

Speech of Ambassador Florian Raunig

Farewell reception as the Head of OSCE Presence Tirana

**8 June 2016
Rogner Hotel, Tirana**

Dear guests,
Dear friends,

Today is the fifth time that I leave Albania and the second time that I leave the OSCE Presence. In 1997, I had the privilege to be part of the team that set up this Mission and in 2013 I had the even bigger privilege to become the Head of this Institution. In between lies a time of tremendous, sometimes troublesome, but always impressive development of the country.

It is a development story that goes hand in hand with that of the OSCE Presence: Being one of the traditional supporters of Albania, the country's evolution is mirrored in the way the Presence has been providing its assistance. It started by accompanying the country out of the disruptive events of the mid-nineties and establishing together fundamental democratic institutions. It is now our common aim to improve on a daily basis the functioning and interaction of these institutions so that the citizens' trust in their institutions increases and the people of Albania can take full ownership of their democracy.

What the OSCE can offer is neither money nor quick fix solutions. The OSCE's intention has always been sincere partnership and long term company for steady progress and sustainable change. I would call it the groundwork, necessary to foster and consolidate a culture of democracy and the respect for rule of law. We all know that this is sometimes a back-breaking work because sustainable change needs time to grow and space to breathe.

At the same time, the expectations and ambitions of Albanian people are very high. This is completely understandable, but it means that our biggest challenge is still time.

Let me assure you that the OSCE will continue to be a true and sincere partner of Albania, assisting the country in a stable and reliable way, sharing in mind and heart a common vision for Albania's future.

Dear friends,

Let me conclude with some personal remarks: I have lived half of the past 26 years in this country. Over 13 years, serving in different positions, surroundings and locations, I had the pleasure to discover big parts of the country and more importantly, to enjoy the hospitality and friendship of its people from Vermosh down to Konispol. On top of that, I witnessed very joyful and some challenging historic moments during this time.

Albania played an important part in my life. I found in this country some of my best friends and professional colleagues. Here I got to know my wife. My daughters have even learned to speak Albanian with a Tirana accent.

I am grateful to all of you who are gathered here today. I am particularly thankful to my family, who accompanied me throughout this time and gave me the strength and endurance I needed to cope with my obligations.

Let me just say: Thank you to all of you and thank you Albania.