

Interview with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

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- The OSCE has missions in many countries to monitor their stability and democratic development. How successful has been such a monitoring? Are there any concrete results of this work?

I believe that the OSCE has contributed to supporting stability and democratic development in all of its participating States, including those with field operations such as Albania. Monitoring is sometimes necessary as a precondition for a wider, more operational engagement that leads to concrete results.

In Albania's case, for example, the OSCE Presence has recently helped support the adoption of a revised Electoral Code. And OSCE support for this process will continue, as the proper implementation of the code is just as important as its adoption.

- OSCE Mandate - Why does the OSCE get involved in so many different types of issues? The organization is active in everything from police reform to protection of human rights. How does it choose what issues to address in a particular country?

The OSCE from its inception as the CSCE – the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe – in the 1970s has always seen security as comprehensive. So it is true that the OSCE is involved in a number of issues – ranging from arms control to environment to human rights – as it touches upon all areas that matter to our common security.

The work of the OSCE is decided by consensus, it is for the participating States, including Albania, to decide what issues are addressed where, and consequently set the mandates of the different OSCE bodies. The mandate of a field operation is agreed by consensus and is specifically tailored to the needs and requirements of the host country.

- Despite the OSCE assistance on several issues - such as electoral reform, parliamentarianism, human rights, media development, civil society, gender equality, property reform, anti-trafficking, etc. - Albania keeps falling behind the other countries of the region in these areas. Do you think this has to do with the lack of a tradition of rule of law in Albania and therefore requires a new strategy by the OSCE?

From the perspective of where Albania started, it is clear that the country has made tremendous progress in a relatively short period of time. The OSCE Presence in Albania has facilitated and assisted in reforms over the past fifteen years.

This progress has not always been smooth, however. There have been setbacks along the way, exacerbated by the deep political divisions in the country. Albanian political actors need to overcome these divisions and agree on sustainable solutions to problems facing the country. For instance, further progress on Albania's stated goal of

European integration will only be possible if political energy is channelled into serious, constructive reform efforts by the leading parties. Although this is not the aim of the OSCE, our strategy of supporting the development of democratic institutions and processes may facilitate this, as has recently been acknowledged in the case of Croatia. But neither in Albania nor anywhere else can any OSCE strategy play a role that belongs to the local political leaders.

- How do you see co-operation between the OSCE and the host country? How long will an OSCE mission be needed here in Albania?

The Presence in Albania has built a very strong partnership with the host country and provided a significant contribution to the development of democratic institutions. The OSCE stands ready to continue to provide targeted assistance based on the Presence's mandate and the priorities identified by the Albanian authorities; in time, this may include further adjustments to its structure and functions. The Presence will remain active here in Albania as long as Albania and the other 55 OSCE participating States agree that it is needed.

- What are the key reforms expected? Where will the OSCE work focus next year in Albania?

Notable progress has been achieved in a number of areas, most recently in amendments made to the Electoral Code and the lifting of general immunities for Members of Parliament, judges and other high-level officials.

Building on this, the OSCE Presence will support the parties to continue critical discussions on broad-based, comprehensive judicial reform, which is a top priority of President Nishani. Public administration reform is also an important priority, and the pending Civil Service draft law could be seen as an important step in that direction.

- Based on such developments, how would you consider a possible Albania's OSCE chairmanship in 2016?

Chairmanships are agreed by the participating States and require a consensus decision, so I am not in a position to comment on which country will hold the 2016 Chairmanship.

- The OSCE/ODIHR has observed several elections in Albania, most recently in 2009 and 2011. Their reports list a number of problems and make recommendations for improvement. How is Albania doing on implementing these recommendations?

The Assembly to its credit finally approved a substantial revision of the Electoral Code that addresses most of the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. However, even the best Electoral Code is of limited use if there is no political will to implement it in a fair and timely manner. I would urge all political leaders and parties to take the necessary decisions to implement the new electoral provisions in good faith.

- One of the debates that have taken place since the last 2009 parliamentary elections is the multiple voting, which affects the results. Would it be possible that the OSCE finance a full project on voters' identification, voting and electronic counting in the next elections in Albania?

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has provided expert assistance in these areas before in other OSCE participating States, although not in Albania. The funding for OSCE projects sometimes comes from individual States in the form of donations. Whether such a project could or should take place is a matter for discussion among potential donors, who would also identify the most suitable implementing organization; and, of course, the expectations of the host country play an important role as well.

- OSCE Ministerial - what do you expect to achieve this year? Are there big decisions pending?

The decisions to be adopted at the Ministerial Council in Dublin on 6 and 7 December are under discussion by the delegations of the OSCE participating States now, and it would be premature to comment. The Irish Chairmanship is working with the participating States on possible decisions in all three dimensions of security covered by the OSCE – that includes the politico-military, economic and environmental and the human dimensions – that will help to guide our work in the years to come. There are important issues under discussion, among which the need to address new security challenges, such as cyber threats, or questions related to good economic governance, media freedom and tolerance in societies.