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Interview of the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Pavel Vacek

Journalist: Marsjola Duro

1. Given all the information on the election process provided so far, do you think that the 3 July 2005 parliamentary elections are acceptable?

Its not up to me to pass such judgement but to the Albanian institutions, the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Electoral College. Their decisions should be respected. The ODIHR Elections Observation Mission will produce their final report approximately a month after the final results are declared, but its not their practice to pass a verdict on – as you put it – the acceptability of elections.

2. You have declared that the election process has not ended yet. What do you expect to change until the final election results are declared?

The election process continues indeed because the Electoral College and the CEC continue adjudicating the complaints and appeals. The Electoral College is to complete their adjudication of appeals. The CEC has to set the date for the re-runs of elections. Re-runs seem to be likely, I stress, seem to be likely in a limited number of zones. Hopefully, there will be no irregularities in the election re-runs - and consequently no complaints and appeals - which should allow the CEC to declare the final results without further delay.

3. The local political establishment, the international actors and the Presence have already recognized that the last general elections marked a step forward. What is this step?

For me, the biggest step forward has been made by the Albanian voters, who exerted their right to vote in impressive numbers and have been patiently waiting for the completion of work by the CEC and the College. The increased respect for the law and institutions is a clear sign of progress, of civic discipline. Of course, the overall detailed assessment of the elections will have to be provided by the ODIHR/EOM and is bound to draw a mixed picture of good and bad things.

4. What do you think about the role of the political leadership in the post-election period in the country?

I hope they have been well advised to follow the attitude of the citizens, that is to respect the law and the election institutions.

5. The current electoral law and the Presence have drawn criticism from the smaller parties and the media. Do you think that this law would still be good if Albania would hold elections again in the future?

Even if the political representation opts for retaining the current law, there is work to be done to further improve it. There have been international recommendations from

the past that have not been followed in the previous reform and there are further lessons emerging from the 3rd July and the vote counting process. However, I hear political parties talk of a departure from the current system based on the mix of majoritarian and proportional vote– in such case the next reform would be about more than just improvements of the current Electoral Code. These are issues for the new Assembly - we will be ready to assist.

6. What are the phases that the Presence is going to monitor from today until the new government will be formed?

The election re-runs should be observed by international observers but its not the Presence which will be in charge of that. The ODIHR Election Observation Mission remains in charge, the Presence may provide them with technical support. I guess that domestic observer organisations will also be interested in re-activating for the re-runs. I hope that re-runs will be free of irregularities of the 3rd July and of the vote-counting that followed.