



**DEPUTY HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT A CONFERENCE OF THE
COALITION OF DOMESTIC OBSERVERS ON ELECTORAL CORRUPTION: THE
NECESSITY FOR AN IN-DEPTH AND INCLUSIVE ELECTORAL REFORM**

26 January 2016

- Albanian citizens, as well as domestic and international observers, have continuously raised concerns about corruptive electoral practices in Albania. The OSCE/ODIHR reports over the years have emphasized how allegations of vote-buying persist; how the legal framework does not provide sufficient transparency in campaign finance reporting; that pressure is applied to public sector employees to attend campaigns or vote in a certain way; that impartiality of election commissions needs to be enhanced; that media editorial independence is hampered by political influence, and women candidates receive marginal news coverage. Some of these practices are unfair; others are frankly corrupt. With one doubt, the whole election becomes suspect, and democracy becomes suspect. It is now time to deal with these concerns, through the new electoral reform process.
- The OSCE Presence commends the establishment by the Assembly of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform last month and looks forward to seeing it up and running very soon. The Committee should prioritize work to tackle electoral corruption.
- Albanian legislation already criminalized some corrupt electoral practices, but the crucial word remains *implementation*. Making the law applicable, without exception. If all of Albania's laws were implemented, the country would be paradise. Legislation without implementation is a deception; legislation without implementation is futile.
- State authorities and political parties have a crucial role to play in the fight against the electoral corruption. The role of civil society is also indispensable. I take the opportunity here to congratulate the organizers of this conference, the Coalition of Domestic Observers, for their efforts to raise awareness about this issue and hold the institutions, political parties and individuals accountable.
- The OSCE Presence and the OSCE/ODIHR will continue assisting the Albanian institutions in carrying out the electoral reform process. It is our responsibility and our honour that we are associated with elections. The OSCE Presence in Albania has a long association with the Assembly, and a long association with the Central Election Commission. We'd be very proud if in some way we had contributed to the KQZ's achievements last year. With ODIHR, we have the recognized global centre of expertise in democratic institutions and elections. Naturally we have accepted the invitation of the institutions of Albania for OSCE to support reform, and I promise you that – when the institutions are ready and sincere – the expertise and support of the OSCE and ODIHR will be tireless.
- The need for a thorough, all-inclusive and timely electoral reform is unarguable. Your democracy heals or dies here.

- The joint participation today is a rare and excellent sign of shared will, shared commitment, to something about party politics. Albanian authorities, institutions and civil society and citizens should ultimately stand together to ensure that votes are cast, counted and reported honestly. This is the irreplaceable basis of democracy and the irreplaceable basis of the legitimacy of power.