



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS - STRATEGIC DIVERSITY
TRAINING COURSE FOR SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS**

18 June 2012

Deputy Minister Peka,
General Director Burgaj,
Honoured guests

As the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I am very pleased to be here with you today, opening the first Strategic Diversity seminar for Albanian State Police senior managers.

This training event serves as another good example of the excellent co-operation between the State Police and the OSCE Presence.

I would also like to thank the Scottish Police College for their support in providing the expertise for the training.

The need for public institutions to respect and protect diversity is given, and it should be clear to all involved.

As for the OSCE, our goal is helping to reduce all forms of discrimination to zero.

That is why we are all here today – to fight discrimination and to promote acceptance of diversity.

Diversity and its acceptance measure the democratic quality of a society.

Diversity is and should be made known and relevant to public institutions and organizations.

Diversity means accepting the uniqueness of each individual, all individuals making up wider society.

Diversity forms part of that widely held democratic principle that all human beings, irrespective of race, colour, creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other grounds, can make an active and positive contribution to society and to public good.

It is a question of human rights, rule of law and equality.

Modern European societies are those where every individual is provided with equal opportunities to realize her or his own potential.

The renowned African-American writer Maya Angelou once put it in a famous quote. She wrote: "We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour".

The OSCE enjoys the full commitment of 56 participating States, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, to jointly promote tolerance and non-discrimination, upholding diversity as a shared value.

I should note the fitting motto, *United in Diversity*, chosen by the Republic of Albania for its Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, which we fully support. A commitment that also relates to stability and security.

Discrimination of religious, ethnic or national minorities is a recipe for civil unrest, instability and conflict. As such, it must be combated, in all its forms.

It is important for the police to use the legal powers they possess to combat acts motivated by racism or/and xenophobia.

Guaranteeing the equal protection of all people before the law also prohibits the police from discriminating against any person on the basis of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, political opinion, national origin, property, and birth.

Specifically, on the issue of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans-gender community, I would wish to emphasize the need to sensitize the State Police on all LGBT people's rights.

I would encourage the leadership of the State Police in promoting non-discriminatory behaviour throughout all levels of service and to ensure that sanctions are issued for all cases of unprofessional treatment of LGBT people, whether inside or outside their ranks.

Discriminatory policing has the effect of criminalizing entire communities and denying them justice.

In this regard, minority communities are often disproportionately subjected to racially and ethnically motivated hate crimes and discrimination.

An eventual lack of appropriate responses by the State Police has the real potential to create a climate of impunity, which in turn may contribute to deepening a perception of marginalization and social exclusion among these groups. Worse, it may call for retribution, leading to violence and unrest.

I would suggest that one important step to win the trust of minority communities is to integrate them into the police throughout all ranks.

Their integration would serve as a confidence-building measure. It would also provide the police with a wide range of knowledge and skills that are needed for working in a multicultural environment.

All police recruitment policies should therefore ensure adequate inclusion of women and national minorities.

Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I want to stress that this is not just about assisting Albania along the path towards European integration and to meet its international obligations and its national aspirations.

It is also an investment in the full potential of the citizens of this country. Simply put, an investment in its future.

I hope the training that gathers us today is not just a one-off endeavour, but one step within a strategic objective of the Albanian State Police, which the OSCE Presence will be pleased to support.

Finally, I wish you all a successful and productive seminar.

Thank you very much.