

## **Head of Presence's interview with *Top Channel***

*28 February 2012*

**Top Channel:** It seems “the love story” between the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party, which started in November, did not last for so long. How do you see the current situation now when both parties are accusing each other for not having political will to progress with reforms, in particular with the parliamentary reform?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** The political will for Electoral Code reform and parliamentary reform is crucial. We are at crucial times. I would be cautious to call it a love story or something. I think that would be too much for any time of that period, but a period of engagement, and it is very important to make good use of these crucial times through full engagement with good proposals and mutual respect.

**Top Channel:** Ambassador, do you think both parties are getting late to achieve the electoral reform, being reminded that the deadline is the beginning of March?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** Together with my international partners, I would like to see early solutions, but more than time, content matters – the good and constructive exchange and proposal of good solutions that will last. That is more important than doing hasty work. In that respect, we are not fully there where we wanted to be at that time, that is why an extension of the deadline looks like very necessary. But every hour of every day, of every week from now on should be used in a constructive way.

**Top Channel:** Are you concerned about both parties accusing each other of not having enough political will to achieve their task?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** To a certain extent it is important that they apparently have internalized that this is the crucial point, but they should also look at themselves if they bring enough of that political will from each side into the process. It is a playing-field that needs co-operation from all the sides, constructive co-operation.

**Top Channel:** Ambassador, the small parties have expressed their wish for electoral system to be corrected. Do you support such a request and do you see it necessarily to be included in the new Electoral Code?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** Democracy allows a wide range of electoral system. There are a lot of examples throughout the democratic world, and the Albanians, the Albanian parties and the Albanian people have to decide which system they prefer. It is very difficult to tie that to Electoral Code reform, because it is two different levels – whereas system is on the Constitutional level, for Electoral Code reform a relatively normal law, not touching the Constitution, is enough. This is a different pair of shoes, even so a very important one. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate inviting the Albanian sides to come together and discuss that as well, while focusing on Electoral Code reform. I think this is the deliverable that they need for themselves to prepare for next elections, and the deliverable they need for international community as well.

**Top Channel:** Without implementation of the 52 recommendations from 2009 and 2011 elections on issues like lists of people that vote, the way the ballots are going to

be counted and security of the system, crucial issues, do you think that the electoral reform will be good enough?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** That depends on the Albanian partners. It is an Albanian law, it is an Albanian Electoral Code, and, of course, the solutions, the next steps ahead, should come from the Albanian side. Some of the recommendations are musts, others are can-be-s, and this is what the process in the ad hoc committee is about. I am happy since November and especially since the work started that the process is underway. I could be happier to see even swifter progress, but a couple of answers are proposed, have been found so far, we see that we are in the midst of the process and I would invite to speed it up and to be from both camps as constructive as possible. We have seen constructive proposals coming from the SP side; we want to see also very constructive proposals from the DP side; and then when that comes together, from the majority and the opposition, then we get closer to an Electoral Code reform that deserves the name.

**Top Channel:** An online survey by *Top Channel* suggests that 79 % of the people who have voted agree with the fact that the consensus reached in November between the SP and DP is in a dangerous moment. Do you agree?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** I would not use that term. It is a crucial moment. One needs to be, as I said, constructive from both sides and make good use of the time, and not adjourn the meetings. Perhaps it would be good considering to meet even up to a daily basis. Of course, time for consideration is also needed to well prepare proposals, but to speed the process up, make good use, come to early and well-discussed results that both sides can agree on.

**Top Channel:** Ambassador, last question: a team of OSCE/ODIHR is visiting Tirana. What are they trying to achieve?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** Well, they support the parliament in pushing ahead the reforms, but the most important thing is always keeping in mind that it is about Albanian reforms, that Albanians are in the lead, Albanian Members of Parliament in their respective committees, and not internationals, not OSCE/ODIHR, or any other. We are helping through advice. The solutions, the proposals, the breakthrough, - hopefully, I really hope to see that soon - must come from the Albanian side, also in order to be sustainable and long lasting. The parliamentary reform is almost at the same level. We need both to move democracy here in Albania even more ahead.