

## **HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS FOR *WOMEN IN POLITICS* CONFERENCE**

*26 June 2018*

Dear Deputy Speaker Hysi,  
Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to welcome the organization of this event as a step forward towards increased women participation in politics in Albania.

The OSCE Presence in Albania has had its contribution across the years, working closely with women politicians, civil society organizations at local and national level, with decision making bodies and State institutions, to facilitate and support more and more women competing in local and national elections and occupying elected public offices.

We have over the years supported the establishment and functioning of the Alliance of Women MPs. For more than eight years now, we have supported many activities strengthening the position of women in politics all across Albania through the National Platform for Women. We have also organized trainings for women local councillors, so the basis of the future women political elite and this year we are developing it into a more systematic and comprehensive training program under the concept of *Academy of Women Councillors*, empowering women at grassroots level.

Most recently, we have started to work regionally on this idea about gender equality in politics, through organizing thematic workshops in Budva, Montenegro in May, as well supported the participation of Albanian female MPs to the Regional Meeting on Gender Equality and Corruption organized by our sister mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Presence also chairs the Gender and Women in Decision-Making Working Group, which brings together stakeholders and plays an active role in advancing women's position in the society. The Working Group collected recommendations regarding gender in politics that will be submitted to the Ad-Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform.

Also in this field, achievements certainly cannot be denied. Albania has proper legislation on gender equality in decision making bodies and State institutions. 41 members of the current Legislature are women, the highest number since 1990, and even compared to some European Union countries it is not so bad. The Electoral Code has set a 30% quota for women candidates in national elections, and, what is of course much better, a 50% quota in local elections. However, these achievements should not be taken for granted and our joint efforts should see that this positive trend continues and that there cannot be a reverse.

Something very concrete in this context: In the previous Electoral Code there was a regulation, which allowed the rejection of party lists that do not fulfil the legal gender quotas. That had been deleted. We strongly recommend a reinstatement into the Electoral Code of this regulation which allows the rejection of party lists that do not fulfil the legal gender quotas. Merely imposing a simple fine on political parties whose electoral lists do not fulfil the gender quota does not advance the cause of women in politics as efficiently as the

rejection of lists that do not fulfil the gender quota. Political parties should do more to ensure the conditions for open and fair participation of women in the candidate selection process within the parties. This shows a lot still can be done.

Nevertheless, the movement forward over the last years keeps me optimistic. I express my sincere hope that the achievements in increasing the participation of women in politics and public life will be sustained and built upon. Maybe at some point in the future we may see a woman Prime Minister in this country, following European and regional trends! For the time being, we work with dedication to see more women local councillors, more women members of the Assembly and more women taking over high State offices.

I wish this event a successful outcome, so that the findings of the reports that will be presented will eventually be taken into account by the parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform and Albania will have more women in politics and more women to higher offices.