

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT CONFERENCE *ENHANCING
WOMEN'S ROLE IN GOVERNANCE: FULFILLING THE PROMISE?*
Tirana, 8 November 2011**

Minister Ksera,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you on behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania to this conference entitled *Enhancing Women's Role in Governance* as part of a three year project funded by Swedish International Development Agency and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

As this project is now coming to an end, let me thank the donors once again for their continued support.

I do not expect to see you surprised, when extending the most special welcome to all the women present here today from all corners of the territory. Welcome! All of you have been actively committed to becoming engaged in politics.

Let me also say a special welcome to our guests from Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - all of whom have fought tirelessly for the promotion of women in public and political life since the project started in December 2008.

Numerous activities have been implemented by the OSCE Presence in Albania, ranging from regional fora encouraging women to take greater political responsibility, training events for women candidates for 2009 and 2011 elections as well as other participants for lobbying, advocacy, and working with media, TV shows produced in all regions and a summer school for elected women councillors.

The Ministry of Labour, Social and Equal Opportunities has supported numerous activities organized within the project. Various fora were attended by the Minister, Deputy Minister and their staff.

The first two project conferences were organized in co-operation with the Ministry, with the Deputy Minister also sitting on the Advisory Board.

One of the most outstanding results of the project, in our eyes, is the National Platform for Women.

For the first time in modern Albanian political memory, this newly established National Platform for Women is bringing together 1500 women from different political parties, civil society and business.

Its task force members have played a key role in challenging gender stereotypes, raising public awareness of the need to promote gender equality as well as ensuring that the gender quota was enforced through lobbying and awareness rising.

Minister Ksera,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Having said this, we still need to accept that much remains to be done in terms of women's elected representation in public office.

As far as we can see, the current levels are still clearly not high enough - 17% (in the parliament) and 12.4 % women councillors respectively.

This, of course, leads to the question why not more women were elected. To remind you: the target was and is 30% and higher.

It seems that the obstacles to increased women's participation still lie in too many political parties not respecting the gender quota, of the election administration structures not strictly enforcing the gender quota and of the self evident lack of internal democratic processes within political parties.

Now is the time to look to the future to ensure greater equality of opportunity for gender mainstreaming in politics.

Certainly the improvement of democratic mechanisms in selecting candidates needs addressing.

Changing attitudes of political parties, their male-dominated leaderships, and building the capacities of women beneficiaries remain a challenge.

Assisting in the fostering of greater co-operation between men and women from different parties and civil society remains a priority for the Presence.

A stronger implementation of all Election gender related legislation before the 2013 parliamentary elections may be needed for significant gender power representation to be seen.

Let us see how serious political parties, especially the larger parties, really are in 'stepping up to the mark' in fulfilling their democratic obligations so that 50% of the population finally get to have a real say in how this country is governed.

Minister Ksera,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Can I just say that opportunities for women to be represented in political bodies and to influence political matters are an important parameter of democracy.

The OSCE Presence in Albania will continue to support the enhancement of women participation in public and political life also 2013 elections.

Thank you very much and let me again wish you a very successful and productive conference.

E.o.T.