



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

## **HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROBATION SERVICE**

13 December 2011

Minister Halimi,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Good morning.

On behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I would like to welcome you to this conference.

We are very pleased to support this event organized by the Probation Service in co-operation with also the Delegation of the European Union and UNICEF.

The establishment of the Probation Service in May 2009 was a major step forward in reforming the criminal justice system.

The 2008 amendments to the Criminal Code and to the Law on the Execution of Criminal Decisions were in line with international recommendations to change the sentencing practice by increasing the number of alternatives to imprisonment and by avoiding social exclusion whenever possible.

An increased use of alternatives to imprisonment has proven to reduce the overcrowding in prisons, as well as the costs and negative effects of preventable imprisonment.

The establishment of a functioning probation service has widely been promoted within the OSCE area as contribution to improve the rule of law.

I am pleased to say that the OSCE Presence has also been actively involved in supporting the Ministry of Justice in establishing a National Probation Service.

Since 2007, the OSCE Presence has helped develop a Probation Service by providing an evaluation report on the implementation of alternatives to imprisonment and on the stage of introducing probation.

Legislative support was provided to the Ministry of Justice in drafting legislation.

Many activities were implemented ranging from capacity building of probation officers by providing specialized training for probation officers, training activities for judges and prosecutors, as well as published manuals for probation officers, judges and prosecutors.

I would like to express my highest esteem for the achievements of the Probation Service.

Considering that working with offenders must be seen as a challenging task in all regards, we can say that the establishment of the Probation Service constitutes a tangible success.

I am pleased that the co-operation between the OSCE Presence and the Probation Service has contributed to the achievements of this new institution.

However, we still need to accept that much remains to be done in terms of developing a uniform and effective probation service.

The establishment and functioning of such an agency is a long process and requires sufficiently trained staff and supporting educational programmes.

The expertise of probation officers will also encourage courts to use alternatives to imprisonment.

That is why the OSCE Presence is encouraging the establishment of a Master programme, focusing on improving social service standards and of services offered by the justice system.

As the execution of alternatives to imprisonment requires the involvement of all justice actors, further focus is needed on closer co-operation between the Probation Service, prosecution offices, courts and local government.

At the same time, assisting in fostering greater co-operation of the Probation Service with local government institutions and civil society remains a priority for the Presence.

The OSCE Presence will continue to support the Ministry of Justice and the Probation Service in consolidating its achievements and in promoting the establishment of probation offices in all regions of Albania.

The OSCE Presence will continue supporting the Ministry by drafting a needs assessment report regarding an appropriate Electronic Monitoring Programme.

Minister Halimi,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by saying that, next to reducing prison overcrowding and the costs of the prison system, the main role of the Probation Service is in contributing to the rehabilitation of former offenders and their reintegration into the society.

Special attention should be paid to promoting the community-based treatment of former offenders, reducing social exclusion and promoting social inclusion.

It is, therefore, crucial to mobilise and enhance the ability of civil society and the community to take responsibility for crime and social disorder, and for the development of collective positive responses to the problems faced by communities and individuals.

At the same time, it will be for each individual who has been granted probation, to make use of this opportunity to reassert his or her role in society.

Thank you very much and let me wish you a very successful and productive conference.

**Ends**

