



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by Ambassador Florian Raunig Head of OSCE Presence in Albania

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 18, 2014

The United States welcomes Ambassador Raunig to the Permanent Council, and we appreciate his comprehensive and thoughtful report. Ambassador Raunig, the OSCE Presence is doing an excellent job supporting the Albanian government and Albanian citizens as they continue the hard work of implementing reform in critical areas of governance.

The United States has consistently called for the OSCE to increase its attention to and support for anti-corruption efforts, including by furthering the implementation of the 2012 Dublin Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering, and the Financing of Terrorism. You and your staff have shown yourselves to be leaders in this fight, and we commend the efforts you have undertaken to support the Albanian government as it works to combat corruption. We appreciate the time you took this week to meet with the Economic and Environmental Committee to provide further details on these activities. We encourage other OSCE field missions to follow your example, and we offer our strong support for similar efforts across the OSCE's operations. Of course the fight against corruption takes a strong and long-term commitment from many, and we encourage the Albanian Government, the Assembly, opposition parties, civil society, and citizens themselves to continue prioritizing anti-corruption efforts.

Albania's successful parliamentary elections in June of 2013 were an example of a democratic and transparent transition of power, and a credit to the faith and confidence of Albanian voters. What has followed, however, has been less than satisfying to many within Albania. As you identified in your report, political in-fighting, mistrust between political blocs, and an unwillingness to compromise and focus on progress have prevented Albania from implementing sustainable reforms. We agree with your assessment that strong support for the rule of law and a re-invigorated and consolidated political dialogue between the government and opposition remain essential. We stress that a key element of this is ironclad adherence by all parties to decisions of Albania's Constitutional Court, and immediate implementation of these decisions. Another way to spur development of transparent, effective, and efficient governance is through strong civil society organizations, and we encourage you to continue efforts in that area.

Although challenges continue, we commend the progress that has taken place in the last year. We are pleased that the Presence has worked closely with ODIHR to help develop a Code of Conduct for Albanian parliamentarians, and encourage its adoption by the Assembly. Physical violence and threats have no place in the Assembly, and we call on party leaders to endorse the Code, and reaffirm that they will not tolerate this behavior. We appreciate the

work done by the Presence to help reestablish the Alliance of Women MPs, and to promote greater gender equality in public and private life. We look forward to the results, which should flow from the Presence's support to the government in developing an anti-trafficking strategy for 2014 to 2017. This initiative and others – such as the fight against organized crime – are likely to benefit from the increased cooperation that is beginning to occur between Albania and its neighbors, in part due to the new Integrated Border Management Strategy drafted by the Ministry of Interior.

Ambassador Raunig, the Presence in Albania has done an admirable job with limited resources. The challenges faced by your host country are shared by many within the OSCE, and we look to you to provide recommendations on how best to meet these challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.