

**Interview of *Standard* newspaper with Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania,
Ambassador Pavel Vacek**

Date: 08 September 2007

Vacek: The end of my three years of work in Albania

By Armand Meta

1. Ambassador you are now close to the end of your three –year mandate as Head of the OSCE Presence. Are you going to leave Albania?

Yes, I am going to leave soon, these are my last weeks - it has been foreseen and I am glad that it has gone as foreseen...

2. How would you describe your work during these three years?

The Presence’s mandate, the direction from Chairmanship and from Vienna have guided the work – that is always the case. I pledged to make a better use of the potential and resources of the Mission for supporting Albanian reforms and I have tried my best to deliver on it.

3. What would you recall as achievements during your tenure in Albania? Are there areas where you think your organization has failed or could perform better?

The work with a number of Albanian institutions and other partners has brought about achievements – some are quantifiable, like number of people trained, material and other resources provided, draft laws commented on, events hosted, tens of thousand of properties registered and the list goes on...Other results are less material but equally valuable – accomplishment of processes, also a more rational, open and transparent type of governance, the trust people have in the Organisation and its mission. The thing I have personally valued perhaps more than anything else is the availability of all constitutional representatives, especially the elected ones for a contact, a discussion, a consultation on the common work..

4. What have been the most difficult matters/ideas to convey to the Albanian counterparts?

The most difficult to handle and also most sensitive are the instances when the Mission has a different view on how to go about a particular matter than the Government or other institution of the host country. It is your country, your decision and your responsibility and the internationals have to respect this while they are under the obligation to pursue their mandates, standards, practices but also experiences, a know-how... To reconcile the two things which sometimes collide is one of the most delicate aspects of the work...

5. The role of your organization as a mediator in solving certain crises has been criticized by some political figures. Have these critics bothered you?

First of all, mediation and facilitation are exactly the roles which I have tried to depart from... But there were situations when Albanian expectations went in the opposite direction - the political talks of August 2006 and December 2006-January 2007 involved international partners and that in itself was no reason for jubilation... However, the election of the President in July 2007 without any international involvement hopefully marks a definitive departure from external mediation... And when it comes to those criticisms - well, I have always tried to look under the surface of such statements and see if there is rational constructive core in it which allows for a dialogue ... or if it is all posturing for internal purposes that has not much to do with us and our work...

6. There are many difficult issues the country needs to solve such as problems with the judiciary, the property reform, lack of rule of law, corruption, etc. What do you think governments should do in order to improve the situation in each of these areas?

In some of the areas the formal international standards and recommendations are known – the electoral reform is perhaps the most obvious example. In many other reform sectors there has always been an interaction with Albanian partners on how to do things - this is a less visible everyday work of ours on new or revised legislation, on restructuring or capacity building of institutions, on projects supporting various aspects of the state operation or society's development – in all such interaction we convey our views on how things should be done, sometimes there are even specific papers prepared, some informal and not meant for publishing... What we do and convey to the Albanian institutions in regular contacts should always be based on the mandate and the sum of standards and know-how available in the particular area... That is why I have seldom felt the need to send messages to the Government publicly, via the media... When this happens, and it happens seldom, it is rather to correct misunderstandings or to indicate the seriousness of the issue or of the situation...

7. Albania has not been able to get out of a cycle of problematic elections. There are still issues unresolved with the voters list, ID cards, etc. There are opinions that the OSCE Presence has not done enough to make the political class here understand once and for all that they should abandon efforts to manipulate elections and that if they do manipulate them they will not get through without any consequences. What is stopping the Presence in Tirana strongly denounce these efforts like the OSCE has done in some other countries in the Eastern side of Europe?

What should finally make Albania abandon the electoral and other malpractices is the will of people to see order and fairness in elections and governance and the willingness of the political representation to respect it... rather than any outside institution, standard or incentive...

8. Do you think you will find any reason to come back to Albania in the future?
What would be your best memories of the country?

Best memories? The occasional rewarding moments in one's work but also the sea and friends... And yes, I would like to come again.