



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
MISSION IN KOSOVO

**Remarks of Ambassador Werner Wnendt,
Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo,**

Conference of Regional Public Broadcasters

Prishtinë/Priština, 16 September 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to open this Conference of the Regional Public Service Broadcasters. This is the first time it is held in Kosovo and I am particularly pleased to see that this was an initiative by Radio Television Kosovo.

RTK is one of the newest public broadcasters, established only in 1999 through the efforts of the OSCE and the European Broadcasting Union. Although the OSCE has not been involved in organizing this event, we continue to work with RTK in its effort to become a professional, sustainable and well trusted Public Service Broadcaster for all communities in Kosovo.

Over the last seven years – and indeed, I think it is this month that RTK is celebrating its seventh anniversary – Kosovo's Public Broadcaster had a very difficult task to fulfil. It not only began from scratch but has faced serious challenges while persisting in its efforts to serve the public.

In today's world, media are the agents of democracy and the quality of media is of decisive importance. Public service broadcasters seemingly have a greater responsibility and are expected to provide its audience with high quality and unbiased programming, free from political influence. However they also must continually adapt to the ever changing technical and medial parameters and the increasing demands coming from the audience.

This process of developing, of adjusting and improving is not simple. It might be easier in well developed and wealthy countries, easier for established Public Broadcasters like the BBC or the

German ARD/ZDF. But it might be and surely is more difficult for young and small Public Broadcasters on tight budgets that either have just been founded, like RTK, or have and still are undergoing the painful transition process from state to public broadcaster. It may seem more daunting if they have to operate in a young and fragile democracy paired with a weak economic market. This is the case in Kosovo and other societies of the region.

Some of the Public Broadcasters present are small and facing similar problems. For the individual broadcaster, improvement might be very difficult to achieve. However, as with so many areas, matters can move forward by joining forces and creating synergies through regional structures and strong cooperation with neighbouring public broadcasters. This is a way to help strengthen individual broadcasters.

I see two areas where working together can help. First is technical cooperation and exchange of know-how; and second – which can make the difference how the audience sees you – content and programming. Exchange of programmes between the regional representatives of public service broadcasting will surely help improve the respective financial situation. More crucially, it can help enhance the cultural and social understanding among people and help create a regional European family with a regional European identity.

I am happy to learn that RTK, from last Monday, started to broadcast its minority programmes in their entirety via satellite. This presents a significant improvement. This offers the prospect of more Turkish, Bosnian, Macedonian and other language programmes – produced by the respective Public Broadcasters – being fed into the terrestrial and satellite system of RTK and vice versa. I am very optimistic that the overall diversity of programming will be of great benefit for the residents of this region.

I wish the organizers and participants a fruitful and successful conference. I very much hope that this will only be the first in a series of conferences and workshops which will eventually lead to closer and stronger co-operation.

Thank you very much.