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I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË  
PRANË ORGANIZATAVE  
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VJENË

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA TO  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS  
VIENNA

## **OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 23 September 2016**

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### **Working session 8: Rule of Law I**

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Albania aligned with the statement delivered by The Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, but I would like to make a few remarks in a national capacity.

The strengthening and consolidation of the rule of law is a high priority for Albania. It also constitutes one of the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations with the European Union.

During the last two years, Albania has embarked into a transformative judicial reform. In November 2014, the Albanian Parliament set up a Special Parliamentary Commission "On the justice system reform", tasked with preparing the necessary proposals for reforming the justice system, including the creation of a number of new independent institutions. The Commission was assisted by a panel of high-level experts, a technical secretariat, and several external advisors, including international experts.

The reform process was designed in respect of the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, professionalism, compliance with international standards and extensive consultations among all stakeholders.

In late September 2015, the group of experts presented a draft package of constitutional amendments, which were sent to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe for review. The Venice Commission provided a preliminary assessment in December 2015 and the final report was published in March 2016.

After two years of intensive work, on 22 July 2016 the Albanian Parliament unanimously adopted the package of constitutional amendments, paving the way for a thorough and comprehensive reform of the justice system.

In parallel with the package of constitutional amendments, work continued on the package of implementing legislation concerning: constitutional bodies, the judiciary, criminal justice, legal education, the legal profession, anti-corruption measures and the financing of the justice system.

Moderator,

The reform aims to bring significant changes in the organization and powers of various judicial institutions, by providing concrete mechanisms that would enhance the accountability, professionalism and efficiency of the justice system, as well as preventing and combating corruption within it.

On 31 August 2016, a law on the vetting of judges and prosecutors was adopted, which constitutes a major step forward for the implementation of the justice reform. Six other priority laws of the reform package are expected to be adopted by the end of September 2016.

It is also important to mention that in the framework of the justice reform, an unprecedented role is being given to external monitoring, as a key element for the credibility of the process.

Moderator,

There is another area that we consider crucial for the consolidation of the rule of law in Albania, where we are glad to report progress.

On 17 December 2015, Parliament adopted by consensus a law on "ensuring the integrity of the persons elected or nominated in public functions". It aims to increase the trust of the Albanian citizens in their political representatives and public institutions, by prohibiting the election or nomination of persons with criminal records, or providing for their removal from public functions.

This law also represents a first important step towards a consensual electoral reform. On the latter, the Albanian authorities have already reached out to ODIHR with a request for assistance, which was received favorably.

On a final note, allow me to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the many partners whose assistance has been instrumental in the adoption of these demanding reforms, the European Union and United States in particular, but also the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the OSCE. We look forward to working together on this and other important issues.

Thank you,