

Head of Presence's Remarks for the Media

17 April 2013

Q: How do you comment the resigning of Mr. Biba from the CEC?

Ambassador Wollfarth: "I was hoping that the CEC could continue with the utmost stability and the personnel working successfully inside the CEC so far. I would like to highlight that personally I have high respect for the work of Mr. Biba and his decision. To my perception, he contributed largely to a constructive atmosphere inside the Central Election Commission, which led to technical decisions helpful to prepare the elections on 23 June. I would like to commend his work together with the Chair of the CEC and the other members. I am sure he will be missed. I am convinced and I wish also for a good personal and professional future for him. He deserves it.

Q: Mr. Wollfarth, we have heard from the media that you have resigned. Is there any truth in it?

Ambassador Wollfarth: "Yes. One of the leading newspapers carried an article this morning. You know, I am a German diplomat and I am serving my third year here. So the German Foreign Office has offered me a good post afterwards. It can be considered even a dream of many diplomats and I have accepted. This is materializing this year. But while being here, it is probably important to highlight that I intend to stay here throughout the election. It is probably also of interest, since some misleading information was included, that I do not write the ODIHR report. The ODIHR Election Observation Mission will observe and write their report and they have a different mandate. But it will be work on each side on their own mandate, side by side and in support of the Albanian people to have free and fair elections.

Q: Do you think that election standards will be affected by the recent developments in the CEC?

Ambassador Wollfarth: "I hope not. Albania has fortunately larger resources of good people being able to professionally work in the Central Election Commission and in the CEAZs. But it is very important to do the utmost and especially from the host country side to keep politics as far as possible out of bodies like the Central Election Commission. It should be seen as an apolitical body. Working with the Albanian people is very rewarding. I like it very much and not only the ordinary people they like and want to live in democracy and they deserve a good framework for that. And I intend to be part of that in the election process.

Q: Do you think that the resignation of Mr. Biba will affect the work of the CEC?

Ambassador Wollfarth: "I am sure he will have a successor. I hope for the same high level of professional quality in that successor and I am sure also that the CEC will have to continue to operate in an apolitical way.

Q: So, do you think that the CEC is balanced today?

Ambassador Wollfarth: "I understand this is the tradition for the last 10 years here in the country, and it was considered – and this is very important – by the local actors as balanced, or balanced enough, but sometimes fine-tuning is necessary.

Let me highlight again that the rule of law is extremely important and that the rule of law should not be circumvented. At the same time, it remains at all stages very important to have dialogue and also a sense for consensus, for commitment for the Albanian people to move forward on the reform agenda. So, I have the hope that the 23 June will also bring clarity that enough majority will be there, enough consensus will be there to move ahead on the reform agenda and that the times when Albania got stuck in internal discussions will finish and the reforms can be tackled and successfully moved ahead. That includes also important issues like we tackled here today in this seminar on countering organized crime. In this case it was and is about human trafficking and the financial aspects of it.

Thank you."