



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

P r e s e n c e i n A l b a n i a

**Speaking points by the Head of Presence, Ambassador Robert Bosch at the Plenary
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Minister Nishani, Deputy Minister Peka, General Prosecutor Rama, Ambassador Lohan, Deputy Head of Mission Jones, distinguished guests, ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

I am very pleased to address you at today's Annual International Consortium Plenary session.

I congratulate all those individuals from the national and international agencies that make up the International Consortium for another successful year of hard work and achievements.

In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to the Steering Committee, and its ICITAP Program Assistant, Ms Liljana Kristo, for their dedication in keeping this valuable co-ordination mechanism well 'on track'.

Colleagues, let me briefly review some of the key points of the last year,

Regarding the State Police, one of the most impressive achievements has to have been their performance during the parliamentary election period.

Without doubt, the Police carried out their duties in a highly professional and impartial way and also received public praise in various International election reports.

This is one clearer sign that police reform is heading in the right direction.

With the current structure in place, the foundations are definitely laid for a modern police service, ready to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Looking ahead, a major challenge remains in introducing and implementing a more efficient and effective style of policing.

To reach this goal, a more stable budgetary framework needs to be in place.

The police must also have the right tools at their disposal to do their job.

Without this, we won't see an efficient and professional police service and we won't see the fight against corruption and organized crime being won.

I am pleased to see that the police have begun implementing the philosophy of community policing in the regional directorates.

These first steps made to improve relations with the public will pay dividends in the future and the Presence stands ready to provide assistance when requested.

Of course, the police are not the only body working to enforce the law, as the courts and prosecutors play a crucial role as well.

These institutions need to be led by people upholding the rule of law in the country.

However, as I have mentioned, the focus of all Albanian authorities' efforts should be on strengthening efforts to reduce and eradicate these two negative phenomena.

On this I commend the Government's policy of zero tolerance against corruption – a policy that has been noted by many of many international institutions and capital cities. Such a policy has already reaped many successes since 2005 as we know.

However, I would now strongly encourage all those national institutions and actors responsible for leading this fight to further focus their attention on all those involved in corrupt practices in political and public office – irrespective of rank or political colours.

Moreover, over the past year, many much needed reforms in this sector have remained stalled.

After the elections, the failure of the opposition to participate in the Assembly has led to delays in legislation requiring a three-fifths majority being approved.

Much of the legislation affecting criminal law requires such a majority, as does the much heralded and long-awaited law on the administrative courts.

The lack of an opposition has also meant that now much legislation is being passed without the level of discussion one would normally expect.

So, I take this opportunity to ask the opposition to reflect long and hard on their actions, which are now de facto harming the process to come to a better functioning modern democratic system.

They need to be made to feel that their active and continuous participation in the Albanian Assembly is welcomed both in words and deeds.

I should also ask in this context, the Government to make extra efforts in ensuring that all legislation is discussed by relevant interest groups in advance of being approved by the Assembly.

That said, in some policy areas we have seen some progress being made.

We should acknowledge and fully commend the fact that Albania has now passed a significant and historic anti-discrimination law.

This law protects a wide range of citizens from discriminatory practices.

Although the media have paid attention primarily to the protection of the LGBT community, and that is a positive development, we should not forget that this law is in fact far broader.

It protects at least to the same degree women, ethnic minorities, disabled persons, the elderly and people living in rural areas.

Perhaps one reason that this is not yet well enough known is that there is still no commissioner against discrimination yet in place.

I hope that someone is appointed as soon as possible.

The OSCE Presence remains ready to support such a commissioner with assistance in drafting secondary legislation.

Finally, when it comes to the court system, challenges continue to be faced with the integrity of the judicial process.

There has been much discussion recently about forthcoming vacancies on the Constitutional Court, which will result in replacement of two-thirds of the Court.

I would remind everyone of the importance of exercising care in selecting new members to this body.

The process must be transparent.

Judges must be selected because of their legal knowledge, their legal reasoning skills and, above all, their integrity.

If there is to be serious improvement in the quality of justice delivered, the same criteria must be used when making all decisions to promote persons in the judiciary system - so also to the High Court and to the Courts of Appeals.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Presence in Albania stands ready to offer further assistance to all law enforcement and legal sector agencies in Albania.

Finally, I wish all those present all the very best for continued success over the next year.

Thank you very much

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