



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

### **Presence in Albania**

#### **DRAFT SPEAKING POINTS, THE HEAD OF PRESENCE, ACCREDITATION OF PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION MONITORS, JUNE 24 2009**

Ambassador Withers, Chair Ristani, Director Celibashi, other honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I am delighted to be part of this important event this morning to publicly acknowledge and honour those civil society groups that will undertake the very first parallel vote count tabulation project in Albania during Sunday's elections.

Any mechanism, any tool or any activity that serves to strengthen and sustain greater public confidence on Election Day can only be welcomed and embraced.

I congratulate all those involved in the preparation of this project.

I believe that all those involved will undertake their duties with the utmost care, with the utmost energy and with the utmost professionalism.

The activity that you are about to perform is important to the democratic development of this country, is highly valued by the international community but far more importantly, it is appreciated by all Albanians.

A heavy burden of responsibility perhaps, but one I feel sure you will readily take on with determination, energy and vigour.

In honouring you here today, allow me a few moments, to offer just some personal thoughts as we move closer to Sunday.

Firstly, I congratulate Chair Ristani as head of the Central Elections Commission for the work and efforts of the CEC in preparing for these elections and for trying to steer the process along calm and still waters.

We acknowledge the efforts to build a consensus in your deliberations and we look forward to seeing you achieve this, even more so with regard to the voting and ballot counting centres, where the rules of the Electoral code will have to be applied stringently, as we move closer towards June 28 and beyond.

Please convey to your staff our good wishes for the period up and including Sunday.

We believe that they will perform their important job to a high level.

Secondly, to the Albanian state police, we look forward again to seeing them play the same impartial and professional role on Election Day that they performed so well in the 2007 local government elections.

Their performance in the run up to Sunday and on Election Day itself will be extremely important in building and sustaining public confidence in the election process.

As a 'police service', they will be looked on by the people of this country to assist in creating a relaxed and calm environment.

I believe that not only will they meet the high standards reached some two years ago, but that on Sunday the Police will be able raise the 'bar of success' to even higher levels.

Thirdly, to the political parties, they should be conscious of the fact that they have a key role to play in ensuring that Sunday is an outstanding success and that the Albanian people can finally participate in elections that they deserve, ones that meet international standards.

So no more problems, no more excuses, no more apologies for past failures,

This time these elections have to work.

This means keeping the public dialogue calm and reasonable.

Most of all, it means allowing all voters to go freely to the polling booth so that they can vote secretly and independently for whoever they wish.

Whether man or woman, rural or city dweller, young or old, private or public sector worker, everyone must be allowed to exercise their constitutional right to vote in accordance with their conscience, in secret and without any outside pressures.

So may the elections of 2009 open a new chapter in the democratic development of this country.

Lets have no more stories of family voting or of episodes where voters are 'instructed' to use the cameras in their mobile phones to record how they voted, as this is strictly prohibited.

Lastly, but by no means least, I would encourage all citizens to enjoy Sunday because Election Days – as in most democracies - are seen as 'festivals of democracy', meaning: cast your vote!

Let us never forget that elections are for the people and are not the personal domains of the political parties.

All Albanians should feel confident that on Sunday we will witness a free and fair election process.

All votes matter, they will be counted, and the election administration process will be fully free, open and transparent.

Ambassador Withers, Chair Ristani, ladies and gentlemen,

I feel confident that the vote of the Albanian people on Sunday will result in a freely elected government, one that will work during the next four years for the good of the people and that will actively work to achieve the European ambitions of the Albanian people.

And finally, I would urge all Albanians who have yet to pick up their ID card to go and do so now – its important – as you will not be able to vote on Sunday without one!

Thank you very much and all best of success for you all.

E.o.T.

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVER*