



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

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT BOSCH AT THE NATIONAL
CONFERENCE: “CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES”**

Tirana International Hotel, 3 June 2010

Your Excellency Prime Minister, Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania, please allow me to welcome you to this two day National Conference on “Challenging Gender Stereotypes.”

This Conference is organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in co-operation with the OSCE Presence and the UN-One Albania.

This Conference encourages the exchange of experiences among participants with the perception and understanding of gender stereotypes in Albania.

We hope that this Conference will provide a set of suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated into the new revised draft of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence.

We welcome his Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha, who has kindly agreed to share some of his time at this important event.

I also welcome the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Mr Spiro Ksera and Mrs Gulden Turkoz-Coslett, Resident Co-ordinator of One UN in Albania, as co-organizers of this event.

I also extend a special welcome to the representatives of the Dutch and Swedish Governments who are currently funding the OSCE three year project "Enhancing Women's role in Government", and without whose support a conference of this magnitude would simply not be possible.

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Your Excellency Prime Minister, Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Why are we discussing Gender Stereotypes?

Originally used in printing, the term referred to a copy of an original typing stamp, which literally translated means “image perpetuated without change”.

With this Conference we wish to challenge this so called image, by showing that the role of women perceived by society are not perpetuated without change.

We want all to realize that in a democratic society man and women are equal in all aspects of public and political life.

Various assessments on Albania's compliance with the UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) showed that while Albania's legislation is generally consistent with CEDAW's requirements, gender role stereotypes are still strong and widespread within the Albanian society, and even among women and that inequalities were assessed most evident in three areas: politics, economy, and marriage and family relations..

In recent years, laws and policies that promote gender equality were significantly strengthened – like the adoption of the Law on gender equality, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, Law On Gender Equality in Society and the inclusion of a 30% Gender Quota in the Electoral Code.

These steps have been taken by consecutive governments to support women's advancement, and much has been done to ensure that the legal framework complies with international norms and standards.

The OSCE has always considered the promotion of gender equality a top priority; starting with the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act when participating States committed themselves to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any distinction such as gender.

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality highlights key principles of the OSCE's policy which says that “equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential for peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region”.

The guiding principles of this Action Plan are, promoting gender equality in participating States and supporting participating States in implementing relevant commitments to promote equality between women and men as well as mainstreaming a gender perspective into the Organization's own activities, policies, projects and programmes.

Priority areas are to ensure equal opportunity for participation of women in political and public life, ensure non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks, prevent violence against women, encourage women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction, promote equal opportunities for women in the economic field and build national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

Based on this Action Plan, the Presence began in December 2008 a three year project “Enhancing Women's Role in Governance” - funded by the Dutch and Swedish governments.

Since the start of the project hundreds of women and men participated in its activities, ranging from trainings on advocacy, public speaking, message development, media relation, awareness raising and advocacy campaigns, coaching for female MP candidates and the creation of Networking Opportunities.

All over the country participants of women forums did for example identify political parties as gatekeepers of women's political participation. Gender-sensitive candidate selection, nomination procedures and gender based quotas are considered essential tools for women to be nominated and supported for elected offices. I am glad that I can welcome many

participants of these forums here today, so they will have a chance to fuel their experience into the conference's discussion.

Allow me to highlight the emerging national platform of Albanian women as an informal, all inclusive network allowing women to raise their voices, concerns, needs and interest with regards to their participation in political and public life and to lobby for themselves.

Though the number of female Members of Parliament did increase considerably with the last elections, in today's political arena as well as in other areas of public life, gender stereotypes are still pertinent and strong.

Your Excellency Prime Minister, Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

To improve and ensure gender equality addressing stereotypes is essential and this is the reason for our meeting today and tomorrow as well as all future meetings after this.

I believe very strongly that opportunities for women to be active participants in political and public life are a key parameter of democracy and thus an integral aspect of the democratization process in this country. Even if there are many women in the administration, not only do they get lower pay; in the higher levels they are underrepresented.

To this end I wish you all lively and interesting discussions and look forward to hearing tomorrow the recommendations for an improvement of the process.

Thank you very much.

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