

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT A TRAINING OF TRAINERS
FOR ALBANIAN STATE POLICE ON DIVERSITY**

8 October 2012

General Director of Albanian State Police Burgaj,
Director of the Training Facility Hoxha,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I am very pleased to be here with you today, for the opening of this Training of Trainers on Diversity.

This training builds on the excellent co-operation between the Albanian State Police and the Presence. A partnership which we cherish as it includes crucial areas for your country's reform progress and, more importantly, for its future as a modern democratic, European society.

The training that gathers us here today reflects our shared objective to address diversity as a priority issue for the Albanian State Police.

It follows an earlier successful Strategic Diversity seminar held in June for senior police managers.

This exercise is also a practical step in implementing the OSCE Presence's mandate of promoting human rights and providing assistance to police.

We hope that, through the training of the instructors of the Police Formation Centre, diversity will be mainstreamed into the police formation curriculum, reaching every new recruit. We wish this to be clear and sustainable.

Diversity then will be an essential component of the police's daily work in Albania, building on the best international police standards.

Let me be clear: this is not a secondary issue nor is diversity only a matter for human rights activists.

Respecting and protecting diversity is enshrined in different international conventions.

It is also an OSCE commitment agreed upon by all 56 participating States, including Albania.

It is a shared value that binds us together.

Diversity applies to relations between States and different cultures, and also between States and individuals.

It basically means accepting the uniqueness of each individual, regardless of race, colour, creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other grounds.

I must also underline that this not just about simply accepting differences.

More than that: it requires a dynamic constitutional and institutional framework that allows for these differences to contribute to our democratic societies.

Hence, respecting diversity implies a policy of zero tolerance towards any kind of discrimination.

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

These are fundamental principles in modern democracies and of very real significance when it comes to the police.

Very often the police are the visible face of the State.

It is with police officers that citizens have their first contact when they face a problem regarding their rights – most basic one among them, their security.

Security means also that every individual should feel protected and treated fairly while interacting with policemen and policewomen.

It is, therefore, crucial that police use all legal powers to combat acts motivated by racism, xenophobia or intolerance in general against minorities or other vulnerable groups.

Sadly, in these times of economic constraints, such acts may increase. It is therefore even more important that police (and all institutions) devote all possible efforts to preventing hate crimes and reacting decisively, in accordance with the law.

This is why discriminatory behaviour by police itself is unacceptable. It is bad for social cohesion and stability, and harms the police's legitimacy.

It should not be forgotten that Police's founding principle is to serve the citizens, guaranteeing their safety and security.

For instance, one possible step towards upholding diversity would be to better integrate minorities into police's ranks, at all levels. This would be a positive confidence-building measure.

General Director Burgaj,
Distinguished guests,

I would like to thank the Scottish Police College for their support in providing the expertise for the training.

In a similar way, I would also like to encourage you to benefit as much as you can from the expertise of our experienced trainer, and then transmit this knowledge in turn to other police officers.

Before concluding my remarks, I wanted to share with you some of what I shared with General Director Burgaj right before this event. I would like to commend Albania for the

successful organization of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Fall Meetings over the past days, which brought to Tirana parliamentarians from many different countries across the OSCE region. It was a positive, a fruitful event. Albania can rightly take pride in this achievement.

The OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier's visit to Tirana in this context was also very productive. Ambassador Zannier met with the highest ranking state representatives and also with the People's Advocate.

In this regard, I would like to seize this opportunity to wholeheartedly commend and thank the Albanian State Police for your very professional work in preserving the security of the meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and that of the Secretary General's delegation, when we were moving between meetings.

And now, I wish you all a successful and productive three weeks of training.

Thank you very much.

Ends