

**HEAD OF PRESENCE AMBASSADOR VINCENZO DEL MONACO REMARKS AT
A RECEPTION MARKING THE PRESENCE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY
AND HIS END OF TENURE**

19 October 2022

“...all the steps that I have taken in my life have brought me here, to this very place, now”. This is the sentence carved in an installation of contemporary art, which I’ve always found puzzling. You will concur with me that it is a terribly serious sentence, and at the same time a funny one.

If the flowing of life is a sublimation of creativity, of surprises, and reversals, stars have been kind enough to me and they have cuddled me to the extent that I got this position in this amazing Country.

Today’s reception is not an exercise of hagiography. I will refrain from speaking about me, and leave it to Vienna, to Albania and to the participating States to judge whether and to what extent we have managed to serve security in the unique understanding that the OSCE has for this concept. For all positive results, credit goes to the OSCE team in its entirety. For all mistakes, certainly in good faith, this is why I’m standing in front of you.

I am very happy you accepted my invitation and I thank you for that.

Special thanks go to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, to you, dear Olta, my/our guest of honour, for all the support you gave me during the last two years. If I had to condense it in one word, that would be “outstanding”.

I interpret your support as a tangible reflection of your clear vision about the role of the OSCE Presence and of the OSCE as a whole. This Organization which makes me wonder whether it is rather strong than powerful; an Organization that knows and has. An outreaching Organization engaged in providing a proven toolbox to promote peace and security, leveraging and drawing from documents that express the grammar and syntax of security that belong to our educational curricula. I am thinking of the Helsinki Final Act, or the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, for a New Era of Peace, Democracy and Unity.

One of the many lessons I will take back to Rome is this Albanian commitment, both institutional and political, - regardless of party lines - to nurture peace and security. Be that in Hofburg, in the Glass Palace, or within the house walls, where security consolidates through the prism of the existing broad process of internal reforms.

From our conversations – I apologise dear Madam Minister for mentioning them here – I have realised that **Albania sees no difference between professing and practicing peace. I have attentively followed what you do at the regional level. It shows that Albania represents a multiplier of OSCE potential and, vice versa, the OSCE provides a magnifying glass to the Albanian peace and security policy. Both live together out of this fertile relationship and of a noble sequence that we may define as a journey that from Tirana unwinds through the OSCE, to ultimately reach the United Nations. If I may add a piece to this journey, the Isaiah Wall. That engraved wall standing in front of the United Nations in New York, which contains a biblical promise, both touching and imperishable: placing human beings at the centre of all that exists. Having humanity at heart, with human rights as resolute foundations of our actions, makes us be alive, not just living creatures.**

The relationship that unites the OSCE Presence and Albania does not only exist in the present. There is also a rich past. Twenty-five years of political partnership that today we want to celebrate, starting from the *zenith* of this relationship, the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship, going through the Polish and Swedish Chairs, all the way back to 1997. This is the reason for the photo book I am presenting today under the auspices and with the support of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs. An exercise in the name of art, at least for more than just one picture. An exercise of memory, not nostalgia for the past, but protection and safeguard of life. Memory makes our present meaningful; it makes our existence and our values meaningful. Thank you! And do not forget to scan the QR code placed around this room.

Starting from the Dean, Amb. Balla, I want to personally thank my colleagues, Heads of Missions, for the respect and cordiality that always characterised our relationships. I thank you for the partnerships we successfully wove and elaborated on *ad hoc* topics of priority nature for Albanian interest and that of OSCE contributing countries. I count on the collaboration you will bestow to my successor at the helm of the Presence.

I want to thank again the Albanian Authorities, you Madame Foreign Minister, hoping you will echo my sentiments to the Albanian people and to your extraordinary staff. Greetings to all of you.

A special gratitude to my extraordinary, knowledgeable and loyal team. To my irreplaceable right hand, Clarisse. Without your dedication, dear staff members, today we would not be here.

I want to express my gratitude for my country. **I return even more aware of the value of the OSCE, of this region's role in the continental level, of the fact that security is a commitment found everywhere in daily life.**

In conclusion, I want to quote a phrase I like from a contemporary philosopher, whose name is Winnie the Pooh: "how lucky I am to have something that makes me saying goodbye so hard..."

Thank you

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