

**Remarks by President of the Republic Bamir Topi and Head of the  
OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth,  
to the media**

*8 March 2012*

**President Topi:** First of all, I would like to wish all women and girls on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March! I would like to also wish all of you who are present here, and to give each of you a flower, together with the Ambassador, in a symbolic way!

I had a very fruitful conversation with Mr. Ambassador. I have the opportunity to emphasize once again the very good cooperation with the OSCE Ambassador, during the period he has been here in Albania, as an important contributor to dialogue in politics, and in the institutions, as well. The support provided by the OSCE throughout the years has been and continues to be very precious and it is focused on the most important issues, as you know, on issues that are directly related to the electoral reform that has taken place during the years, on parliamentary reform issues, on property issues and on many other elements that have to do with the relations among institutions, matters that relate to the foundations of democracy in a democratic country.

I would like to specify, while referring to this important day, the particular role of the OSCE in promoting women in politics. This is a national project, that has taken place in different cities of Albania, and which identifies the need for women's active participation in the political and social life in Albania. Today is the day to reflect on the extraordinary role of women in the society, and undoubtedly, to identify an undeniable progress made throughout the years. Today women are present in politics, they work in institutions, they are part of the civil society, but of course, the 8<sup>th</sup> of March takes us back to issues that we must take into consideration, such as employment and women's presentation, very, very equally, with men. As I have already mentioned previously, nature's odds bring us to this world equally, and modern societies, and I believe that Albania, as well, has joined the path of modern societies, must understand that the projection of the position of women must be taken into consideration starting from school years, university, followed later on by applicable policies. I do not want to criticise any parties, but they must do what they say. However, I have never agreed with figures that condition, even psychologically, the participation of women. I am speaking here, while I have had the opportunity to appoint ladies as heads of very important institutions and in equally important fora. So, let us do this without any prejudice, let us have a full appreciation of the profile of women and possibilities for them to express their skills in the political and institutional life. Also, I would like to encourage the continuation of the OSCE project. Considering that we are at a moment when the electoral reform is still going on, we would like to encourage you to take this moment into consideration.

We also discussed other important reform-related issues. And let me reiterate, and we also agreed with the Ambassador on this, the reasons as to which the adoption of the Law on Administrative Court is being delayed, while all parties agree, are not understood. It should be achieved as soon as possible. It is our demand first of all, a demand from the business people, people concerned with administrative issues, in order to free the judiciary from these problems and to tackle issues at a faster pace and more specifically. A political will is needed for it to be achieved soon. We discussed

with great concern about an issue that has maybe turned into some kind of a gangrene, the property issue, which blames the Albanian politics of the last 22 years, regardless of who was in power and who was in Opposition. In a country like Albania, small country with great potential to tackle this issue, it should have been resolved long ago. However, we are critical to what has already passed, but it should be reflected upon in order for justice to be made for each individual and household to enjoy their property as set forth in the Constitution. A property is inherited, donated, purchased and therefore it becomes an issue of great importance in another context, i.e. the fact that property allows one to enter the market economy in a definite manner and in full compliance with the terms of reference, and that the property, which is an extraordinary asset for each individual who possesses one, enables that person to enter the market, providing thus an opportunity for swift development and also for the state to collect the required tax, in order for everything to run normally. This is an appeal which we shared with the Ambassador, an obligation for politics. Politics cannot have the luxury to deal with the property issue as it suits them best, issuing endless administrative acts, which makes it difficult even for the best property expert to get oriented, when there is a new administrative act issued once a month or every other month, and add to the confusion. Politics, its institutions, should make things simpler, more transparent and should show the full picture to the Albanian people, which is needed.

We touched upon other issues as well, but I do not want to shift the focus from the topic which this day symbolises – 8<sup>th</sup> of March. Once again my best wishes to all women, mothers, and sisters, who are part of the great vitality of the society, of our children's education and part of the guarantee for the future of this country! Happy 8<sup>th</sup> of March! Thank you, Mr. Ambassador!

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** Let me start by thanking the President for this joint opportunity, congratulating the women of Albania for their crucial role in developing this society. More important than congratulations is to repeat the invitation to the men and women of this country to build and move forward this society on gender equality, equal rights for women.

The OSCE Presence in Albania supports Albania through projects on gender equality that are highly recognized throughout the country. We would like to do more and to see greater participation.

I would especially like to invite active women in this country again to participate in the electoral reform process. The future Electoral Code must see a guarantee for increased participation of women. Of course, women should actively correspond to that – more candidates and hopefully also more elected women in politics.

Women can clearly be also very good entrepreneurs. So be more courageous also in economy. And let me pick on one of the very important reform items, property. Women must clearly have same rights as men in becoming land owners. It is very important context: independent Albania turns 100 years old this year – the country is older. It is also around 100-101 years when a German socialist lady triggered having the Women's Day in March. So, what Clara Zetkin triggered 101 years ago clearly has come a long way, a successful way, the world of women in Albania is much bigger then decades ago and I strongly invite to go further steps. And I am extremely happy to

see and to be able to state that Mr. President is fully behind the women in Albania, while not forgetting the men.