

REMARKS BY THE HEAD OF PRESENCE
"Annual Meeting for Prevention and Fight Against Cultivation of Narcotic Plants"
Tirana International Hotel
13 April 2012

Minister Nishani,
Mayors
General Director Burgaj,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's topic "Annual Meeting for Prevention and Fight Against Cultivation of Narcotic Plants" clearly shows that a big task is being tackled and your presence here shows that the work is taken most serious.

First, I would like to thank you, Minister Nishani, for your leadership in this fight against narcotics and your initiative for this important meeting today. Let me reassure you, Minister Nishani, you personally and your entire team can count on our continued support and thank you also for your kind words of introduction about the OSCE Presence.

For the OSCE Presence in Albania the great significance comes through two reasons.

The first one is the goal of the meeting, which aims at the reduction and possibly the end of the illegal production of narcotic plants in Albania.

The second reason are the means, the tools on how to reach that goal.

To eliminate any cultivation of narcotic plants on Albanian territory is of national interest. Production and consumption of illegal narcotics are challenging to the rule of law, the economy and also public health, like they would do in any other country.

The crime of illegal cultivation does not stand alone, it also brings other and more crimes with it.

Illegal drugs, in any form, are a scourge everywhere and the fight against cultivation of narcotic plants has for good reasons now been one of the top priorities of the Albanian Government and the Albanian State Police, when holding this kind of meetings since 2002.

Albanian authorities do very well by taking into account this issue in a very serious and professional way.

We see the Albanian State Police strongly engaged in this fight. Although significant improvements have been made, more challenges lie ahead, important problems are still waiting to be solved.

Let me mention as one example the longstanding issue of drug cultivation in somewhat rural communes in the South, and in the North.

It clearly indicates that the State Police cannot do everything alone to eradicate this problem.

The support and co-operation of the local governments is imperative and crucial for the whole process.

It is often thought that fight against drug cultivation, and crime in general, is only a work for police.

Reality, however, is different.

Reality teaches us that, in a democratic society, police cannot achieve anything without the support and cooperation of the community.

This is why we would want to see the local actors motivated and constructively involved in this issue, hopefully everywhere.

The municipalities and communes have the legal, moral and civic obligation to join the Albanian State Police in its task to fight drug cultivation and trafficking.

For any kind of crime, prevention and deterrence are better than prosecution and sentence.

Again, this way of proceeding is open only through cooperation between all key actors.

Minister Nishani,
Mayors and friends,

I would like to conclude by saying that, based on our mandate, the OSCE Presence in Albania remains firmly willing to offer further assistance and support to the Albanian State Police and to local governments to promote and strengthen the fight against illegal drug cultivation and help by encouraging the development of appropriate strategies. And we do so jointly with PAMECA and ICITAP.

To combat this plague is a mandatory goal; to bring together police and community through effective and efficient cooperation is the right means.

Let me finally express my best wishes for success to all of you on this challenging issue, this fight against crime

Your achievements will help to pave the way for a more secure and safer Albania!

Thank you very much!

Ends