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OSCE Criticises Irregularities during Elections

(Translation from Albanian)

OSCE Ambassador to Tirana, Osmo Lipponen, stated that the rerun of local elections in Himara did not mark any progress. On the contrary, elections were worse than those of 12 October.

In an interview with BBC, Mr Lipponen first answered the question about the main problems noticed during the process of local elections in Albania.

Lipponen: A part of a process went really well, but we may say that the conduct of elections failed and the biggest problems were those related to voter lists. Also, there were problems related to the practical work of the electoral commissions in the voting centres. Thus, it can be said that the practical administration failed and as a result there was confusion.

BBC: Mr Lipponen, in your opinion, what exactly happened during Sunday's elections in Himara?

Lipponen: I am one hundred per cent sure that the rerun elections were even worse than those of 12 October. There is no need to enter into details again, especially because we have to give the authorities a chance to express themselves. But we have witnessed the whole process, from the establishment of the voting centres to the handing over of the ballot boxes. We have taken notes of all that happened and we do not consider it reasonable to say more than "disgraceful things happened".

BBC: Mr Lipponen, do you think that the OSCE has any kind of responsibility and that it could have done more in the well-conduct of these elections?

Lipponen: We have done what we could do. We managed to do a lot. We tried to help the Central Election Commission and they did a really good job. We also trained the media. We supported the NGOs and trained them to observe elections. We helped in clarifying the police role, in order that they respected the new Electoral Code and its provisions on the police role.

I think that we have done a lot, but despite this, the elections were not as they should have been. We printed 30,000 copies of the Electoral Code and translated it into Albanian, but if the people that control the voting centres and election commissions do not read the Electoral Code and disdain to implement it, this is something which we cannot help, as we are only observers.

The responsibility lays with the Albanian authorities and the Central Election Commission, because the OSCE can only observe and then issue reports, give recommendations and undertake measures in order to improve the situation. We have started doing this.