

**Launching Ceremony of
Master in Transitional Justice Study Programme**
Opening remarks by Ambassador Vincenzo Del Monaco
Tirana, 1 December 2021

Madame Minister, dear friend,
Your Excellency the Rector,
Dear Professors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear participants,
Dear colleague, Minister von Oy,

I am delighted to be here with you today on this special occasion to launch the Master in Transitional Justice study programme at the University of Tirana. We started this endeavour in September, when four reputed international experts offered a full month of training to the University lecturers that will teach in this Master.

Now we see our joint efforts bearing concrete fruits. The lecturers that we trained will now teach the students, providing them with a unique opportunity to enhance their knowledge of and develop research in social, legal, and political issues related to transitional justice.

And we will stay close by in case further support is needed. Because the OSCE has a long-standing commitment in strengthening the foundations of democratic debate and democratic institutions here in this beautiful country, in Albania.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the donor of this project, represented here by the Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, for its generous financial support to this extra-budgetary project. The assistance offered by our Presence would not have been possible without it.

First of its kind in Albania, and unique in the Balkan region, this two-year graduate programme was established with the aim to foster research, academic debate, and public awareness about social, political, and legal issues related to the transformation Albanian society had gone through in breaking away from and coming to terms with its communist past. A comprehensive and far-fetching curriculum covers a broad range of perspectives from law, history and social sciences, and is designed to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of and, through various internship opportunities offered, a first-hand professional experience in research and analysis of transitional justice issues.

Notwithstanding the immense progress made, transitional justice mechanisms aimed to address the legacy of the past regimes' abuses remain under-researched and overlooked in both policy-making and academic discourse.

Education, in that regard, and you all know how much respect I pay to education, and to teachers, and to professors, plays a crucial role in informing decision-making processes regarding the delivery of justice and reconciliation through cutting-edge research and historical preservation.

Against this background, the OSCE Presence initiated a multi-year strategy to consolidate the conduct of research and teaching in the field of transitional justice in Albania. In 2018, with the involvement of international scholars, the Presence supported ten young Albanian researchers to undertake study projects in the field of transitional justice. At the University of Tirana, the Presence also supported the creation of a specialized Centre for Justice and Transformation – a multi-disciplinary structure that aims to lay the foundations for strengthening current academics and practitioners' debates in the field.

In view of developing the Master course, consultations with relevant national and international institutions were carried out, namely the State Authority on Access to Information of the Former State Security Police, the Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture, the Institute for the Study and Consequences of Communist Crimes, as well as the Kujto – Archive of Crimes and Victims of Communism.

In a nutshell, the establishment of this Master programme, therefore, offers a unique opportunity to harness the potential for academic research to offer novel perspectives in addressing the wrongdoings of the communist past through facts-based dialogue and exemplary reconciliation practices.

If I can address the students, I am convinced that the rigorous and multidisciplinary programme will offer you multiple opportunities to engage in research of and will equip you with fact-based practical tools in addressing past injustices in a diplomatic, judicial, non-profit, or academic environment. With the support of experts at the University of Tirana you will succeed in gaining invaluable knowledge that will prove of inestimable benefit for your future and will serve as a guidance in enhancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law, while recognizing the importance of historical memory and reconciliation in the country.

Lastly, please avail me an opportunity to extend my deep admiration and sincere appreciation to the academic staff at the University of Tirana whose enduring commitment and enthusiasm in developing the Master programme cannot be overstated. I am convinced that the students will benefit from your shrewd expertise and mentorship throughout their academic and professional development.

And, last but not least, without the involvement of Minister Kushi we would not be here today. And I can testify to your constant commitment and support to our activities, which is of invaluable relevance for me and my entire team. I would also like to thank my team for their excellent work, those who are here today and those, like Claudio Pala, who are not among us physically but certainly in spirit. Thank you very much and I look very much forward to see your concrete deliverables in your academic activity. Grazie!