

**Remarks by Head of OSCE Presence, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, for the media
during visit to Elbasan**

17 April 2012

Question: Will the OSCE Presence have any concrete projects of co-operation with the municipality of Elbasan?

Ambassador Wollfarth: We have a regular exchange, I like to come to Elbasan and Mayor Sejдини knows that. For the whole of Albania, for us, it is very important to be in close touch with the local government, and Elbasan certainly is an excellent place to do it. It is a city in the centre, in the heart of the country. It is a centre, it is of great tradition, and we see how we can contribute to make the very best out of it. Local government has immediate impact on the citizens' lives in their places where they live, and they elect their mayor directly – they have done so last year – and therefore is very important to be in close touch with distinguished mayors like Mayor Sejдини; to have and exchange, how also to connect in the best possible way national level with the local level. So, as I said I really like to come to Elbasan, I think it is already my fourth visit, I sure hope it is not my last one. One of the reasons I came today, you will see that later, I will speak at the University.

Question: In regards to the electoral reform, is there an impasse?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The ad hoc committee is working; I do not see any impasse so far. It is very important that this important task is being dealt with in the parliament, and the co-chairs, from both sides of course, are doing great amounts of work. The whole ad hoc committee is contributing also on the expert level. And we will see another visit of OSCE/ODIHR experts this week. So I am convinced that again progress can be made.

Question: U.S. Ambassador in Albania Arvizu spoke about a difficult beginning referring to the present political situation, especially in view of the presidential elections to be held later this year and the general elections scheduled for 2013. He said that the controversies between the Albanian politicians have contributed directly to the country's inability to gain candidate status for the EU, and he said that the U.S. is here in Albania together with other international bodies, such as OSCE/ODIHR, in order to overcome these obstacles. What is your comment on that?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The most important thing between politicians and the people, the people and politicians, and among the politicians themselves, it to build trust. General elections are scheduled for next year, in 2013, this summer indeed is scheduled to have presidential elections, and it is important for this country, for the future of the office holder, to have a dignified process. Now it is time to look for good candidates, and how the voting in the parliament has to proceed, there the constitution is quite clear. So I sure hope for a dignified process, the country and the citizens of this country deserve it.

Question: So you think that they will follow the constitution in this case? So will there be a vote in the parliament, and will we have a consensual president then?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The constitution is valid. I do not have any other information, and there is no way around the constitution.

E.o.T.