

Check against delivery!

*Statement by Ambassador Werner Almhofer, HOM
To be issued at press conference on 3 May, 2012*

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is, above all, dedicated to promoting democracy in Kosovo and encouraging respect for human rights.

One of those fundamental rights is the right to vote.

It is a credit to Kosovo institutions that the right of persons who are eligible to participate in Serbian parliamentary and presidential elections is being respected both by the Kosovo government and Kosovo population at large.

In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the OSCE has been asked by various local and international actors to facilitate the balloting in this Sunday's Serbian parliamentary and presidential elections, only. The OSCE will not have any association with any attempt to organize local elections

The OSCE is honored to accept this challenge, and grateful for the support of the government of Kosovo. Because the time for organizing this operation is extraordinarily short - less than one week - we need the support and co-operation of local and international partners.

Let me explain the precise role of the OSCE. Our Mission has been asked to carry out one step in the election process - the ballot facilitation. In other words we will enable eligible voters to cast ballots in Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections. Here is how the process will work.

OSCE will bring and transport out all balloting materials, including the ballots. OSCE will establish polling stations at 28 centers around Kosovo.

OSCE will staff the polling station boards. An international OSCE mission member will serve as coordinator for the polling station. Eligible voters will file in and be provided with a ballot that they can mark in privacy and then drop in a sealed ballot box.

At the end of the day, OSCE will take these sealed ballot boxes to counting centers in Raska and Vranje. Counting there will proceed without any OSCE involvement.

I am pleased to announce that the first step of our plan has been successful. This morning the entire complement of ballots and related materials arrived in OSCE vehicles.

Some 500 personnel, all OSCE hired, will be involved to achieve this. I am grateful to our committed staff from OSCE offices ranging from Tirana to Vienna who are volunteering in support of this effort.

There are many tasks to accomplish, and time, as I already noted is very short, making our challenge considerable indeed. We thank all of you here for helping us inform the public responsibly about the process, supplementing our own efforts to let voters know how they can exercise their right to vote.

I'll now take your questions, before turning the floor over to our spokesperson.