

Klan TV, 25 September 2003

Interview with Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Osmo Lipponen

By Arta Tozaj

Ambassador Lipponen, the OSCE has played an assisting, guaranteeing and ensuring role in preparing the Electoral Code. This Electoral Code has been first contested regarding the media monitoring and now also regarding some technical aspect of the police role in the elections. Was this Code prepared only for achieving an agreement between the opposition and the majority or was this Code in compliance with international standards? How do you think the role of the police in the elections could be solved?

Thank you very much for giving the OSCE such a role. I believe we assisted very much the bipartisan committee in reaching a really viable and good result. The guarantee however comes from Albanian parliament and the government. What we have guaranteed and promised is that after the elections we would continue to improve further, with the members of the bipartisan committee or whatever the composition will be, the already good Electoral Code. I assure you that the Code was not made just to please the two major parties. Throughout the work, every aspect of international standards was the benchmark, which ensured that the compromise reached is in line with the international standards. However, how the Code functions in practice is another thing. But we have to understand all the time that two major parties had to reach an agreement. That was the starting point of all the work of the bipartisan committee in an effort to create something new in the Albanian politics: a wide consensus on key issues, aimed at achieving stability and normal democracy in Albania. That is why the consensual spirit is extremely important.

The main concern that we have had so far is the role of the police and the normative act on the Law on State Police. First of all, it was not drafted in the same consensual cooperation. But right now parliament is at session debating and I hope parliament will regain the consensual spirit. What we were also concerned with is that the act came in the middle of the electoral campaign. This should have been discussed before the electoral campaign. The spirit of the Electoral Code on the role of the police is very clear.

What do you think about the latest developments such as the appointment of the seventh member of the Central Election Commission (CEC), in view of the bipartisan committee guarantee to have a balanced CEC, especially after the last elections in June 2001?

On several occasions I have said that I wished the spirit of the bipartisan committee to be implemented. It was extremely good that the parties wanted to have a balanced CEC and my expectation was that the confidence in the Electoral Code and the electoral process

should be found. Without the balance and the implementation of the agreements and the law there seems to be little confidence and the quite positive spirit that was managed to be built seems to be endangered. We have very much wanted this electoral campaign to be a normal campaign, not the campaign concentrated on the past issues.

What do you mean Ambassador when you say that the positive spirit seems to be endangered? Are you referring to the last elections or these elections?

These elections. Clearly there have been loud voices saying that the balance in the CEC has not been achieved. Probably the CEC is the main issue. But when there has not been a solution reached for the main issue which, in this case, would satisfy the opposition, than the other issues such as delay in deciding on the party financing and the normative act on the Law on State Police become big issues. I really hope that the parties will find a positive solution to the issues.