



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

HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT BULQIZA EVENT ON WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

12 June 2018

We highly appreciate the Ombudsperson's initiative to address the very sensitive issue of child labour and for organizing this meeting with all local institutions which have the responsibility to address it. Also, I appreciate the presence of the Deputy Minister, Member of Parliament, and the Commissioner coming from Tirana like us.

I understand from the Ombudsperson's report of 2015 that in Albania 200 children are in child labour and most of them in Bulqiza. This is not a matter of the past. This morning we went up to the stone dump of the mines and we met young boys there, one of them telling us that most of his classmates are working there. This is sad and this is an unacceptable situation. If the entire system and society fails to protect children from hazardous work and child labour, it shows that their vulnerability to more severe forms of human rights violation is exacerbated, such as child trafficking, exploitation and illegal migration.

We realise that the legal mechanisms are in place, both regarding child protection and against trafficking. We are supporting the central and local institutions to strengthen the child protection mechanisms aiming to prevent child trafficking and other related phenomena such as sexual exploitation, illegal migration, and so on. There is a concerted effort of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, UNICEF, OSCE and important child protection organizations to have new child protection procedures in place, including procedures for the identification of children in economic exploitation and procedures to prevent child trafficking. But these regulations would remain dead paper, unless there is political and personal will to emphasise the urgency of eliminating child labour. Albania made in 2017 a huge widely successful effort to stop cannabis production that is ongoing this year. I would wish for a similar effort to protect children better. Children are the weakest. Let me emphasize some key points:

- The need for proper funding of the child protection structures is urgent. I hope to learn from the discussion here today what are the plans and available resources of the Municipality to tackle this problem. You are blessed with natural resources, which the local Government should take advantage of.

- What is the situation with the royalties that must be allocated to the local government? Can this money be used to tackle the issue of low-income families that have no other opportunity but rely on child labour?

- My third point is that it comes to the protection of children from harm there should be no excuse of institutional responsibility for not undertaking immediate action to remove the children from the hazardous work and to address each case in its specificity, as also my colleague from UNICEF mentioned. I am aware of the complexity of the phenomenon; many institutions have to work together. The new legislation requires that you work together as a multi-disciplinary team to search for solutions to end this plight.

- We are also here to listen to your concerns and explore ways with you on how to support you. The OSCE Presence is willing to help in developing local-level instruments that reflect

the particular local situation, while also supporting with building the institutions' capacities to adopt a human rights and freedoms approach in tackling the children's situation and to prevent severe violations.

We adults have the obligation to build a safe and healthy generation.

Thank you very much for your attention!