

**AMBASSADOR WOLLFARTH SPEAKING POINTS AT
LARGE CALIBRE LINE INAUGURATION – MJEKES, 8 MARCH 2011**

Minister Imami,
Ambassador Müller-Holtkemper,
Ambassador Arvizu,
Deputy Minister Spahiu,
General Malaj,
General Gjunksi,
Chair Demi,
Prefect Deliallisi,
Director Karanxha,
Distinguished Guests,
Good morning:

Can I say, first of all, how pleased I am to be here with you in Mjebes for such an important gathering.

To begin, it is worth, albeit briefly, sharing with you some thoughts as to what brought us together today in the first place.

Some three years ago, in spring of 2008, the Ministry of Defence first approached the OSCE for assistance in dealing with 34 tonnes of a toxic rocket fuel component known as *melange*, as the OSCE had disposed of such fuels in other countries and evidently hoped that we could render similar technical assistance here in Albania in an environmentally correct and safe manner.

The OSCE acting through the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in Vienna and the OSCE Presence in Albania - wished to respond in a positive manner to such a request and so the facilitation of the Ministry's request was started.

Four participating States, namely Sweden, Finland, Greece and Denmark, then agreed to fund a project that was finally completed in late 2009 with the very last incineration having taken place in Sweden.

In March of the same year 2008, and as a direct result of the Gerdec tragedy, it became clear in all brutality that conventional surplus ammunition was a huge problem, technically then, but today also, as it seems, even bigger for the judiciary.

It was at this point in 2008 that a second request for technical support was sent by the Defence Ministry to the OSCE for assistance in the disposal of large calibre ammunition.

In December 2009, six band saws were delivered and donated to Mjebes and Polican demilitarization depots, funded by Denmark.

Since that successful start, I am pleased to say that the band saws have been extensively used to dispose of thousands of tonnes of ammunition and anti-tank mines, the majority of which was destroyed right here in Mjebes.

Then, in April 2010, in partnership with the Defence Ministry, the Presence embarked upon a third project involving the packaging, shipping and incineration of 120 tonnes of another hazardous chemical that was highly flammable, toxic, corrosive and even possibly carcinogenic, and this project was then completed in August of the same year.

Today is the start of a fourth project - the inauguration of the large calibre line with five band saws.

The band saws to be inaugurated today will assist with the disposal of 75mm ammunition and other ammunition up to 152mm in size, of which there are many thousands of tonnes in surplus.

This project was only made possible through the generous funding from Germany.

With these additional band saws, it will be possible to increase the disposal rate by an additional 7,000 tonnes during 2011.

Also, today, we see the joining of NATO and NAMSA to an already very successful effort of surplus ammunition treatment in a project funded by the United States.

NAMSA, along with Director Karanxha, will manage all four demilitarization lines located here in Mjekes.

I am convinced that there will be excellent co-operation between NAMSA and personnel here in Mjekes.

The Presence is looking forward to co-operation helping with the disposal of these dangerous munitions.

In stark contrast to the successful technical disposal process of ammunition, the judicial handling of the Gerdec incident has not made the same level of progress, as we all would have wished for to see.

With the third anniversary of this man made disaster coming up soon, the Albanian public still does not see that justice is done. It is dragging on for too long, not only in the eyes of those directly affected.

Let me take this opportunity to remind all those involved in the justice system of particular responsibilities and appeal to their consciousness to do what it takes to ensure that justice is done and is seen to be done.

Minister Imami,
Ambassador Müller-Holtkemper,
Ambassador Arvizu,
Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me wish the Defence Ministry much success in their continuing efforts with this extremely important and necessary effort.

Please know that the Presence remains ready, upon request, in assisting in projects leading to increased security.

Let us be clear that with the disposal of all surplus ammunition in the future, as a full NATO member state, and as a country with well known EU aspirations, Albania will be a much safer country, one where its citizens will be able to live and prosper.

While thanking you all, let me highlight again our special thanks to the Government of Germany represented by you, Ambassador Müller-Holtkemper, for the great contribution that brought us together today here in Mjebes

Thank you.

ENDS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY