

Head of Presence's remarks following meeting with People's Advocate Igli Totozani

9 January 2011

Head of Presence: It was very important today to have the first meeting with Mr. Totozani, the Ombudsman recently elected with an overwhelming vote in the parliament by 127 for him. This is an extremely important statement that has come from the parliament in support of the Ombudsman and in support of the institution of the Ombudsman. It is a vote for the people, for the Albanian people. I congratulated Mr. Totozani today for this important vote of confidence. This confidence should also find expression in the acceptance of his work. It is for the Human Rights, it is for the Rule of Law, especially in front of authorities here in Albania. It is another channel, adding to the channel that people already have in the parliament, the channel of finding their right towards authorities, when people have the founded feeling that they did not get a fair treatment. The OSCE Presence in Albania is mandated to support Albania to have full Human Rights and full Rule of Law, and the Ombudsperson's Office and the Ombudsman personally are the important starting points. I am very happy that we see Albania now in the position of being fully equipped in this respect. Mr. Totozani will not only get personal support, but he will also institutionally continue to receive the full support from the OSCE Presence in Albania.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, the New Year has started with a debate concerning the quorum required for the election of the president. Do you think this is the prelude of a new political deadlock?

Head of Presence: What is very important to pave the way towards European integration is consensus, talking to each other, and today we are here at the Ombudsman's institution. I visited the Ombudsman today, and that shows that consensus is not only possible, but that with consensus Albania makes headway. *[Directed to the Ombudsman standing next to him:]* And the vote of 127 for you, Mr. Totozani, is extremely important, extremely encouraging, and hopefully also adding to full thrust for the cause, which is Human Rights and Rule of Law. I hope that a similar consensus – maybe not that spectacularly high – but a similar consensus will be found, once a candidate or a couple of candidates are being found for president.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, speaking about consensus and referring to the way the People's Advocate was elected, do you think that this formula would work also for electing a consensual Head of State?

Head of Presence: The year is just beginning, the elections are in July, the Constitution is there, and there is enough time to discuss. But let us dedicate the day of today to the Ombudsman. This is really, I would say, a big step for the Albanian people and also for European integration.