



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

**Opening address of Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania,
Ambassador Osmo Lipponen,**

**at the evaluation meeting of the Women's Rights and Anti-Trafficking Education
(WRATE) project, Tirana, 23 January 2003**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Fight against trafficking in human beings is high on the agenda of the OSCE Presence in Albania, but also of the whole of the OSCE this year.

Different Departments of our Presence have joined efforts in the fight against trafficking. We launched one of the basic projects in November 2000. It is Women's Rights and Anti-Trafficking Education (WRATE) project, which we will continue in the future with new efforts.

WRATE was created as a grass roots campaign by the OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The Project was designed to sensitize the Albanian men and women to the rights of women, as guaranteed by the Albanian law and the international human rights conventions that Albania has ratified.

The project objectives are:

1. to increase knowledge of women's rights and the risks of trafficking among key groups in local communities;
2. to combat trafficking and abuse of women's rights through development of networks on gender issues;
3. to increase community capacity and build NGO training capacity on trafficking and women's rights.

Last autumn alone, WRATE trainers conducted 38 regional workshops throughout the country, apart from the north-east part of Albania. Since the beginning of the project, we have conducted 104 workshops and trained a total of 1600 women and men.

The participants highly valued the information given to them about women's rights in Albania and welcomed the opportunity to discuss those issues freely. Many of the participants were previously unaware of their rights and of the obligation of the Government, under international conventions, to protect those rights. A lot of them talked about their experiences with the domestic violence and trafficking but were unaware that

the Albanian legislation condemns those acts and that the perpetrators should be prosecuted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have already said, the OSCE Presence aims at continuing with WRATE activities also in this year. We believe that there is still an acute need for public information and thus a serious need for further continuation of public awareness campaigns about women's rights and anti-trafficking issues.

In the future, we would like to continue with regional workshops and to extend our activities to the north-east part of the country. What is important is that we will continue working mainly in rural areas. Our target groups will be Roma, rural women and men, but also the high school students and teachers, university professors, health care providers, police anti-trafficking units, judges, prosecutors and media representatives. We will also continue with training OSCE mission staff, as well as members of other international organizations, on gender issues and anti-trafficking.

Our vision is to empower Albanian actors in all areas of OSCE democratization activities. Focusing on that, we plan to enhance the co-operation with governmental and non-governmental bodies. We have already established co-operation with the Albanian Committee for the Equal Opportunities and are looking forward to more joint activities this year.

We will contact OSCE representations in the neighbouring countries, in order to explore possibilities for expanding WRATE activities throughout the region.

Finally, we believe that there still remains a lot to be done in the area of prevention of trafficking and that there is a huge need for continuation of the public awareness campaigns.

We all need to tackle the issue with full responsibility. This includes the government, which should have its responsibility in this work. The only way to fight this problem is to act together.