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30 June 2021

ENGLISH only



MISIONI I PËRHERSHËM
I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË
PRANË ORGANIZATAVE
NDËRKOMBËTARE
VJENË

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

Ref. 225/1

NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the International Organizations in Vienna presents its compliments to all Permanent Delegations and Missions to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre, and in accordance with the FSC.DEC/7/04, has the honor to provide the requested information on Anti-Personnel Landmines for 2020.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all Permanent Delegations and Missions to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre the assurances of its highest consideration. 14.



Vienna, 30 June 2021

**To: All Permanent Delegations and Missions to the OSCE
OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre
VIENNA**



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

**QUESTIONNAIRE
ON ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES**

(FSC.DEC/7/04)

OSCE

2021

OSCE QUESTIONNAIRE – 2020

PART I

- 1. *Is your country a State Party to the 1996 Amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices annexed to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW)?***

Yes, Albania is a State Party to the Amended Protocol II of the CCW. (28 August 2002)

- 2. *If yes:***

If no:

- 3. *Is your country considering ratification/accession to the Amended Protocol II?***

N/A

- 4. *What measures have been taken to prevent the indiscriminate use of mines, booby-traps and other devices?***

Since April 2006, Albania has approved a new Law on the implementation of the APM Ban Convention, which imposes administrative and penal sanctions on any activity involving indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines.

- 5. *Would your country be interested in receiving assistance related to the implementation of this Protocol? If so, please describe.***

N/A

- 6. *Does your country have the capacity to assist others related to this Protocol? If so, please describe.***

No

PART II

- 7. *Has your country ratified or acceded to the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction?***

Albania has ratified the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel mines and on their destruction since 29-th February 2000.

8. ***(a) If yes, please attaches the most recent report submitted by your country in accordance with Article 7 of the Convention or give the appropriate electronic address for the report.***

<http://www.unog.ch>

- (b) If no, is your country considering ratification/accession to the Convention?***

N/A

- (c) Has your country adopted legislation to address the humanitarian objectives of the convention, or taken any specific measures regarding the use, production, storage, transfer and destruction of anti-personnel landmines? In ease a moratorium has been introduced, what is its scope and duration and when was it introduced?***

On April 2006, Albanian has approved a new Law on the implementation of the APM Ban Convention, which imposes administrative and penal sanctions on any activity prohibited for a State Party to the Antipersonnel-Mine Ban Convention undertaken by persons or on Albanian territory, and confirms the Minister of Defence as the authority in charge for all mine action activities in the country.

9. ***Does your country have any specific measures in place to provide assistance to victims?***

Until now, the assistance to the mine victims was provided by AMMCO (Albanian Mine & Munitions Coordination Office). But AMMCO closed its activities on 31 March 2021. Instead of AMMCO, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (MHSA) will deal with this issue. The focal point for the assistance to the mine victims/survivors is Ms. Irena Mitro, Head of the Sector on Policies and Strategies on Social Care and Integrated Social Services under the MHSA. Also, this ministry informs that the rights of the persons with disabilities in Albania are subject to the National Action Plan on People with Disabilities 2021-2025 adopted by the Council of Ministers' Decision No 276, date 12.05.2021. This Action Plan is aligned with the principles and obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

10. ***Does your country require assistance in mine clearance, stockpile destruction, mine awareness and/or victim assistance? If so, please describe.***

No

11. ***Does your country have the capacity to assist others in mine action? If so, please***

describe.

No

PART III

- 1. *Has your country notified the Depositary of its consent to be bound by the 2003 CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) once it enters into force? Is your country considering doing so?***

Albania is a State Party to Protocol V of the CCW on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

- 2. *If yes, at what stage is the process?***
- 3. *Would your country be interested in receiving assistance in clearing or otherwise minimizing the risks and effects of ERW? If so, please describe.***

UXO Hotspots Contaminated areas:

In addition to the contamination along the northeastern border Albania is still also suffering the contamination from unexploded ordnances hotspots created because of civil unrests in 1997. During these unrests and later, there were a number of explosions at Ammunition Storage Sites (ASS) across Albania. According to AAF estimates at the time, 38 army depots (storages) were destroyed due to the detonation of about 5,700 tons of ammunition in 15 different locations. The explosions killed and injured many civilians while thrown-out ammunition contaminated vast areas around the ASS.

The ammunition contamination of the territory is still a problem in Albania. Among the causes of such contamination are the unplanned explosions at Ammunition Storage Sites (ASS) across the country during the civil unrest in 1997, the unexploded remains of the WW II as well as former army ammunition demolition areas which need to be cleared of explosive remnants.

UXO hotspots have been created also in few former army demolition areas and shooting or firing ranges polygons (former shooting & training sites), which have been closed recently by the AAF. Most of these areas need a full subsurface clearance at a depth of up to 50 cm, before being used by the army or being released to the local community.

The Government and the Ministry of Defence have outlined a Plan of Action for Elimination of Excess Ammunition in Albania aiming to dispose of all its surplus stockpiled ammunition by 2015 and to clear all the UXO/ERW hotspot areas by 2021.

Albanian Mine and Munitions Coordination Office (AMMCO) have carried out technical and socio-economic impact assessments in 19 identified UXO hotspot areas. The purpose of these assessments was to obtain a real picture of the remaining threat such as: exact location, estimation of threat, to determine the details of clearance operation requirements, impact to the communities and to propose due action. More than 1.9 million square meters were identified as dangerous in these hotspots, due to the presence of ammunition remnants.

The Ministry of Defence requested UNDP's assistance to deal with the UXO hotspots problem by engaging AMMCO (Albanian Mine & Munitions Coordination Office) as a professional structure to contribute through the same institutional arrangement and role, inclusive of its know-how in mine victim assistance and risk education/community liaison activities, in the area of hotspots clearance and ammunition disposal, to help ensure that these components are carried out in accordance with the International Humanitarian Standards. Currently the coordination and monitoring activities are supported financially from US Department of State through ITF and UNDP Albania until the end of March 2021.

Based on the MoD action plan and clearance priorities with financial support of USA Department of State through ITF Enhancing Human Security the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in the **7** UXO hotspots and cleared and released **793,015** square meters of land and found and destroyed **39,300 UXO** and **131,483 SAA** at Gjeroven, Palikesht, Mbreshtan in Berat, Kordhoc, Picar in Gjirokaster and Sinanaj in Tepelenë including the half task of Jubë - Sukth, Durres.

No.	UXO Hotspot	Clearance period	Cleared Area (m ²)	ITEMS REMOVED
1	Gjeroven - Berat	2014 – 2016	68,423	4,228 UXO 36,501 SAA
2	Palikesht - Berat	2015	13,321	1,679 UXO 1,778 SAA
3	Mbreshtan - Berat	2015 – 2016	65,227	7,659 UXO 61,442 SAA
4	Kordhoc - Gjirokastër	2016 – 2017	24,470	1,822 UXO 748 SAA
5	Picar- Gjirokastër	2016 – 2017	62,000	2,590 UXO 14,007 SAA
6	Sinanaj - Tepelenë	2018 – 2019	171,389	4,845 UXO 17,000 SAA
7	Jubë - Sukth, Durres	2017- 2018	388,185	16,477 UXO 7 SAA
TOTAL			793,015	39,300 UXO 131,483 SAA

Also, the EOD of Albanian Armed Forces are doing clearance of Hotspots in Albania with financial support from the Albanian Government. Based on the MoD action plan and clearance priorities the EOD AAF teams in the **6** UXO hotspots and cleared and released **164,030** square meters of land and found and destroyed **55,189 UXO** and **462,529 SAA** at Otlakë in Berat, Gërdec in Vorë and Klos, Suç and Selixe in Burrel and Laç.

No.	UXO Hotspot	Clearance period	Cleared Area (m ²)	ITEMS REMOVED
1	Otlakë - Berat	2013	3.000	2.081 UXO
2	Gërdec - Vorë	2013 – 2014	75.000	2.493 UXO
3	Klos - Burrel	2016	180	2.321 UXO
4	Laç	2016	350	981 UXO 4.823 SAA
5	Suç - Burrel	2018	84.000	133 UXO
6	Qafë Shtamë (Selixe) - Burrel	2018	1.500	47.180 UXO 457.706 SAA
TOTAL			164.030	55.189 UXO 462.529 SAA

UXO Hotspot Jubë-Sukth, Durrës

The former AAF (Albanian Armed Forces) training area and later ammunition demolition area (OBOD) lies on the beach North of Durrës, which is an area used regularly by the local community. Fisher nets are pointing to fishing activities in the area. Ammunition metal scrap collectors are collecting metal pieces in the water for selling them on the market. This activity contains a certain threat and should be halted. Numerous demolition pits scattered over the area are witnessing OBOD activities. The last demolition happened in April 2011. The Albanian MoD closed this demolition range and intended to handover the area to local authorities. The AAF carried out a surface clearance but the area will need a sub-surface clearance according to International Standards (IMAS) before the land can be released to the local communities. On 8 May 2017, AMMCO in coordination with General Staff issued a task dossier to do Technical Survey of UXO Hotspot of Jubë -Sukth (TD HS 017) to Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), based on the MoD action plan and priorities. After the Technical Survey completed, based on the NPA Clearance Operation Plan approved on 28 June 2017, AMMCO issued a task dossier based on the MoD Order to do Clearance Operation of UXO Hotspot of Jubë- Sukth. The total area in question lies north of Durrës and was identified as the area of the total size of 1.3 million square meters (this also includes an area of app. **300.000 sq.** meters that is covered by sea). NPA teams consequently re-measured accessible area and have defined the area as the total size of **808,185** square meters.

NPA deployed two clearance teams to the Jubë - Sukth UXO hotspot executing Clearance Operation starting from 28 June 2017 and completed phase 1 in on the 5 December 2018. NPA teams cleared a total of **388,185 square meters** in the **Phase I** of clearance. This means that **420,000 square meters** was left for clearance of AAF Teams in Jubë - Sukth and is subject of the current operational clearance plan.

The NPA handed over completion report for **Jubë - Sukth Phase 1** to AMMCO and AAF teams.

UXO Hotspot Jubë – Sukth, Durres Phase 2

NPA has provided training in EOD systematic clearance to 50 AAF staff from the engineer company of support battalion of AAF Land Forces, using NPA SOP and training plans.

The aim of the training was to build sustainable Albanian capacity, to deal with the remaining clearance in Jubë - Sukth task, as well as any other areas that will require systematic EOD clearance in Albania, for instance former firing ranges. Phase 2 of the UXO clearance operations in Jubë - Sukth started on 17 September 2019 with new two AAF Clearance teams trained from NPA during May- July 2018 under NPA management support. NPA has conducted refresher training in the period from 02 – 13 September 2019.

Training was executed by NPA Site Supervisor under guidance and supervision from NPA Operations manager. NPA has prepared clearance plan in this period, which was discussed with AAF teams. On 16 September 2019, the teams executed site preparations on the Jubë - Sukth task TD-HS-017c and on 17 September 2019 was the first operational day for AAF teams on the Jubë - Sukth site. The teams are deployed under the supervision of NPA Site supervisor and consist of two team leaders, 15 searchers and two medics. In addition, one commander of the Unit is always present in the administration area. Teams are executing clearance as per NPA SOPs and general Staff Order No.1026 date 30.08.2019 “Implementation of the UXO hotspot Clearance Operation in Jubë - Sukth, Durres”

UXO Hotspot Jubë - Sukth, Durres (TD-HS-17 c) - Phase Two	
Total Estimated Area in sq. meters:	420,000 sq. meters
Total Cleared Area in sq. meters 31/01/2021:	45,589 sq. meters (10,85 %)
Total Items Found 31/01/2021:	575 UXO
Remaining area to be cleared:	374,411 sq. meters
Clearance organization	Albanian Armed Forces -Two Teams
Donor's	Albanian Ministry of Defense, USA EUCOM, USA DoS PM/WRA through ITF Slovenia.

The Clearance operation activities in Jubë - Sukth, Durres were suspended as per Government decision on the Covid-19 situation and measures applied. Based on the Albanian Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Order No. 580 date 22.06.2020 “The implementation of clearance operation in UXO Hotspot of Jubë-Sukth, Durres”. In the first week of July 2020, the AAF teams

setup the field base in Shkozë, Durrës and they started with one-week refresh training support by AMMCO QM Team. After refresh training teams were deployed on the clearance operation activities as per approved clearance plan. During the month of October-December 2020, the AAF teams due to raining weather conditions and with restriction of COVID prevention rules they work with low clearance rates and slow progress.

The clearance operations from Two AAF teams in this UXO hotspot until the end of **December 2020**, a total of **45,589 m²** is cleared and **575 items** of unexploded ordnance (UXO) are found and destroyed on-site or transported in approved demolition ranges designated by MoD for this purpose. AMMCO team was continuously coordinating and conducting Quality Assurance on this UXO hotspot clearance operation activity.

The AAF Support Command provides all the necessary logistic arrangements according to safety regulations and respective international standards for the ammunition collected in the hotspots by the clearance company and considered safe for transport. In addition, the EOD experts of AAF dispose on the spot all dangerous ammunition was unsafe for transportation. AMMCO coordinates and closely monitors the UXO clearance and disposal operations to ensure that these are carried out in strict compliance with the international humanitarian standards. Community Liaison and Risk Education activities are carried out also along with the UXO clearance operations to inform the communities aware of the ammunition risk.

Since the Government of Albania is currently struggling with several priorities, the international financial support is a crucial need for both clearance and the monitoring process of the clearance of these UXO/ERW hotspots, and Victim Assistance in order to be cleared within the set deadlines and so ensure the safety of the surrounding communities in ensure the medical and socio-economic rehabilitation of survivors.

EOD Response to Callouts:

In addition to the UXO Hotspots Clearance the EOD unit of Albanian Armed Forces (AAF) perform the EOD response based on the request from police and local authorities which are classified as non-criminal act. During the reporting period the EOD company responded to 55 EOD tasks where 11,973 items of unexploded ordnance of different calibres, 143 Antitank Mines, 3 bombs from WW II and 4,832 items of small arms and ammunitions (SAA≤ 23 mm and bullets) were found in total during the EOD tasks.

Physical Security& Stock pile Management (PSSM) Support:

With additional funding from the Department of Defense, the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) utilized the New Jersey National Guard through the State Partnership Program (SPP), and U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) to conduct EOD Level 2 training events with the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF).

The US Department of Defense and the US EUCOM as part of Physical Security& Stockpile Management (PSSM) Program has on-going the assistance for improvement of physical security

and safety upgrades at the Miraka and Engineering Battalion ammunition depot facilities Ministry of Defense's (MoD).

The Underwater Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) contamination problem in Albania.

Due to our turbulent history, and as a result of various parties dumping large quantities of munitions during both World Wars, we have a significant problem with underwater unexploded ordnance along the entire coast of Albania. The most significantly contaminated area is in Vlorë bay, but other areas, particularly in southern Albania coast also have dumped of unexploded ordnance in the waters. Additional surveys need still to be carried out around these areas.

During the reporting period January - December 2020, due to the Global pandemic COVID-19, the activities of the Diving Center has been limited to carrying out operations planned to take place. The EOD diver's teams was carried out the reconnaissance and clearance operations in contaminated area at the entrance of the canal of the Port of Durrës where a 145 mm and a 76 mm caliber artillery shell was identified removed and destroyed.

The Diving Center develops its annual training and education plan, which is focused on training young divers (including the EOD group) as well as keeping the level of professional training of divers.

The Albanian government has requested the necessary equipment's for underwater clearance operation which is will enable to make a serious commitment to cleaning up our coastal waters, and thus making these safer for our citizens. There are already identified underwater UXO/ERW contaminated areas mainly in the Vlorë Bay and Saranda Bay, also our experts already have prepared the plans for cleaning those contaminated areas. Therefore, any kind of support from the international organizations will be appreciated to fulfill those projects.

4. *Does your country have the capacity to assist others in clearing and minimizing the risks and effects of ERW? If so, please describe.*

Albania provides the EOD team of Albanian Armed Forces in the European Union mission to assist with European Union Military Committee (EUMC) in EOD training in Mali. EU "EUTM Mali" training mission in Republic of Mali, in Africa, with 4 (four) military personnel, as part of the EOD Team "Explosive Ordnance Disposal", in support of the Protection Company of Koulikoro Base. This participation stopped in May 2020, pursuant to the guidance and recommendation given by the Military Planning and Conduct capability MPCC and in total accordance with the on COVID -19 Adaptation Plans activated by MPCC "For the reduction of the mission personnel at risk and nonessential mission personnel".

As of June 2017, the Albanian Armed Forces has engaged with an EOD platoon as part of Canadian contingent in NATO enhanced Forward Presence (e-FP) in Latvia with 21 military EOD personnel (4 officers and 17 NCO-s).