



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

**ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR WOLLFARTH AT THE CERTIFICATES'
AWARD CEREMONY OF THE MINISTERIAL GENDER EQUALITY
EMPLOYEES
14th July 2011**

Honored Minister Ksera, Honored Deputy Ministers, members of the National Council on Gender Equality, dear Gender Focal Points, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

It is a great pleasure in welcoming you together with Minister Ksera to this Award Ceremony. This event is organized jointly by the OSCE Presence in Albania and the Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO). So was the training for which we today hand out the certificates. All events are part of the 2011 OSCE Presence joint project "Assisting the effective functioning of the gender equality mechanism in Albania". It is a model of how the OSCE Presence fulfils its mandate in co-operation with the Government of Albania.

The project contributes to the goals of the OSCE Gender Action Plan (2004), which recognizes that "...equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development, and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region...". Albania, as a participating state of OSCE, supports this Action Plan.

In 2007, the Presence supported the drafting and implementation of Albania's National Strategy on Gender Equality and Against Domestic Violence (2007 – 2010). We have recently assisted the evaluation of this strategy and its extension into the coming years. Also the consultation process on the Law "On Gender Equality in the Society" was supported by the Presence in 2008.

Strategies and Laws however remain dead letter, if nobody is aware of them, knows them and uses them.

For this reason we keep supporting the Albanian National Council on Gender Equality and the Department for Equal Opportunities Policies and Family inside the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Equal Opportunities and the Gender Focal Points so that the Law and the Strategy become more widely applied and known in Albania.

Inside this complex framework established by law, the Gender Equality Focal points in the Albanian Ministries are of particular importance. The main task of the ministerial gender equality employees is to support the development and

implementation of their Ministries' policies and programmes from the gender perspective. This is an important task.

This graduation ceremony gives recognition to their attendance to an “Advanced training for ministerial gender equality employees on gender mainstreaming in programs and policies” organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania in co-operation with MoLSAEO, on 23 and 24 June 2011 in Vlora.

In addition to giving knowledge and skills, the training was also an opportunity to discuss the situation. It was encouraging to see, how committed and engaged the discussion in Vlora was. Conclusions and recommendations were made. If possible, the gender equality employees' network should meet regularly and exchange information, it was said. They should monitor on regular basis individual work plans and keep track of the achievements in each sector, they suggested. I am optimistic that the respective supervisors will give their staff opportunities to implement these recommendations.

In addition to this a lot can still be done to complete the network within the institutions. Within the fourteen ministries there are only two officially appointed full-time ministerial gender equality employees. They are within the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Health.. The remaining, are performing as gender focal points in addition to their everyday work. The picture is similar at the local level. Only fifteen out of sixty-five focal points are officially appointed as full time gender equality employees.

So I think, it is now time to finalize the appointment process of the gender equality employees, to strengthen the link between the Ministries, the National Council on Gender Equality and the gender equality employees at the central and local level.

Allow me to use this occasion to turn your attention to a gender equality issue, which is not directly related to today's ceremony, but deserves high attention.

As you know, the Electoral Code requires that one out of three candidates on a list should be a woman/or of either gender. Until today, we have not received any consolidated information, to which extend this was respected in the May 2011 Local Government Elections. We also have not yet been provided with an overview on how many women got elected.

I encourage the National Council on Gender Equality and the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Equal Opportunities to follow up with the CEC with regard to the important data on Women Candidates and elected Women Municipal Councillors and Mayors.

And finally I appeal to elected women to stand firm and not to disappoint their voters.

As for today's event, I would like to conclude my speech here. I would like to thank all the gathered for their appreciated participation and wish you success in the continuation of your work.