

**Comments for the media of Acting Head of Presence, Robert Wilton, in the wake of meeting with People's Advocate**

30 July 2013

**AHoP Robert Wilton:** I have made in my first weeks in Albania visits to politicians of all different parties; this is the first time I have been with the media, and it is appropriate that this is for my first visit with the People's Advocate.

My vision for the OSCE Presence in Albania is that we are working in partnership with and in support of the institutions and the people of Albania in protection of their rights and the realization of their aspirations for being a democratic society. The role, strength, and efficiency of the People's Advocate, as a central and independent institution, is essential to Albania's status as a functioning, modern democracy.

The OSCE Presence in Albania has been active in a wide range of areas to do with human rights, the rule of law, and the freedom of the media, in partnership with the People's Advocate. I am very proud of that work, I am very proud of our collaboration and I look forward to more in the future.

**Journalist:** Compliments for your very understandable Albanian. In Albania there are two issues right now that are affecting the population: the first is the issue of toponyms in regards to the passports of Albanian emigrants' children, and the second is that related to the normative act on the eviction of tenants from buildings owned by former owners, which is leaving homeless a great number of families. Do you have a comment on this issue?

**AHoP Robert Wilton:** For the issue of the toponyms, this is a question to be addressed between the Government of Albania and the Government of Greece. And I know that the People's Advocate has been speaking publicly on behalf of the rights of Albanian people. I have nothing more to say from the OSCE side on that subject.

On the issue of property, the question of property rights is fundamental to Albania's stability as a democracy; it's very important for the rule of law, for the people's economic independence; it is also crucial for foreign investments. The OSCE Presence has done work in the past to try to assist the Albanian institutions in the area of property rights; we are ready to continue to work in partnership with the European Union, who have been very generous donors for this work. We are ready to continue with this work but it does depend on the willingness of the institutions of Albania to take this issue seriously, as it is very complicated.

**Journalist:** And what about the homeless people as a result of the normative act. They were living in those houses for quite a long time?

**AHoP Robert Wilton:** We have had representations from these families; we have done some work trying to push for a solution to this issue, we ran a workshop to explore this issue. Clearly this is an unhappy situation and it can only be addressed in the long-term by a serious process of reform and a serious, committed approach from the institutions and people. And this is all about the rule of law; it is fundamentally an issue of rule of law and the rights of

individuals. And what I can say is that we encourage a committed approach to solving this issue.

**Journalist:** More than a month has passed since the holding of parliamentary elections and it seems we are still far from the certification of final election results. Have the process's standards been undermined as a result of this?

**AHoP Robert Wilton:** I am waiting for and I am looking forward to the final report of the OSCE/ODIHR EOM. That will be the most thorough, the most detailed, the most expert report on these elections and I hope that will be taken seriously. As you say the election process continues; it is continuing through the proper institutions, the independent Albanian electoral institutions; that's where it should be. All I would ask is that all of the players in this process continue to respect those institutions, continue to respect the laws and procedures of those institutions, and fundamentally that they respect the votes of the Albanian citizens. And I hope that we have a process that concludes with stability and results that all parties will participate in.