

**Statement by the Head of the Albanian Delegation,
Ambassador Florent Çeliku,
to the “2010 Review Conference” of the OSCE
(Warsaw, 30 September – 8 October 2010)**

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Mr. Chair,

Allow me to start by expressing the high evaluation of the Albanian Government for the excellent cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Albania as well as for the contribution that the OSCE Presence is ongoing to give for the consolidation of democracy and the country institutions.

Let me quote the latest report by the Head of OSCE Presence in Albania to the OSCE Permanent Council. 9 September 2010 that Albania is witnessing “important achievements in the framework of cooperation between the government of Albania and the OSCE in implementation of the important reforms like the civil registry office. On civil registry reform, the focus was placed on the sustainability and data quality management aspects that will contribute to the quality of voters’ lists for the next local government elections.

Staff training on central level was provided as well as management tools implemented that will improve service delivery, control costs and mitigate risks regarding the functioning of the National Register of Civil Registration. Work also continued on the address system to create a National Register of Address.

In the field of protection of the human rights, the year has seen a number of highly positive developments. In February 2010, the Assembly approved the Law on Protection from Discrimination and in May 2010 the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, was formally sworn in. The Law offers protection to a wide range of persons who may be subject to discrimination.

On civil society, the Government should be commended for passing of the Charter of Civil Society, acknowledging the role of civil society.

This year saw the Assembly also approve the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Civil Society Support Agency.

Albania has a long history of close and successful cooperation with the ODIHR and the OSCE Presence in Albania in the framework of the country’s electoral reform.

As a direct positive result, it was the consolidation of the institutions and especially the electoral process which paved the way to Albania holding the parliamentary elections in 2009, in compliance with the OSCE standards.

As a follow-up on ODIHR recommendations, in year 2008, Albania embarked upon a thorough electoral reform aiming at the fulfillment of all legal and infrastructural provisions required for the organization of free and fair elections according to OSCE principles and commitments. This important reform process started through the organization of a “Workshop on Electoral Systems” sponsored by the OSCE Presence in Albania.

At the end of 2008, Albania adopted a new electoral legal framework that established a regional-proportional electoral system – thereby overcoming the “gerrymandering predicament” linked to the previous system, which ODIHR reports had identified as one of the major drawbacks of electoral processes in Albania.

Alongside the electoral legislative reform, the Government of Albania undertook a series of measures aimed at the enhancement of the infrastructure of the voting process, in conformity with the principles enshrined in the Copenhagen Document.

In this connection, the reform of the civil registry produced numerous tangible results – including the establishment of a reliable digitalized National Register of Civil Status, the development of a modern system of electronic identification documents and the issuance of biometric ID cards and passports. Currently, the Government of Albania is engaged with the finalization of the civil registration reform through the establishment of the new address system.

These measures have contributed significantly towards the increased transparency of the electoral process – and hence towards the credibility and legitimacy of elections in the country. As found in the report of the International Election Observation Mission headed by the ODIHR, the parliamentary elections of June 2009 were marked by significant progress in regards to the voters’ list and met most of the OSCE commitments in the field of elections.

The aforementioned reforms have been commended by the ODIHR/Venice Commission Joint Opinion. Indeed, the achieved progress comprises a sound basis for addressing shortcomings identified in the ODIHR report. In this context, the Government of Albania has continuously reaffirmed its readiness to closely cooperate with the opposition for the improvement of the Electoral Code in view of ODIHR assessments and recommendations.

On this occasion, Albania confirms its openness and willingness to capitalize on the expertise and specialized assistance from ODIHR and from the OSCE Presence in Albania – in order to finalize these key national reform processes and live up to the shared principles and commitments of the OSCE community.

We believe that ODIHR should continue to play its crucial role in supporting the endeavors of participating states in implementing OSCE commitments in this field, through the work of its election observation missions and the provision of pre- and post-electoral support and assistance.

In the framework of the Corfu Process, Albania is carefully considering the proposals concerning the strengthening of ODIHR post-electoral role in ensuring a prompt follow-up on election assessments and recommendations by participating states.

Albania is open to discuss the establishment of a new mechanism in this field, which shall allow ODIHR to follow up on the implementation of its recommendations – in close cooperation with the host country and OSCE field missions, as well as in keeping with the interests of political actors of the respective countries.

Allow me to reiterate that Albania attaches utmost importance to the OSCE commitments in the field of free and fair elections, as a defining feature of pluralist democratic societies. Albania views the adherence to OSCE commitments on free and fair elections enshrined in the Copenhagen Document as a key for democratic processes in OSCE participating states.