

PC.DEL/70/11  
27 January 2011



ENGLISH only

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PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS  
VIENNA

## Statement of the Delegation of Albania

“On the demonstration held in Tirana on 21 January 2011”

As delivered by Ambassador Spiro Koçi at the  
848<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
27 January 2011

### **Thank you Mr. Chairperson,**

On behalf of the Albanian delegation I wish to thank all the previous speakers who extended condolences for the unfortunate and tragic loss of life occurred last week in Tirana during a political demonstration of the opposition, as well as for their constructive messages. I will convey all of them to my authorities in Tirana.

Allow me to thank the Chairperson-in-Office for his statement expressing the readiness of the OSCE and its Presence in Albania to continue working with and support the efforts of Albania's authorities and institutions to further consolidate democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This intervention was most welcome, timely and conveyed the clear message that the right of assembly comes with the responsibility to do so peacefully. Unambiguous messages are most welcome and helpful at any time.

### **Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues,**

Last week's demonstration was organized by the Socialist Party of Albania, following the publication of a videotape containing allegations of corruption involving the Deputy Prime Minister. Despite his prompt resignation, his readiness to face all charges and the ongoing investigation launched by the office of the General Prosecutor, the opposition continued to urge the government to step down and hold new elections. For this very purpose a demonstration was convened in Tirana in the afternoon of 21 January.

To our great regret, what should have been a genuine expression of the people's undeniable right to free assembly spiralled into violence claiming the life of 3 citizens. The tragic scenario that resulted was largely announced in the run up to this demonstration. Provocative language and fierce rhetoric was repeatedly used, suggesting violent acts.

During the demonstration a small group of violent and ill-intentioned protesters, around 200-300 people, who had mingled with the peaceful crowd of some thousand citizens, attacked the police and the Prime Ministry with stones, hard objects and large projectiles, including Molotov cocktails, in what amounted to an attempt to storm their way into the chancellery and seize it. After 4 hours the state police succeeded to disperse the violent crowd and to restoring order. It was deeply unfortunate that the clashes left 3 dead and many others injured and wounded, including more than 80 police officers. It is worth emphasizing that the overwhelming majority of the protesters showed restraint and distanced themselves from the violent crowd; a wise and courageous act that was very much praised by the people and the authorities.

The Government of Albania has strongly condemned the violence exercised against the police and the Prime Ministry, considering it an attempt to seize power by force. It has pointed out that similar events ought to be led by their political organizers, and, that no political party can waive or avoid responsibilities related to rallies with pronounced political connotations. While reiterating that violence used against the country's democratic institutions is unacceptable and intolerable, the Government of Albania has assured the citizens of its commitment to defend the country's democratic institutions and public order.

The General Prosecutor has already started an investigation in order to hold the perpetrators accountable for their acts and to look into eventual cases of excessive use of force. Also, the National Assembly has set up an *ad-hoc* inquiry committee mandated to investigate on this issue.

**Dear Colleagues,**

In every democracy, including Albania, corruption cannot be addressed by violent acts, and, political power and legitimate institutions cannot be taken over by force and violence. The constitutional order and the democratic institutions in place provide the necessary framework and instruments to address all the allegations on corruption, including those on the Government's officials, and to solve every political dispute within the institutions.

Albania is a free and democratic country. Inspired by the unwavering belief in the values of freedom and respect for human rights, including the right of peaceful assembly and protest, the people of Albania have, in the past 20 years, established a viable and vibrant democratic society. We have come a very long way, which, we are absolutely confident, despite this unfortunate event, will ultimately lead Albania to the fulfilment of its European Integration aspirations.

I thank you for your attention.