

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE
THE ROLE OF EQUALITY BODIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN THE
JUDICIARY

9 December 2021

Dear Ombudsperson, dear Commissioner, dear participants,

I commend, first of all, the organization of this regional roundtable for Human Rights Institutions and I am glad to see represented here the relevant institutions from the region. Here to discuss about Human Rights, a topic at the very heart of our work in the OSCE. Actually, the OSCE provides in principle an enormous geographical space for human rights to flourish, since its borders, the borders of the OSCE, extend across three continents, from Vancouver to Vladivostock, from the Pacific to the Pacific. And I will not be banal, stressing here the extraordinary importance of protecting human rights. What is less banal and probably needs to be reaffirmed at every occasion is rather the universal nature of human rights. They apply to everyone and everywhere.

Yet we see, not in Albania, attempts to re-interpret them according to local values, to regionalize them. It is difficult to believe that these arguments could come from the voice of any individual that would stand ready to give up his/her rights to liberty and security. How can one argue that we all **not** seek to live free from discrimination, slavery, or torture?

Tomorrow marks the celebration of Human Rights Day and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are all responsible for the protection of human rights, but the primary role lies with the State. Independent Human Rights Institutions are therefore essential synapses to ensure the effective implementation of international human rights standards at the national level, to act as a bridge between the citizens and the State, protect those in need, and hold governments accountable for their human rights obligations. In a nutshell, independent human rights institutions reaffirm the universality of human rights, and further their progress through the daily praxis. I would like to commend Madame Erinda Ballanca, her Office, the Commissioner Gajdja and his office, all the Albanian Independent Human Rights Institutions for their formidable work. As you know, in Copenhagen in 1990, the OSCE participating States pledged to “... *facilitate the establishment and strengthening of independent national institutions in the area of human rights and the rule of law...*”

The work of the OSCE Presence in Albania is driven by OSCE commitments but informed by actual realities from the ground. In this sense, your participation in this regional round table enables

us to understand better how we can contribute to strengthen regional co-operation. And strengthen our collaboration with our host country, with Albania.

The Presence has been supporting independent human rights institutions since their establishment, and recently played a significant role in the facilitation of the signature of a co-operation agreement among them; supported the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination in hosting the third equality bodies conference in Tirana; and built the capacities of the institution's staff in the field of human rights based data collection and monitoring; it provided comments and legal opinion on new or amended human rights legislation.

Dear participants,

If I put the magnifier closer to today's roundtable focus on the role of the human rights institutions in the judiciary, I can clearly see the importance of strengthened regional co-operation among you. Actually, the aim of this roundtable is not only an exchange of best-practices and discussions, but it serves also, as foreseen by the UN Paris Principles, to strengthen the regional network of collaboration among you. Furthermore, this event can serve as a momentum to raise awareness about respective government's obligations towards protection from discrimination and promotion of the human right institutions' work.

I wish you a fruitful and productive discussion!