaminated areas covering more than 15.2 million square meters. All of this would not have been possible without the support provided by a number of countries and international organizations to whom Albania is very grateful. (namely: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Luxembourg Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, European Commission and NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency).

Victim assistance was one of the priorities of the Albanian Presidency of the 10th Meeting of States Parties. In this regard and in line with the Cartagena Action Plan, Albania hosted in June this year an international Symposium on Strengthening the International Cooperation on Mine Victim Assistance" with the participation of 91 delegates, representing 43 governments, different related NGO-s, civil society and academic circles. The symposium appreciated also the valuable contribute of several mine victims.

With respect to the universalization of the MBT, the Albanian Presidency has been promoting the Convention in close collaboration with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Belgium, in its capacity as Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group. In His capacity as the President’s Special Envoy on the Universalization of the Convention, His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan has visited the capitals of several States not parties to engage in a discussion on possible accession to the Convention.

My delegation takes this opportunity to renew its appreciation for the professional work and dedication of the aforementioned actors, as well as of all other entities and
NGO-s who tirelessly continue to work on the ground serving the humanitarian purposes of the Convention.

Albania welcomes the accession of Tuvalu to the MBT last September and looks forward to the implementation of the commitments made by Finland and Poland – to join the Convention in 2012. We especially encourage states to take the final step in the light the upcoming 11th Meeting of States Parties that will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 28th of November to the 2nd of December this year and we wish all success to the upcoming Cambodian Presidency. This event should provide a great opportunity to advance the full implementation and universalization of the convention. In the same time we call upon all other states who have not acceded or ratified the MBT to do so without delay.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman,

This year, Albania, together with Norway and Cambodia have tabled the draft-resolution titled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction" as contained in the document A/C.1/66/L.4. The draft resolution calls upon the States to accede and implement the MBT, giving a strong focus on the humanitarian dimension of the Convention. The text presented this year, has not substantial changes from the last year’s Resolution 65/48, except for some technical updates. Since it was first presented 14 years ago, the resolution has recognized an increased support over the years. Last year, it reached the highest level of support ever with 165 votes in favor at the General Assembly. We call to all UN Member States, especially on those who are not party to the treaty, to vote in favor of the resolution, thus showing support for the humanitarian principles of the convention.

I Thank You, Mr. Chairman