

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT THE PRESENTATION OF MANUAL
ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR POLICE OFFICERS**

5 April 2013

General Director Burgaj,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Speaking to you in my capacity as the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, let me state first that I am very pleased to be here with you today.

The publication of the Manual on Equality and Diversity for Albanian Police Officers is a very important contribution to and can be considered as a milestone in the overall efforts to build respect for diversity by the Albanian State Police's officers.

This Manual is the result of the excellent cooperation between the Albanian State Police and the OSCE Presence in Albania, which encompasses several areas of joint work in the service of the country's security.

These are just not one-off initiatives or events, but a sustained commitment to address diversity as a priority issue for the Albanian State Police.

The Manual follows a successful "Strategic Diversity" seminar, held in June, for senior police managers and the "Training of Trainers on Equality and Diversity", for Police Instructors and Trainers, last October.

The importance of respecting and protecting diversity is underscored by the fact that all 57 OSCE participating States, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, from very different countries and cultures, have all assumed demanding commitments in this area.

Also, several international conventions, to which Albania is party, uphold this principle as a norm.

Further, it is a value that binds us together as mutually respected individuals in our societies.

In essence, respecting diversity means accepting the uniqueness and importance of each individual, regardless of race, colour, creed, ethnicity, gender, political opinion, sexual orientation or other grounds.

Ultimately it is a question of human rights, the rule of law and equal protection of *all* people.

This is not just about a passive acceptance of differences.

More than that: it requires a strong constitutional and institutional framework that allows for these differences to actively contribute to the common good of our democratic societies.

To bring it to full life, it must go along with a policy of zero tolerance towards any kind of discrimination.

These are fundamental principles of very real significance when it comes to police – the very institution created in the service of and in the protection of the people.

Police must therefore use all legal powers to combat acts motivated by racism, xenophobia or intolerance against minorities or other vulnerable groups, in particular, Roma and LGBT. These acts are unacceptable, a source of social unrest and insecurity.

Leading by example is therefore crucial. At bottom, security means that every individual should feel protected and treated fairly while interacting with police officers. Discriminatory behaviour by police itself cannot be tolerated and should be sanctioned accordingly.

Otherwise social cohesion and stability suffer, as does police's legitimacy *and* authority.

In this regard, the Manual can be used as didactic material for the new recruits of the Albanian State Police, to contribute to their understanding of the importance of respecting diversity, making it an integral part of their everyday work. It can also be used as an orientation tool for other police officers, including at the strategic level.

These comprehensive efforts should assist Albanian police in ensuring that diversity is respected in its daily work, building on the best international standards.

As a practical follow-up, in our view, one additional step towards upholding diversity within police itself would be to better integrate minorities in its ranks, at all levels. This would be a positive confidence-building measure, crucial for working in a respectful environment.

Inclusion of women should be fostered, too, as a practical example of implementing gender equality commitments.

General Director Burgaj,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to vividly invite the instructors of the Police Formation Centre to start using this manual as a tool for the training of new police officers, and to senior police officers to mainstream notions of respect for diversity within the strategic management of the police.

Upholding diversity is a shared responsibility. It represents also a valuable investment in this country's future.

The OSCE Presence in Albania will stand ready to support you further in living up to these objectives.

Thank you very much.