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## **Interview of Head of Presence of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Pavel Vacek**

*Journalist: Rudina Xhunga*

**Question: Mr. Vacek, after the signing of the agreement where you were the godfather, problems have started again between the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party. What do you think about what is going on now?**

First of all, the question is if there is any deadlock. I understand that the ad hoc committee met again today. I myself I spoke with the two co-chairs yesterday and I believe that a search for solutions of the outstanding problems is continuing. Of course, disagreements or difficulties over details can occur and they do occur so for me this in itself is not a deadlock. As to the agreement of the 30<sup>th</sup> of August I do not claim that I played such a role of a godfather. This is an agreement concluded between the two parties and I was just one of those international partners who assisted on the sidelines, so to say, and I as the others can only hope that the agreement will be delivered on to the full and in good faith.

**Question: Congratulations on your modesty! We can use another word rather than deadlock, for example impact. But there are still problems which might hinder the delivery of a normal electoral reform. So how do you think this situation is going to be solved?**

Of course, I hope as always, that not only the outstanding problems will be resolved, but all of them. That's one thing. And then I understand that it is currently about the role of the prefects in monitoring of the process of the discontinuation of the temporary register and is also about more concrete deadlines of the electoral preparations calendar and I believe that the contact between the protagonists continues in order to find the solutions of the remaining problems. Because as we all know time is of essence and the revised code should be submitted to the assembly as soon as possible in order to go ahead with all of the electoral preparations.

**Question: In Albania, after every election, the code or the rules of the game need to be changed. Do you feel also responsible that our rules need to change every time?**

I can understand that this vicious circle of reviews of electoral legislation after each election is frustrating but for me the responsibility - and that's the notion that you used - is always with the Albanian political representation. Of course, each and every iteration of the review brings the legislation closer to a certain golden standard, but at the same time we all know there is no bullet-proof provision, there is not bullet-proof law: if there is not enough will to deliver on such a provision or a law to the full then of course the situation repeats itself and in a way that's what you have.

**Question: Do you think it is likely for us to have, this time, uncontested local government elections in Albania?**

I hope that if the constructive spirit prevails and if the shared responsibility is acknowledged by all, then you stand a chance to have better elections than in the past, although we know that the time is limited. The time is shorter than it should be for preparing good and orderly elections, but I would very much hope that the spirit of the agreement of the 30<sup>th</sup> of August will prevail over temptations either to procrastinate or even to obstruct.

**Question: When do you think is the most suitable time for holding the local government elections? This winter or this spring?**

That is not up to me to tell. There is the legal window for having the elections and that legal window provides for at least some flexibility and I think it is up to the parties and ultimately up to the President of the Republic to look for the best, the most practical, most viable solutions.

**Question: So you are optimistic that everything will go well and we will not end up in elections contested by one side or the other?**

I have to be optimistic and I also have to do my best to help those who want to be assisted. That's how I see our role in this process.

**Question 7: How do you offer your assistance? Is it also in a form of pressure?**

I would not speak of pressure of course. You know the forms of our assistance. When it comes to the electoral reform there is the body which we are technically supporting also with expertise and some times with informal advice and this is also one of the forms of assistance and this is what is taking place.