



MISIONI I PERHERSHEM
I REPUBLIKES SE SHQIPERISE
PRANE OKB-SË
NEW YORK

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

320 East, 79th Street New York, NY 10021, Tel.: (212) 249-2059, Fax: (212) 535-2917

Intervention of
Mr. Saimir Repishti
Head of the UN Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania
to the
UN Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of
the UN Programme of Action on SALW

New York, 11-15 July 2005

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important meeting and to assure you for the full cooperation and support from the Albanian delegation for the success of this meeting.

One of the objectives of the foreign policy of Albania is its integration into NATO security structures. We have cooperated with NATO through Partnership for Peace Program and this cooperation with partner countries has significantly contributed to peace and stability in our region and has extended the zone of security and stability to other European countries. Close and effective cooperation on security issues has also been built with the UN, EU and OSCE through several programs and initiatives.

Albania remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the UN Plan of Action and its objectives of preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade of SALW.

Albania has taken due measures in order to successfully implement the "UN Program of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects". Due to the turmoil of 1997 a significant number of small arms and light weapons were spread all over the country and moved to the hand of civilians. It became a matter of emergency the collection of such weapons and their immediate destruction. The government established the Weapon Collection Commission headed by the Deputy Prime Minister

whose task was the coordination at the national level of all the key ministries working on weapons collection issue. There is also a National Contact point for implementation of the Plan of Action – he is based in the Ministry of Defense. There are also other focal points for different areas of work related to small arms control, including for instance the Secretary of the Weapons Collection Commission who acts as a national coordinator and focal point for weapons collection within Albania. The police task is arms collection while the army stockpiles the collected arms into military storehouses for destruction.

Albania has made significant steps towards the completion of its national legislation on SALW. Albanian Parliament has adopted the law on “On fire arms” in 1992, on “SALW collection” in 1998 and “For collection of weapons, ammunition and other military materials” in March 2003.

Since 1991 the Ministry of Defense controls the export-import of military goods through MEICO (Military Export Import Company). Recently the Albanian government prepared the law on “State control on import-export of arms and dual use goods, equipments and technologies” which is drafted in accordance with EU legislation and EU Code of Conduct. This law will be accompanied by a list of dual used goods, equipments and technologies that might be used for military purposes which will be updated every year according to the EU standards.

The Albanian General Customs Directorate has the responsibility to prevent the import and export of unlicensed goods, investigating offences and taking

appropriate actions , including prosecution of offenders. Entities or individuals violating export control legal requirements carry administrative, criminal and civil responsibility pursuant to the Albanian legislation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is acting as key player regarding the fulfillment of the international obligations that derives from the international instruments on export regime control that my country committed to and resolution of the Security Council.

So far Albania has no legislation on brokering activities. But an expert group is soon to be established and to draft the proper legislation on the matter since Albania is fully committed to apply the EU Arms Brokering legislation and EU Code of Conduct. We think also that an international instrument on arms brokering would bring new positive developments on the field.

My country has made commitments towards EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfer and the OSCE Small Arms Document and Best Practices Guidelines. On April 2004 the government of Albania consented for the membership of the country in Wassenaar Arrangements and the issue is in hold until the parliament adopts it.

Albanian army through a process of modernization due to be completed in 2010 under the Partnership for Peace program has been reformed from the “emergency phase” into “operational phase”. In relation to the defense reform and its long term plan there is a national strategy on concentration of military storehouses. With the foreign assistance, the Ministry of Defense of Albania has issued regulations for managing the SALW stockpile in full compliance with the NATO regulations. 6 new storehouses are “licensed” to

help the Ministry of Defense for planning SALW stockpiling in the future. But we think that the improvement of the storehouses premises will take more time due to lack of financial resources for destroying the existing surplus stocks of SALW that continue to be stored in poor conditions. This is particularly important due to the fact that the safety of the storehouses premises still does not meet the international standards and some of them are still located near residential areas. While there is a good will and full commitment from the Albanian government to improve the stockpiling premises and their safety, more support from the international community is needed in terms of financing, capacity building and law improvement.

It is also worth mentioning the project launched by the UNDP in cooperation with the Albanian government on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control which is implemented during the period 2002-03. Based on the UN Program of Action its objectives were to help remove illegally held weapons and explosives from the population, to make the population more aware of the dangers of the illegal possession of such items and to enhance the ability of the authorities to control the private possession of arms and ammunition. SALW collection program in Albania aimed to reduce firearms related accidents as well as violence and crime linked to weapons possession. We have to stress out that this project was not a straightforward weapons collection one. Instead of offering individual rewards to people handing weapons, the project offered collective incentives in the form of community-based development projects by providing development assistance to poor communities and encouraging such communities to tackle their problems in a constructive and cooperative way. The project encouraged the competitive

approach which demanded a weapons collection effort with tangible results from the participating communities without setting an conditional target. In addition, I have to mention that some people, mainly in cities and villages nearby, voluntarily handed arms and explosives to the police without expecting or receiving any kind of reward or compensation because they were aware of its contribution for the improvement of public safety. At the end of the project around three hundred thousand small arms have been collected and destroyed.

Being convinced that the education for peace incorporated program helps in the sustainability of physical disarmament, we included it in our project on SALW. Parallel with the implementation of the project we trained community members and students aiming at raising their awareness on the dangerous impact of keeping illegal weapons within the community. Information was also given on national legal framework on firearms and penalties related to the illegal possession of arms etc. The project activities on education for peace were designed to promote tolerance, peace, disarmament, conflict resolution, human rights among the community members. At the and of the project, peace education became an integral part of the national Albanian curricula of the Civic education subject while our Teacher's and student's manuals are included in the National Educational Standards. Education for peace is now part of the University courses for future teachers. Students of the secondary education nation wide get some lessons and practices on peace and disarmament. 3 activities from Albanian project on Peace and Disarmament became part of international Hague Appeal for Peace Manual.

My country plays an active role in the SECI Small Arms Task Force through seconding a senior police officer to act as the chair of the task force and project manager for its operation. The first activity of the task force, Operation Ploughshares yielded some successes, including the arrest of some (an) illicit trafficker moving across the borders of several participating states. We are active on Operation Safe Place that aims to improve inter-agency and inter-governmental cooperation on anti SALW trafficking across the region. In December 2004, a regional planning meeting for Operation Safe Place took place in Albania, jointly organized by the Government of Albania, the SECI Center and Saferworld, UK. Regarding cooperation with the Stability Pact we welcome the involvement of the SEESAC, as an organization linked to the Stability Pact on the drafting process of a national small arms strategy in Albania.

The Albanian government has cooperated with a range of national and international civil society organizations over the past two years on a wide range of projects including training, awareness raising, research and policy development on SALW. Two deputies for the National Focal Point participated in a civil society training meeting for NGO-s from Albania and Kosovo that took place in 2004 in Tirana organized by SEESAC and Saferworld, UK.

Thank you Mr. Chairman