

REMARKS BY THE HEAD OF THE PRESENCE
AT A SENIOR LEVEL MEETING ON GENDER EQUALITY EMPLOYEES
2 May 2012

Minister Nishani,
Minister Ksera,
Deputy Ministers,
Mayors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning

It is a great pleasure to welcome you today on behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania to an event that seeks to further strengthen the gender equality mechanism in Albania.

In so doing, I would like to thank Ministers Nishani and Ksera for their personal full commitment in promoting gender equality policies.

For the OSCE Presence, the promotion of gender equality is a crucial commitment.

The OSCE Gender Action Plan recognizes that equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to successful human development: peace, sustainable democracy, economic development, and therefore to security and stability. This is fundamental in Albania, in Europe, in the whole OSCE region, and all other parts of the world.

Democracy requires popular control. It is based on popular control. Control over decision-making and also the equality of rights in the exercise of that control. For the citizens, that is expressed in elections and through civil society in public discourse.

Women and men must be able to play a full part in decision making at all levels. While acting as voters, this might already be the case. But is this the case also as elected politicians? Or as public officials, serving the community?

If women are not equally involved in the design and implementation of policies, legislation and enforcement mechanisms at every stage, then the system that emerges will not be properly democratic.

Women continually face discrimination and are often ignored or sidelined in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes.

The result for women is the perpetuation and institutionalisation of gender inequality.

However, the danger that women are seen only to speak for women and that men only speak for men must be avoided

Both must speak for and be involved in the creation of an equal society.

Gender must be taken into account in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes at every level and should involve both women and men.

This approach - gender mainstreaming – has been well defined by the UN as follows: “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

Ministers,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen

Albania is making important efforts to mainstream gender in all spheres of public life.

Recent years have seen a major strengthening of laws and policies that promote gender equality:

These steps were taken by successive governments to support women’s advancement.

Much of what has been achieved has gone far in ensuring that Albania’s legal framework upholds international standards.

The 2008 Law on Gender Equality in the Society foresaw the creation of a National Council on Gender Equality as the State's main monitoring and advisory body on gender equality issues and policies as well as it has called for the establishment and empowerment of full-time gender equality employees or gender focal points.

The Gender Equality Employees are important in terms of the development of their institutions' policies and programmes from the gender perspective.

The past years have shown some positive results while also allowing for identification of some challenges, such as institutionalization of their positions, terms of reference, need for strengthening their capacity to carry out their tasks.

Within the fourteen ministries of the government, there are only two officially appointed full-time ministerial gender equality employees. The picture is similar at the local level.

A lot was and is achieved, but still much is left to do.

The Presence has been supporting the strengthening of the national gender mechanisms, co-ordinating its work with other national and international stakeholders.

The latest contribution is the situational analysis that will be presented today.

The study confirmed some of the already known issues and has also flashed out some new ones, and we will hear more about this shortly.

What is really impressive today is that we have representatives at all levels present.

The gender mainstreaming can only succeed if the government, the National Council on Gender Equality, mayors and the gender equality employees are all fully on board.

Now time to finalize the appointment process of the gender equality employees, to strengthen the link between the Ministries, National Council, mayors and gender employees.

Ministers,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the OSCE Presence, I would like to wish to you all success in the continuation of your work.

Thank you very much.

Ends