

AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND THE “THESEUS DEBT”

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The governance of the security sector is by no doubt at the very roots of the Organization I am honoured to serve in Albania: the OSCE. The topic might appear *prima facie* theoretical, if not obscure. It might resonate as a subject to be debated within inner circles, among experts: too bad! The opposite is true: the governance of the security sector can only be effective if civil society is actively part of the discourse. The OSCE knows it too well, through its unique understanding of the deep meaning of security, and its capability to provide a platform for dialogue on the ground. I had the opportunity to debate about how to include civil society in the security sector governance just a few days ago, during a major exercise co-chaired by the Swedish Chairpersonship-in-Office and the Conflict Prevention Centre, in co-operation with the Folke Bernadotte Academy. And I shared with the OSCE family my positive assessment of our activities as OSCE Presence. The conference also offered me the opportunity to reflect on my recent meetings in a number of Albanian cities, with Mayors, Prefects, and Police directors.

I believe that in today’s world, freedom and pluralism cannot be secured only through the classic division of powers identified by Montesquieu three centuries ago. There is a sort of new division of labour on different levels of power: predominantly a national level, but also supranational and international. And I would add as well a sub-national level, with a growing role that is played by non-state actors. We moved from a world of concentrated power to a much more diffused power. This is the reason why the OSCE and the Presence have embraced the whole of society approach in addressing security related issues.

More concretely, a good illustration of the positive role that civil society plays in security in Albania is the establishment of a Consultative Group addressing environmental issues. The group is composed of 18 members from media, CSOs, and has the capacity to provide expertise and guidance to law enforcement agencies related to environmental violations. Its contribution among others, led to the changing of the criminal code provisions on environmental violations, to enrich it with new provisions on waste crime, crimes against the natural environment, and trading of wildlife. We do not work with central bodies only and for this reason I have travelled extensively throughout the country during the last two months, to engage local institutions and actors, to explore new paths for our co-operation, to hear from them how they prioritize and address safety and security issues. And I have been emphasizing the importance of Local Safety Councils, 54 in total, but with our firm intention of having them established in all 61 Albanian Municipalities. They are seen as an effort to bring together key actors for public safety at the local level, in order to join policies, planning and resources to effectively collaborate and address the safety and security issues in the community.

Partnership is actually a very valid hotbed to build trust in institutions, to instil a culture of transparency and accountability between the actors engaged. We have regularly included young people in the equation of safety and security. Engaging them, making them empowered citizens is a good recipe to reduce the risk of violence and crime. Therefore, in 2020 the Presence developed a comprehensive training package on youth safety and security encompassing modern concept of security, conflict resolution, on the role of youth in preventing violence, violent extremism, and domestic violence, on youth engagement in decision-making, and youth partnership with security actors. One of the participants from the seminar in Berat, Rahela, said: “This workshop raised my awareness on security threats. Now I will be more aware and I will know how to protect myself from these threats, and where to address my concerns related to my safety”. This is what we are on!

Clearly, there is also a link to Women, Peace and Security. Already since the ancient Greeks women were active part in the security debate. We all remember the security threat posed by Minos, and the number of casualties that the fight against it provoked. It was a woman, Ariadne, who gave to Theseus, the thread to enter the labyrinth, prevail over Minos and return to life. The “Theseus Debt” towards women is intellectually at the grassroots of what we call today WPS. Consistently, as OSCE Presence in Albania we pay great attention to Gender mainstreaming and in particular to Women, Peace and Security agenda. In that context, together with partner organizations, such as UN Women and the Dutch Embassy, we contributed to the co-ordination of efforts that resulted in the adoption of the first ever Women, Peace and Security Action Plan of Albania implemented 2019-2020 and in the preparation of the next action plan. The Presence’s engagement to support Albania’s NAP on UNSCR 1325 has shown that civil society activists and associations are crucial to promoting and advancing the national WPS action plans, especially when it comes to their practical implementation – ranging from the measures related to access to justice, identification, victim protection, and rehabilitation, to measures addressing positive action to promote women in leadership positions in the country’s peace missions abroad, law enforcement at home, and policy making on Women Peace and Security both at home and internationally. Involvement of Civil Society becomes more and more important when it comes to monitoring and holding state actors accountable for it, as the experience of the Albanian Network on Women, Peace and Security has shown.

My bottom line is that any order or system, to be truly effective, needs to be evaluated by what it manages to deliver concretely, and the ultimate measure of any reform effort is whether or not it generates benefits to citizens. When the majority of the population enjoys these benefits, when it deems that it has a say in the national debate, then we can remain confident that the climate is conducive to prosperity, stability and security. It is about a journey between an opened society and an open society.