



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

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS - ASSOCIATION OF ALBANIAN
MUNICIPALITIES**

11 June 2012

Deputy Minister Poni,
Mayor Basha;
Mayor Luka,
Ms. Cagnolati,
Mr. Tonhauser,
Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning

I want to start by thanking the Association of Albanian Municipalities on behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania for this opportunity to be with you this morning among a group of highly esteemed elected local leaders.

Let me enumerate a couple of facts in the best spirit of service to the public:
You are elected to make the real difference to the lives of citizens living in your communities.

You are high ranking public servants and your role is to serve the public good.

Your duty is to serve the whole community and to help create a better future for people.

Surely a great and noble task, which is at times equally challenging.

Service might include another, even wider aspect: As members of an association representing the interests of all municipalities, you have an opportunity to play a major strategic role in development of Albania.

However, for this to happen, the Association needs to take on the role of cohesive, united and proactive national non-partisan body, one that advocates for local interests and one which can support the work each of you do in developing and strengthening the provision of local public services.

We would like to encourage you to work in true partnership, across the political camps, to lobby central government on initiatives that can have a real impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.

From talks with citizens of your country we know that they hope and also expect you to carry out your work in a constructive, professional and non-partisan to ensure that their interests are best served.

The Albanian Association of Municipalities should provide the ideal platform for promoting local needs and the sharing of information and best practice.

As I understand it, the Association's mission is: "To contribute to the protection of Common Interests of Local Government Units aiming strengthening and development of democratic structures and mechanisms for the organisation and functioning of Municipalities in compliance with European Chart of Local Government."

It must be able to build an annual policy agenda and foster broad coalitions needed to pass legislation and prevent also legislation that run counter to the interests of local people.

Again: a successful association needs your active support regardless the political affiliations.

I would urge you to do all you can to put the interests of the communities you represent over and above the partisan self interest.

I would implore you to help build the necessary climate of trust and co-operation, to enable a functional Association: An Association to lobby and advocate the interest of all Municipalities.

Indeed, one of the key objectives of the Association activity is to establish direct links with the Albanian Assembly and central government to protect the interests of Municipalities and to become a main actor in the policymaking processes for decentralisation.

The Association provides a unique opportunity for the discussion of the problems and challenges, the identification of solutions and exchange of experiences and good practice.

The Association is an instrument to ensure sustainability of the donors' efforts by delivering good practices, tools and guides on decentralised public services among interested municipalities all over the country.

I believe the Sector Working Group on Decentralisation needs the key role of a functional Association to bring the voice of Municipalities and represent their interests.

The Association also represents Municipalities in the national and international organisations and serves as facilitator of the relationships with partners, homologous associations and international organisations for development of common co-operation programs.

The OSCE Presence continues to see a functional Association as a key partner for the recent efforts to promote Inter Local Co-operation as an approach for more cost effective delivery of local public services in the context of fragmented administrative division of territory.

Ladies and gentlemen,

All the donors working for the strengthening of local democracy view the Association as a strategic partner representing the interests of all municipalities able to facilitate, promote and sustain their' efforts in benefit of local government in general.

Municipalities need to engage more with the Association to help them to achieve results in the management of their territory, to help meet international standards, to join their inputs and have an instrument of presenting issues of common concern to central government, to help them in the enforcement of legal issues by exchanging best practice.

Thank you very much.