



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

HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT 10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

14 June 2018

Dear Deputy Speaker Hysi,
Dear Minister Gjonaj,
Dear colleagues
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today at this important and impressive international conference on restorative justice. The OSCE Presence is pleased to support this multidimensional effort.

The restorative justice plays an important role in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice is an approach to problem solving that, in its various forms, involves the victim, the offender, their social networks, justice agencies and the community. Restorative justice programmes are based on the fundamental principle that criminal behaviour not only violates the law, but also injures people, victims, and the community. Any efforts to address the consequences of criminal behaviour should, where possible, involve the offender as well as these injured parties, while also providing help and support that the victim and offender require.

Mrs Deputy Speaker, I was very much impressed with what you said about the need for restorative justice. We have been supporting Albania in this field. Our partnership with a broad variety of justice actors allows the OSCE Presence to look at different angles when supporting justice reform. Justice reform must be comprehensive in order for it to be effective. Laws and structures are being reformed, and we must not forget that, for it to be accomplished, introducing measures to increase public trust in the justice system is mandatory. The OSCE Presence in Albania has contributed to this justice reform in two directions: on one hand, supporting legislative reform, and through concrete contribution to victim-offender mediation.

Already in 2014-2015, we supported this mediation in the Probation Service. The mediation service, offered by the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes, has been successful in 81 out of 92 cases, that means in 88% of the total cases referred to mediation by the Probation Service. 57% of persons involved were juveniles and young adults. But what does this mean in concrete terms? That means that in 88% of all cases, a mediation agreement between the offender and the victim could be concluded! This is a remarkable success.

This means that mediation assisted in the rehabilitation and the reintegration of offenders, and thereby helped reducing criminal behaviour. This also helped reducing the burden of the courts, and reducing the overcrowding in prisons. Currently this amounts to more than 250 offenders, which is about 5% of the prison population. At the same time, let me stress the very important and novel aspect of such mediation: it also meant giving victims a chance to be heard, and an opportunity to see their worries and fears addressed.

It is now time to take next steps from this point. Measures should be taken so that mediation in penal matters is a generally available service at all stages of the justice process, especially for juvenile offenders. There should be regular consultation between criminal justice authorities and mediation services to develop a common understanding.

We are all looking forward to your recommendation. Thank you very much and let me wish you a very successful and productive discussion. Thank you!