



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT THE ANNUAL MEETING FOR THE
PREVENTION AND FIGHT AGAINST CULTIVATION OF NARCOTIC PLANTS**

11 April 2013

Minister Noka,
Ambassador Gaiani,
General Director Burgaj,
Mayors and Heads of Municipalities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me highlight that this 2013 version of the "Annual Meeting for Prevention and Fight against Cultivation of Narcotic Plants" is a significant event dedicated to addressing a real and pressing issue.

This is why I am very pleased to be here this morning in my capacity as Head of the OSCE Presence. And I would like to thank you, Minister Noka, for keeping this topic - countering illegal narcotics - on the forefront of your Ministry's action. Your leadership in this fight against illegal narcotics is of great value and significance.

Obvious, but still worth mentioning: Mr. Minister, your Ministry and all the police staff involved can count on our continued support.

The OSCE Presence in Albania, fully acting in line with its mandate, remains ready to assist the Ministry of Interior and the State Police.

For many years now, the cultivation of narcotic plants has been a problem in Albania for different reasons among which are the following three, working against the rule of law:

- Cultivation of illegal narcotics diverts a lot of energy and time from lawful activities.
- Cultivation of illegal narcotics generates illegal traffic and income.
- Cultivation of illegal narcotics leads to drug consumption with all-encompassing additional problems.

Besides the importance of the topic itself – using all the energy to get to rule of law, I completely support your approach concerning two key points:

- To associate both prevention and fight. This seems specifically relevant; ensuring continuity between both sides of the same general action, while aiming for the same final objective – rule of law.
- To consider that nothing can really be achieved without the involvement of local governments. While the State Police can do a lot, it cannot work alone without the support and in partnership with, the Association of Communes and Municipalities, authorities.

From an operational point of view; a victory can be earned by considering all different methods and possible means provided by the law.

From a strategic point of view, the best victory is the one obtained without fight.

This is the goal to be achieved: For Albania, to be free from illegal narcotic cultivation and distribution.

In Albania, like everywhere else, cultivation of illegal narcotics is a crime, and should be considered as such at all times; by everybody and from all possible angles.

To prevent, deter, reduce and combat this crime in Albania is of national interest.

Despite all endeavours already undertaken by the State Police, the problem still persists and the cultivation of narcotics has not been eradicated. In some parts of the country, it remains a great concern.

This clearly indicates that the State Police require greater co-operation from the local communities and the Criminal Justice system, while they strive to implement a community policing approach to address the problem. Working in partnership is essential.

Therefore we encourage all actors to intensify their cooperation on this issue. Illegally produced drugs coming from Albania, should no longer be found on menus in some of Europe's drugs café's.

This co-operation is not an option. It is an obligation, a moral obligation, and also a legal obligation!

Minister Noka,
Ambassador Gaiani
General Director Burgaj,
Mayors and friends,

Let me conclude by underlining, once again, that the OSCE Presence in Albania remains most willing to encourage and offer further assistance to the Albanian State Police and to local government, to promote and strengthen the prevention and the fight against illegal drug cultivation.

Finally I would like to express my encouragements for this seminar and best wishes to all of you for your daily work on this challenging issue.

Thank you very much!

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