

**Remarks of the Head of OSCE Presence in Albania,
Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, for the media in a visit to Durrës**

24 April 2012

Journalist: What is the purpose of your today's visit to Durrës?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Durrës is an important harbour; Durrës is an important city in Albania; Durrës is also an important tourist destination. These are some of the reasons why I am in regular contact with Mayor Dako and try to get first-hand information on the developments. The development of a city like Durrës ought to reflect very much how development in the country is going. As I said, it is the country's port number one. So, to a certain extent it is an important visit card of the country. We exchanged also on the developments, and also on the restraints that come through a limited city budget. The best possible services for the citizens of course are in the view of the Mayor, and we try to learn and also to assist, to come to good conclusions and recommendations how to improve citizens' lives. And I always like to come to Durrës, I also remember the moment of your reintroduction [addressing Mayor Dako] after your re-election last year.

Question: Mr Ambassador, representatives of 23 political parties had a meeting yesterday on electoral reform while the largest political parties still stand by their same old positions. Do you encourage parties to hold similar meetings for a consensual electoral reform?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I think it is very important to talk first about the Electoral Code reform that is underway in the ad hoc parliamentary committee. That is not only understandable; it is a very important move from the smaller political parties also to discuss aspects of the electoral system. Especially when the smaller parties want to be heard, platforms, like this one, are very important to make their opinion known, and, if they are convincing to a larger part of the political scene, they might also materialize in the future.

Question: Mr Ambassador, what is the OSCE Presence's stance on the election of the new President of Albania, since we are only a few weeks away from the start of this process?

Ambassador Wollfarth: We first of all look at the constitution, and the constitution regulates how the Albanian President is elected. Now, indeed, the time is approaching when candidates need to be nominated and presented. But the OSCE leaves it completely to the Albanian citizens and parties and the political system to propose the candidates for the presidency. It is very important to identify personalities, who can execute that office in a very dignified manner. The moral power of that office is especially high, and Albania deserves, the citizens of Albania deserve a very good service.

Question: Mr Ambassador, the end of April is the deadline for the expiry of the mandate of the ad hoc parliamentary committee on electoral reform. Do you think that the electoral code reform will be over by that date?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Like in earlier occasions, I would say that good quality is even more important than a speedy solution. The members of the ad hoc parliamentary committee, and especially the co-chairs, are doing extremely hard, and good, and fruitful work, and I am confident that they will develop together, jointly, a good draft that will be presented soon. It does not have to be on the very day but as soon as possible because other important dates are approaching, one of them being presidential election.

Question: What can you tell us about the events in Kosovo North and FYROM and their impact on Albania?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I like Albania and Albanians very much, and what I admire most is that Albanians are a peaceful people. I am hesitating to use the word nationalist, but the Albanians are proud of their country which is celebrating 100 years of independence this year. It has open and frank relations with all its neighbours, and the official representatives, starting with the Foreign Minister, but also including other high officials have made it clear that citizens of countries, wherever they live, must be loyal to their country. And this is the best line to take: it is a line of peace and it is also the line of respect, and it will help to look forward to a very good future of this region.

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