



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Presence in Albania

**REMARKS OF THE HEAD OF PRESENCE, AMBASSADOR ROBERT BOSCH,
AT THE FORUM OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS
24 JUNE 2010**

Chair Ristani, Deputy Chair Subashi, members of the CEC, ladies and gentlemen, good morning,

I am very pleased to be here today at this important meeting.

This event forms part of the support that the OSCE Presence in Albania is providing to the CEC in order to help improve the administration of elections.

I would, first of all, like to congratulate Chair Ristani, Deputy Chair Subashi and all the members and staff for their commitment and efforts in preparing and administering the 2009 parliamentary elections.

An important part of this performance was the relations built between the CEC and lower level election commissions.

While notable progress was seen in the functioning of these commissions, there are, of course, areas that pose challenges and need further improvement in the future.

In this framework, today's event focuses assistance on the CEC, as the highest body managing the elections, in its efforts to further strengthen its links with lower level commissions, notably the Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZ).

Today's event comes as the concluding phase of a project that the Presence has with the CEC.

In its first phase, the CEC was assisted in successfully establishing, for the first time, a professional database containing the full data of all CEAZ commissioners who served in last year's parliamentary elections.

This database will enable the CEC not only to possess a thorough electronic record of all CEAZ commissioners but also to easily access and update their data should they be called to serve again as commission members.

Today we will see the launch of the *Covenant of Election Commissioners* as an informal body of all commissioners who are entered the database.

This is the inaugural meeting of this Covenant, with the participation of some 50 commissioners who served as Chairs and Deputy Chairs of more than one third of all CEAZs throughout the country.

This meeting will serve as a informal forum where commissioners and other participants can exchange their experience in administering the last elections, discuss the most problematic issues they had to face and also share solutions they applied to solve them. We hope that they will come up with suggestions for a better implementation and further improvement of technical aspects of the elections' administration, which will be valuable to the CEC in enhancing its professional knowledge on administration of elections.

I am confident that this event will also contribute to the further strengthening of a constant bond between the CEC and the CEAZs.

This is a very positive development that shows that the CEC remains fully focused on collecting the best-practice of those who had a direct touch with technical aspects of elections.

In this context, while evident progress in the administration of the process by the CEC and the lower-level commissions was noted by the ODIHR in its final report, let me also remind this important forum on the main ODIHR recommendations pertinent to election administration.

It is crucial that, in order to ensure an independent and professional election administration, political parties should not be allowed to arbitrarily replace members of lower-level commissions. Such replacement should be allowed only for specific reasons clearly stated in the legal framework.

Further, the Electoral Code should guarantee effective mechanisms for filling vacancies in the election administration in case political parties do not exercise their right to make nominations within the established deadlines.

Finally, the election commissioners as well as elected and appointed officials at all levels should refrain during their performance from basing election-related actions and decisions on political considerations.

I believe that these are very important recommendations and I would urge the relevant authorities to make their best in order to take them into account and implement them properly when the implementation of all CoE and ODHIR recommendations made after the last elections, will be discussed the sooner the better.

Once more, allow me to express my highest regards to the institution of the CEC.

I would like to assure them of the support that the Presence will continue to offer to them in their work on administration of electoral processes, and I look forward to future successful co-operation.

Thank you very much and I wish you a very successful meeting.

ENDS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY