

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT ANTI-CORRUPTION EVENT
AT LAW FACULTY OF UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA
7 December 2011**

Dean Kaçupi
Director Llalla
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good morning.

I am delighted to be with you today to mark the International Anti-Corruption Day.

In joining you this morning, Albania's future judges, prosecutors, lawyers and public administration officials, I would like to draw your attention to the evil scourge of corruption.

The International Anti-Corruption Day, I clearly see as an important opportunity to highlight the devastating impact that corruption can inflict upon society and individuals. On a much more positive side and in the same clarity, I see the importance, and the relevance that your commitment can make to integrity and ethical conduct as you continue with your careers.

With its direct bearing on economic and social stability, the fight against corruption is a major priority for the OSCE Presence in Albania, which is also anchored in its current mandate.

We support - both national institutions and civil society - in promoting good governance principles and taking other measures to combat corruption.

I should mention here particularly our excellent co-operation with HIDAA, the High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets, over many years in raising the awareness of public officials on issues surrounding conflict of interest.

Let us be clear, whenever and wherever it takes a foothold, corruption impacts upon every level of society.

Corruption destroys economies, undermines social stability and erodes public trust.

Corruption lowers tax revenues, inflates costs of local services, distorts private competition, and can condemn already vulnerable groups to poverty.

Ultimately, corruption can lead to significant social instability and even violent conflicts.

All of us know from the many International reports already published, that corruption remains prevalent in many sectors despite many commendable prevention measures introduced.

The lack of transparency and the unclear legal basis to underpin property rights is an area that facilitates corruption and further undermines the goal of creating a functional real estate market.

The clear commitment of the authorities to combat corruption has not always been mirrored by a consistent implementation of existing laws.

A more convincing and sustained track record of verdicts as well as a more robust policy on sentencing and/or fines in corruption cases needs to be established, particularly for those involving senior officials.

Moreover, a firm and transparent handling of cases involving alleged corruption, regardless of the status of those accused remains a key indicator of judicial independence.

The full immunity of senior public officials, including judges I might add, remains a major obstacle to effective and successful investigation.

This immunity, along with the absence of a proactive approach to pursuing cases and the lack of resources by law enforcement bodies, continues to seriously obstruct effective investigation.

Experience elsewhere has shown that there is a direct causal link between high levels of corruption and low levels of civil society engagement.

Although NGOs have in recent years made progress their involvement in anti-corruption, their efforts still remain weak, fragmented and unsustainable.

It is important, therefore, that a more active participation in the monitoring of government activities in order to promote greater transparency and accountability.

One must not forget the importance of a free media as a crucial medium for fostering greater accountability in public decision making processes.

A free media should serve as a counter-balance to corruption while never forgetting its responsibilities to report *the facts* and not take on the role of *judge and jury*.

It is also important to further strengthen an ethical, professional and impartial public administration, one that is built upon procedures that guarantee fair recruitment, appropriate remuneration, and performance and merit based career development.

However, we should also be clear that government alone cannot tackle corruption.

That is why the media, civil society and the public at large must actively support anti corruption institutions such as HIDAA when suspected corruption is encountered.

It would be a shame if the major progress made by Albania in social, political and economic reforms to date were to be undermined at a stroke by the inability or unwillingness to tackle the root causes of corruption and thus delay the much needed development of this great country.

Director Llalla
Dean Kaçupi
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to invite you, therefore, in kind and urgent manner to seize the moment.

I would like to encourage you now to contribute your share in helping your country achieve greater levels of transparent and accountable governance.

As the renowned American citizen Mrs. Bess Myerson once said "*The greatest accomplice to the crime of corruption is frequently our own indifference*".

Thank you for your attention.

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