

**REMARKS BY HEAD OF PRESENCE, AMBASSADOR EUGEN WOLLFARTH,
TO JOURNALISTS, FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH ALBANIA'S PRESIDENT**

29 April 2011

Journalist: Mr. Ambassador, how did the meeting with the President go?

Ambassador Wollfarth: We will look forward to Election Day on 8 May, marking local elections. It will be a very important day for the citizens of Albania in choosing who is rendering in the future local services in cities, towns and municipalities. It will be very important for the citizens, men and women to go and vote, cast their ballot and show confidence into the system, to ask for these services after election day and also take note of the programmes the candidates and their teams have for the future of their cities, towns and municipalities. The service for the country starts with serving the citizens in the places where they live. Albania has made a lot of progress in the last 20 years after the arrival of democracy and there is no obstacle for a good future if the citizens contribute.

Journalist: Do you consider as necessary the measures taken by the CEC regarding approval of additional stamps or other decisions that might be taken on reserve commissioners in case commissioners walk out? Is there indeed any reason to panic that commissioners might walk out of the voting centres on Election Day?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Citizens should be confident that the preparations are going well ahead. It is very important that all those - that assume the duty to serve in the voting centres and in the commissions - that they really serve the citizens and that they stay on their posts throughout the election process. It is about building trust and, therefore, the people must also trust that when they go to the voting centres that they can cast the ballot. In the past, unfortunately, there have been some cases when commissioners walked out. That should not happen again and, if so, there should be a remedy and I think is very good that that is prepared accordingly.

Journalist: Will the 8 May elections meet the standards, considering the electoral campaign so far?

Ambassador Wollfarth: All the tools are there, all the preparations are well underway, so Albania, starting with the citizens and the candidates, can achieve. The important will is to have the good political will and the political will is not something only delegated to the parties. It is also political will on the citizens' side and on the commissioners' side to really serve the country.

Journalist: Last week, the Central Election Commission made some changes on the Electoral Code urging televisions to broadcast ready-made tapes. What is your view on that? Do you believe it was a right or a wrong decision?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I have said in the past what my view is. Good journalistic work is free. Freedom of the press is extremely important and I appeal to journalists to make their own reports. Of course, some stations are not as big as others and cannot afford to send people probably, but good journalistic work is having first-hand information and not depending on second-hand information. So, I invite all the media in having access to first-

hand information, and make good journalistic work and I see a lot of good media work already.

Journalist: Two days ago, President Topi talked about the phenomenon of selling of votes, for the first time publicly. How did you read this?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I am not so sure whether it was the first time in the public discussion. The President had invited the local observers of elections, Albanians, Albanian civil society, and I think that was extremely important and a very good move, because it is about Albania, Albania's citizens and Albania's future. And elections are in fact very simple: one voter-one vote.