



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
**Presence in Albania**

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT INAUGURATION OF MEDIA ROOM  
AND RECONSTRUCTED LAWS COMMITTEE PREMISES IN PARLIAMENT**

*23 May 2012*

Your Excellency Madam Speaker,  
Charge d' Affaires, Herr Tintrup,  
Honoured guests,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

First of all, before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the dignified manner Albanians came together after the tragic accident near Himara. Our feelings are with the victims and their families. Our wishes go to the injured for speedy and full recovery.

Allow me to turn now to this morning's event. On behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I am pleased to be with you for the inauguration of a model committee room and media working premises.

I would like to congratulate Madam Speaker and her team for all the hard work and commitment that has gone into arriving at this point.

The Assembly is a key institution of democracy in Albania.

It is the place where open and fair debate and discussions can make the spirit of democracy come to life.

It is the place through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and government is held to account.

It is the place that is able to represent and speak for the whole people of Albania.

It is the place that makes public the choices facing policy-makers and helps also to educate the public about them.

These four attributes of the Assembly constitute the real essence of a democracy in the 21st century.

And, in nearly all modern democracies, the democratisation process is rarely if ever a one-off event.

It is rather an evolutionary series of piecemeal reforms and an open-ended discussion of the best policies to better serve the people, and thus the real sovereign of a democratic country.

Such has been the case here in Albania.

Over the last 10 years, due to the hard work of the Assembly's leadership, from all political sides, major progress has been made in further enhancing the capacities of parliamentarians, Assembly staff as well as in upgrading its infrastructure.

For these reasons, the OSCE Presence in Albania is pleased to continue supporting the Assembly to develop further its role and institutional capacities.

Since 2002, and with the financial support of the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany, the Presence's support has included the live webcasting of the plenary sessions, the introduction of new information technology practices and infrastructure, together with the further modernization of the library premises and research capabilities.

In 2011, support from the Presence has focused on the wider availability to the public of parliamentary information through the modernized archiving infrastructure; the digitalization of archive files; the creation of media working room, and the upgrading of a model committee room in the Assembly offices.

And this brings us neatly to why we are standing here in this building this morning.

As we have all seen, in practice and due to their obligations, most citizens are unable to visit parliament in person.

Therefore, for parliamentary proceedings to be truly publically accessible, it means effectively being open to the media who can act as the public's 'eyes and ears'.

However, informing the public about the work of parliament is not just a concern for an independent media.

Informing the public about parliament is also a responsibility for the parliament itself.

The media working room we are inaugurating here today will help the media have easier access to outcomes of committee meetings and to parliamentary documents.

This room will also be a convenient place for the media to meet and to discuss.

The upgraded model committee room will offer a more user friendly environment where joint committee meetings and public hearings can take place.

This room will also increase access for the public and the media through a mini public gallery inside the room.

At this juncture, I would like to thank the German Government for their financial contribution towards this process.

These additional changes will only help the Albanian Parliament to become more transparent and accountable in the eyes of the public.

These changes will help to increase public ownership of the democratic process – and thus strengthen its legitimacy.

Madame Speaker,  
Honoured guests  
Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, as I think we all know, Parliaments are not just about buildings, fixtures and fittings.

More crucially, they are about seeing important decisions being made that affect the lives of citizens.

In this sense, I would like to mention two important decisions that will need to be taken shortly by the Parliament.

First, electoral code reform.

The Assembly is now very close to reach the 'finish line' as a result of all the hard work that has been made by all relevant political sides since November of last year.

I urge all sides to remember that they take their seat in the Assembly in order to serve the expressed will of the Albanian people.

And the Albanian people need to see an Electoral Code consensually agreed from which successful elections can take place later next year.

Second, the Presidential election process.

I hope that we see a process in good spirit.

I hope that we see a constitutional process that shows the Albanian people how their elected representatives can come together in the national interest to elect their Head of State.

I hope that we will see a lot of common ground, and ideally a commonly elected new President.

The ongoing dialogue between leading politicians sends most encouraging signals.

Political consensus on fundamental issues is needed.

This will help Albania to live up to its national aspirations towards the European family of nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Third, I would like to invite you also to see this morning inauguration in support of the ongoing important parliamentary reform process.

Thank you very much.

**Ends**