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**ADDRESS**  
**BY**

**THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, H.E. MR.**  
**LULZIM BASHA**

**AT**

**THE 15TH MEETING OF THE OSCE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**Madrid, 29-30 November 2007**

Honorable Mr. Chairman,  
Honorable Colleagues,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, permit me to address this esteemed forum and share with you the best congratulations for the Spanish Chairmanship – in – Office for hosting this Ministerial Meeting, but not simply for that. During this year, all of us have been eye - witnesses of its efforts aimed at the good functionality of the Organization and at close consultations in achieving the consensus at the OSCE, with the sole intention of turning it into an all - inclusive, consistent and coherent Organization.

Only a year after reaching the decisions which would prove quite useful in raising the OSCE efficiency, Albania notes with pleasure that the Organization has become more effective and better focused, reflecting in this way, the democratic developments of the countries in its space. Therefore, OSCE remains the appropriate instrument in strengthening cooperation for security, peace and prosperity and in facing the increasingly threatening challenges to peace and stability, both in OSCE region and beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

It was our affiliation to the values of the OSCE in human rights, rule of law, democratic government, that made us submit Albania's candidacy for the OSCE Chairmanship – in –Office in 2012. We have chosen our candidacy to the OSCE to levels while being self-aware that, thanks to its multi-dimensional approaches to security, to the essential frame of political commitments and to its unique geographical representation, this Organization would be the adequate forum for tests like these, which demand a serious and solemn commitment to equalize the standards and meet the obligations. Albania is ready to offer such an approach. In this spirit and thanks to the rich experience gained through its cooperation with the OSCE, both as an active member and a hosting country of one of its missions on the ground, Albania could render a valuable contribution as Chair – in office of the OSCE in the year 2012.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albania is passing through an ongoing democratization process, whose prevailing trends are the growing pace towards the reform implementation, the consolidation of the legal and institutional frame for the good state functioning and continuous changes in the conduct and mentality at several segments of the Albanian politics and society. Permit me to state with certitude that this is a step -by - step dynamic and irreversible process whose concluding point is certainly our joining to the large family of the states with a lasting democracy.

There are several influential actors and factors in this process of democratic and institutional development in Albania. First and foremost, it is an outcome of our aspirations towards full integration, which is becoming to us and whereby we view that our certain future lies. Likewise and in due time, a number of international partners have provided us with assistance and special encouragement. Among the latter, OSCE is the organization, whose member Albania became right from the debut of its transformation into a democratic state of the rule of law; in addition, OSCE has essentially and continually contributed to the Albanian vigorous transition to democracy. Therefore, we extend our gratitude to the Organization, to its distinguished representatives and its Member States, for their assistance in this steady transformation. However, now that my country is complying with the commitments emanating from the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, the Albanian Government thinks that the ownership of the process and the accountability of Albanian institutions for its implementation would as well lead to the intensification of our commitment to democracy and security cooperation. This explains why Albania has also called for focusing the mandate of the OSCE Presence in Albania, in line with the country's major priorities, which remain priorities of its not very – distant integration.

Mr. Chairman,

Albania congratulates You on the new qualitative momentum during this year, with regard to the relations between OSCE and its Partners, given the idea that, endeavours to maintain pace and security in the OECE space are meaningless without having a close cooperation, benefiting a broader and more lasting security. Albania does also view this kind of cooperation as a priority of its foreign policy, since it is convinced and it is a proven fact that the regional, cross-regional and the wider cooperation is a value added to our joint efforts for global peace and stability. On this point, and not without pride, let me mention this functional cooperation in Southeast Europe. Our region has become a pattern of a simultaneous and inter-changeable development of its countries. Albania maintains intensive and friendly relations with all its neighbors. This has helped our countries become interlinked with one another, not only thanks to a considerable number of bilateral agreements, but also to joint projects in the framework of OSCE or NATO and EU integration.

Mr. Chairman,

During this year, the process of the settlement of Kosovo's final status has been at the top of the international political agenda. All of us are eye- witnessing the ongoing endeavors of the international community, at various forms and formats, aimed at

providing a solution to the Kosovo issue, whose people is aspiring for justice and the clarity of its own future. This desire was also manifested in the latest elections in Kosovo; these elections showed the irreversibility of the democratic process there and the readiness of its political elite in undertaking the decisive steps, in cooperation with the international community for the settlement of its final status. True, a negotiable solution has been and remains always preferable for the Government of Albania. Meanwhile, we have continuously underscored and let me emphasize it again now that: in absence of an agreement between parties, the international community should unveil the diplomatic initiative for the implementation of President Ahtisaari' s Plan. Any attempt for an endless drag-on to this process would be useless for all parties concerned; besides, it would be fraught with the real danger of losing the trust on the process as a whole, on the praiseworthy efforts of international community and it would put at stake the future of security in Kosovo, on the region and on a wider scale.

Albania stands to the view that if we are to minimize the implications on security, both in Kosovo and on the region and promote the underlying values of a democratic and tolerant state, then the OSCE should remain involved in Kosovo. We have commended the OSCE commitment in Kosovo through its Mission there, in building up the democratic institutions and capacities, mutual confidence but also lending development opportunities to all communities there. We hold that OSCE should remain involved into Kosovo's development, in providing its renowned experience, at the areas of institution building and democracy, respect for human rights and establishing the rule of law.

We also believe Mr.Chairman, that there are no double standarts when it comes to the interpretation or implementation` of the Helsinki Final Act Decalogue. If reference is made to the Helsinki Final Act in relation to the Kosova issue and, in order to justify the position, only one paragraph of it is implied, may I recall that there is also another paragraph that speaks about self-determination of people.

Finally, in view of the documents we shall adopt together, permit me to express the confidence on the merited place that this Ministerial would take on the OSCE diplomatic record, pumping hope to our common future on a safe and peaceful world. The decisions of this Ministerial will constitute the basis of our work during 2008 and by virtue of their significance, in the years to come as well.

On this occasion, I would like to wish full success to the upcoming Finnish OSCE Chairmanship – in – Office and give my assurances on Albania's full-fledged cooperation with the OSCE.

I thank You for the attention!