



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania**

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 26, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the floor and thank you, Ambassador Del Monaco, for your thorough briefing this morning.

The United States warmly welcomes you for your first address at the *Permanent Council* in your new role as Head of the OSCE *Presence in Albania*. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for your presentation today, as well as your *informal* presentation yesterday. We welcomed the participation of one of the Mission's partners and beneficiaries in the informal briefing for the 57 pS yesterday, Deputy Speaker Vasilika Hysi. The deputy speaker provided a great overview of the close collaboration your office has with the Albanian Assembly. It is the position of the United States that our beneficiaries are very welcome when they come and make presentations and it really should be done in all cases. It helps the permanent representatives to understand that the OSCE's money is being spent in a way that is of assistance to the recipient country. That is a big help to us.

We understand from Deputy Speaker Hysi's intervention, and your own report, that your office has been a great supporter in making the Assembly a more transparent and efficient institution. I might say we welcome the timeliness of your report, which I have right here, and have reviewed it, and I must say it is an impressive list of activities that have been done in order to be a good partner to Albania. I might make a comment, that our missions and presences throughout the OSCE region are intended to be partners of the host nations, and is in no way intended to lecture or to present themselves in a superior way, but is there to be of assistance to the citizens of that country as they carry out the reforms and advancements that they wish to do. We believe that your presence is making a difference in that regard. So we welcome the timeliness of your report, which allows participating States to engage with you effectively during these sessions and to find areas in which we can better support you and your team.

We recognize the Mission's work over the reporting period was conducted amidst a somewhat tense domestic political climate, and two national emergency situations. Despite the challenging environment, your office continued to support Albania's ongoing justice and electoral reforms, which is an essential building block. You also helped foster Albania's efforts to combat corruption, which, as we all know, has been a central program of the Albanian Chairmanship of the OSCE, as well as your work in trafficking in human beings, which is a central focus of the United States and its Belarusian partner. We noted that the *Presence* supported the Assembly's adoption of new technologies to organize online committee meetings and plenary sessions, and to make them publicly available through livestream on the Assembly's website and social media sites. This is an innovative approach and it provides Albanian citizens across the country with access to their parliament. Promoting access and transparency are ways to increase public trust in the Assembly. We also commend the active program of outreach by Parliamentary committees, which your office supports. When needed, the *OSCE Presence in Albania* shifted its work to better respond to the needs of the Albanian government, providing personal protection equipment, and conducting needs assessment

missions to tailor support for Albania's Border and Migration police. It is this type of flexible and collaborative approach that makes the *Presence* a trusted and effective partner for the Albanian government.

Ambassador, like you, we recognize that more work remains to be done. We were pleased that the *Presence* is a key partner in Albania's reform efforts, such as assisting with electoral and judicial reform. With Albania's Parliamentary election scheduled for next spring, we know that time is limited to make concrete progress on electoral reform, but it is necessary to do so. In addition to the training and workshops your office supports, we were also particularly impressed by the *Presence's* report on *Enhancing Co-operation and Co-ordination Between Prosecution and Judicial Police in Albania*. We also look forward to the publication of the *Handbook on Prosecutorial Leadership*. This research and these recommendations will undoubtedly be useful as Albania seeks to strengthen its judiciary, which is essential to a free democracy.

I would also like to take a minute to recognize Albania's strong leadership as Chairperson-in-Office this year under Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Edi Rama, and Chair of the Permanent Council Ambassador Igli Hasani. Both have demonstrated great leadership amidst a global pandemic and during a year marked by multiple conflicts in the OSCE area. We are grateful to Prime Minister Rama and Ambassador Hasani and their team for their hard work and flexibility during these challenging times. Albania's Chairpersonship of the OSCE clearly demonstrates its ability to provide strong leadership and to hold firm on matters of principle. The success of the Albanian Chairmanship is probably the reason that countries are lining up to take future chairmanships, because they see the opportunities taking the chairmanship presents, not only for the organisation, but for the nation itself.

Mr. Ambassador, thank you again for your presentation. We appreciate your office's work in helping Albania continue on its chosen democratic, Euro-Atlantic path.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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