

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT  
6<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF *MEMORY DAYS*  
*19 February 2021***

Thank you for this special opportunity to be part of this discussion.

It is with great pleasure and genuine dedication to the advancement of Albania that I contribute to the opening ceremony of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Memory Days.

Albania has come a long way since the collapse of the dictatorship. Many young people heard of those times from others, many of them do not have a personal, direct experience with the regime. For future generations the regime will be a chapter in their history books.

It is through rational, mature and accepting dialogue, including thoroughly research on the time that the past can be understood, so that lessons learnt are integrated into the present society, in order to avoid falling into the trap of forgetting the past.

Dialogue is a key word. In fact, museum cases are not enough to speak about the past. In museum cases, we observe an embalmed life. They satisfy our curiosity and knowledge, but those cases rarely provide us with the inspiration to create a masterpiece and to draw our future. They do not give us the bravery for our daily behaviour. Keeping memory means to save lives from the rapacity of time and from human violence. It belongs to memory an event that expands life.

The objective here, in our celebration of memory, is actually much bigger and important than just remove dust from the recent past of Albania. The underlying idea is at least threefold: to pay respect to the victims, to prevent the substance of that tragedy from repeating itself anywhere else in the world, to paraphrase Hannah Arendt, and to support the efforts of Albania to build an ever stronger and secure society.

Memory Days upholds this mission, enabled by the Albanian Institute for Democracy Media and Culture and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and all other partners, including the OSCE Presence.

They give space to researchers to get together and discuss their findings, provide historians grounds to review the past, as well as contribute to the education of young generation.

I am also very pleased to see that many institutions and partners as well as many civil society organizations are intensively working to tackle the issue of the social and political legacy of Albania's communist regime.

I commend the work of the Authority on Sigurimi Files that is a key institution in the process of coming to terms with the past.

I have met Ms. Gentiana Sula, the Chairperson of the Authority, and we had an open discussion about what needs to be done.

This a collective effort for the benefit of the society overall. Each can play a part, the Institute of Studies of Communist Crimes, the Albanian Institute for Democracy Media and Culture, but also the work of many others, civil society first and foremost.

I can assure that the OSCE Presence in Albania will continue its engagement by offering the public in general and students in particular an opportunity to learn about how societies deal with a traumatizing dictatorial past.

I take satisfaction in announcing that the Presence supports the development of an academic Master's Programme on Transitional Justice at the University of Tirana, which will add to the efforts of addressing the wrongdoings of the past.

We look forward to have this programme finally approved by the Ministry of Education, as its needs this institutional support. I cannot emphasize more how important this area of work is for the society and for the overall functioning of democracy.

With support from the Presence, the Centre for Justice and Transformation has also been recently established at the University of Tirana, aiming to serve as a hub for dialogue on transitional justice, covering areas such as human rights, democratization and rule of law.

I am happy to announce that the Presence has allocated funding from its 2021 budget for projects focusing on issues pertaining to the identification and recovery of bodies of the missing persons executed without trial during the communist regime.

To this aim, and teaming up with the Centre for Justice and Transformation established by the Presence in 2020, the Presence will support the development of a number of research papers in the fields of law, social science and history.

As I was informed by my colleagues, the Presence will also contribute through the organization of roundtables serving as a platforms of discussion on the challenges faced by institutions and the way forward, in particular concerning investigation proceedings on cases of missing persons.

Finally, I take the opportunity to assure you that as OSCE Presence we will continue to support the work and efforts of all relevant Albanian institutions involved in this field. This is team work, and therefore I need also your full and convinced support!

Thank you for inviting me to attend the Memory Days and I look forward to a continued collaboration among our organizations.

**Ends**