

**AMBASSADOR EUGEN WOLLFARTH'S REMARKS AT FORUM
'EUROPE – BETWEEN ME AND YOU', FIER**

2 March 2012

Mr. Velaj,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you on a topic of interest and importance for all citizens of Europe.

And allow me to add, I do this in consciousness that this is being done in the framework of a series of speeches begun two years ago in February 2010. A number of distinguished diplomats have spoken since then.

Before I begin, let me congratulate Mr Velaj for the great distinction he received recently: the European Citizen Award awarded by the European Parliament.

This award was awarded for outstanding achievements for European relations.

In my eyes, it was an excellent choice to have picked you.

Please take it as a further encouragement for the excellent work you are doing.

It was a pleasure for me to accept your invitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the subject of the day: *Europe, between me and you.*

Most of you will know that while being the Ambassador of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I came to this function through being career diplomat of the German Foreign Service.

For me, Europe is therefore a passion and a professional business at the same time.

I worked on European issues in Berlin and in Brussels and in some of our embassies, as I now enjoy in a similar way working with the OSCE in Tirana.

A person, a man, a woman, does not necessarily have to be an EU citizen to feel 'European' and stand for the values of modern Europe

In particular, the European Union, the OSCE and the Council of Europe stand for the core issues that are making our lives so much better in modern times: human rights, peace and security, freedom, rule of law and prosperity – to name only the most fundamental ones.

Most nation states in Europe, and throughout the world, share these high goals.

These goals are only to be achieved at the top of a historical and civilising process.

Difficult to achieve and not guaranteed for those societies not ready to defend them each and every day.

Since I am the OSCE Ambassador in Albania, I would like to take you now on a short journey to provide a short overview of OSCE's history, its structure and what it stands for, not least in relation to Albania's continuing integration aspirations

As you will see, there are obvious links between the work of the Presence and those activities bringing Albania closer to EU-structures.

My short journey through the history of the OSCE will trace the growth of the OSCE from its origins in Helsinki into an organization with truly a global reach, which that is actively engaged in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The OSCE is also engaged in other activities related to security co-operation, human rights and more.

These steps came when the Cold War was fully on, and while Albania suffered from communist oppression under Enver Hoxha.

Now a brief word regarding the OSCE's history that started as the CSCE – a point I will explain shortly.

The signing of the Helsinki Final Act on 1 August 1975 was a historic occasion.

35 Heads of State – from West and East - committed themselves to mutually beneficial dialogue instead of mutually assured destruction.

The Helsinki Final Act was a landmark accord in many ways.

One of the most significant was that it made human rights issues subject of international concern.

Up to that point, it had long been a no-go area in relations between East and West.

With the enactment of the Helsinki Final Act, no longer could nation states seek to shield human rights violations from international scrutiny by claiming they were internal affairs.

Here, the first foundations were laid to start with the improvement of international human rights and freedom including until then rather closed countries under communist rule.

The agreement also featured three main sets of principles, often known as 'baskets' or 'dimensions'.

There were issues related to the politico-military aspects of security (basket I) – seen as a top priority;

then economics, science and technology and environment (basket II) – included at the request of the then eastern bloc;
and humanitarian and other fields (basket III) – included by the West.

For over a decade and a half after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) served as a forum for dialogue and a catalyst for change; forming a vital bridge between the two halves of what was still an ideologically, politically and economically divided Europe.

However, none of the original 35 signatories could have predicted the startling speed with which the communist bloc would finally collapse at the end of the 1980s.

Regime after regime crumbled as a result of the emerging freedom to utter grievances.

Then, it was easy to get carried away by the seemingly universal atmosphere of optimism.

History, however, comes with heritage – and some of it is poisonous.

In Eastern Europe, many old tensions - ethnic, political and geographical – resurfaced.

Despite all efforts to stop them, a number of bloody conflicts would flare up in the following years.

It was clear that the framework for co-operation provided by Helsinki was no longer sufficient.

As the Soviet Union headed towards eventual disintegration, the CSCE was developing according to the changing requirements to meet the security challenges of the new Europe.

In November 1990, the CSCE Heads of State or Government met in Paris for what was only their second-ever Summit to lay the groundwork for the transformation of the CSCE from a diplomatic Conference into an Organization dedicated to the promotion of security and co-operation in Europe.

To address the new challenges created by the now-volatile situation in many regions of Eastern Europe and beyond, the CSCE created numerous field operations and other bodies.

The process was marked by the renaming of the CSCE to the OSCE at the Fourth Heads of State Summit in Budapest in December 1994.

By the end of the 1990s, the OSCE had set up a large number of institutions and field operations, ranging in size from just a handful of staff in small missions to well over 1,000 in the case of Kosovo/UNMiK.

With their flexible and practical methods of working, these field operations contributed greatly to increased security and stability in many parts of Europe.

However, the arrival of the new millennium - far from ushering in a new age of peace and security - showed once again the truth of the saying that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

The horrific events of September 11 and other later terrorist attacks in several OSCE participating States, pointed to the need for a more holistic approach to global security.

Meanwhile, other voices calling for further OSCE reform were starting to be heard.

Was the OSCE, which had achieved so much during the 1990s, really equipped to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century?

It is a question that will continue to be discussed in depth as the OSCE's 56 participating States consider its future.

Now, if I may, I would like to quickly present the work structure of the OSCE:

With 56 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE forms the largest regional security organization in the world – from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The OSCE is operated by consensus.

All decisions within the organization, the decision of who will chair the organization for one year is taken by consensus by all 56 participating states.

Ireland is chairing the OSCE for 2012.

Imagine running an organization or a company where you have a board of 56 members that all had the right of veto.

The OSCE could be stopped at any moment by anyone of those 56.

Yet they don't do this.

Why - because they have an interest in keeping the momentum, in implementing the commitments that have been agreed, and in having this sort of permanent peer pressure.

The Permanent Council meets every Thursday and can hear from specially invited guests, who address current issues, Foreign Ministers, Heads of field missions and other OSCE institutions.

Current issues is basically what any participating state is interested in talking about in any of the three dimensions.

This often gives rise to very diversified and interesting issues.

In December 2009, the Permanent Council adopted the Organization's Budget for 2010, totalling over EUR 150 million.

The OSCE employs some 450 people in its various institutions and around 3,000 people in its field operations.

They are highly diversified.

They are groups of experts that are there on the ground and call of the host nation in order to help implement the standards and commitments of the OSCE.

And there is no organization which is, none of these field offices is the same.

They are all a product of a sort of unique ‘chemistry’ between the host country and what the 56 are willing to provide in terms of assistance.

The OSCE Presence in Albania was established in March 1997, in response to the breakdown of law and order, on invitation of the Albanian Government and after a decision of the Permanent Council.

The Presence's mandate was updated in December 2003 to reflect the overall progress achieved in Albania in recent years and the positive role that Albania has played in improving relations in South-Eastern Europe.

Then, as now, the Presence works in partnership with the Government and other national institutions to strengthen the main state institutions, to underpin a democratic system of ‘checks and balances’ and to foster cross-party dialogue in order to build confidence in these institutions.

The Presence focuses particularly on: legislative and judicial reform, property reform; regional administrative reform; electoral reform; parliamentary capacity-building; anti-trafficking and anti-corruption; development of effective laws and regulations on the independent media; promotion of good governance and management of targeted projects to strengthen civil society; and police assistance in co-operation with international partners.

In addition to the Presence’s headquarters in Tirana, we are supported by its four project offices, in the North in Shkodra and Kukes, in the South in Vlora and Gjirokastra that help coordinate the Presence’s project activities outside of Tirana and maintain contacts with key local actors.

The Presence manages a core budget of around 3.2 million Euros with some 100 staff – with 75% Albanian staff.

The key point to stress here is that the Presence’s support to Albania is aimed at supporting the ongoing reform process to help the country with its European integration aspirations.

We provide technical assistance to strengthen their capacities and to prepare laws that are necessary to this aim.

We also co-operate closely with the EU Delegation in Tirana

One sign of this is the fact that the Presence based on our OSCE mandate is implementing several key projects which are funded by the EU. I can mention here was the technical assistance project to the Government in the modernization of administrative address and civil registration systems.

Lastly we try also to help assist our political partners to resolve political issues of the moment – although as you will notice from the media our efforts to help are not always perceived well by either side.

To conclude,

For the OSCE the basic message is the idea that security has to come in a cross dimensional way so that we can build lasting overall security among our participating states based on a functioning security system.

Let me highlight, the OSCE as a security organization does not only deal with issues of military security, disarmament or border issues. In fact, the OSCE considers security to be more, much more than merely the absence of war. Our unique signature is the human dimension, the understanding that unless there is respect for human rights and respect for the dignity of the individual and rule of law and a democratic perspective, you can never build long lasting security. Based on this broad concept of security, a comprehensive framework for peace and stability in Europe requires the upholding of human rights and of democracy.

This area is an ever evolving field, a field that reflects not only the growing co-operation between different States, but also the transformation of the societies within these States. Thus, while the principles enshrined in the OSCE commitments in this regard have to be seen in a historic context and have evolved, the underlying OSCE concept has proven more valid than ever: a free society allowing everyone to fully participate in public life is a safeguard against conflict and instability. Compliance with these important principles has often been considered a cornerstone in the accession bids of countries wishing to join the European Union.

The OSCE tries also to maintain the peace by becoming involved in ‘early warning’ and conflict prevention in order not to come into a situation where a conflict has already happened. In those cases you have to deal with crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, which means the damage has already occurred.

So the key principles of this ambition are essentially: inclusivity, equality, consensuality and co-operation.

So this is, what I had in mind to present to you as a brief introduction to the OSCE with a clear view on Europe.

I want to encourage you to go deeper by visiting our website www.osce.org/albania, where you can find current and past activities and basic documents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You can see that the start of the OSCE resemble the beginnings of the EU, when Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schumann came to an understanding to bridge the gap between Germany and France after many wars, in the 1950’s soon after the Second World War.

The “Montanunion” regarding coal and steel of those days has developed into a forceful and most prosperous Union, which some call including with some admiration “Festung Europa”.

Let me recall the important words and values I mentioned at the start of my talk, for which this fortress stands: “human rights, freedom, peace and security, rule of law and prosperity.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think, I have made transparent that in my view OSCE and EU share the same values and work for the same end: for a safer and ever better European world. I would like to include in this view also the element of strong transatlantic partnership, complementing the European efforts of détente in all directions – West and East, East and West.

I wish Albania swift progress in the European integration process.

It would be wonderful to see decisive steps made while the day of 100 years of independence is approaching later this year.

We are here as partners and friends of Albania.

And we are here to help.

Thank you very much.