



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

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT EVENT ON SUPPORTING CIVIL
SOCIETY'S ROLE IN P/CVERLT: A FOCUS ON SOUTHERN-EASTERN EUROPE**

17 October 2018

Good morning dear ladies and gentlemen!

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this event on supporting the role of civil society in the prevention of violent extremism, and an even greater pleasure to welcome this panel: Deputy Minister of Interior Romina Kuko, Agron Sojati, director of the Co-ordination Centre on Countering Violent Extremism, Ambassador Johann Sattler from Austria, and Ambassador Argo Avakov, Head of the Action Against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna.

It is a great pleasure to see so many representatives of civil society participating in this conference. Violent extremism is all over Europe and in other parts of the world a fundamental challenge not only for democratic values of tolerance, respect, inclusion and diversity that underpin the work of the OSCE, but more importantly to the daily lives of the communities that are threatened by its effects. We all have these pictures in the back of our minds from Paris, to London to other places. As a global threat it knows no borders, neither geographic, nor political. To prevent and counter it, we need to build co-operation not only on a regional level, but also between state and non-state actors. Of course, state institutions do play a leading role here, through their efforts in the military, law enforcement and social services. We as the OSCE here have been working in this field with all these actors.

However, top-down, state-led action is never enough to effectively counter violent extremism in society. There is a vivid discussion in my home country, Germany, about the strength and need to involve civil society. It is the communities who most directly feel its effects that are the most valuable assets in tackling violent extremism

Engagement with civil society actors– giving them the tools and support they need to flourish– enhances the value of individuals, communities and civil society in strengthening security.

This event comes at a good time to reflect upon the challenges, opportunities and also on the success stories in this field. Here we have a unique opportunity to gather perspectives: both from policy-makers, who are working on legislation, policies, and strategies; and from civil society actors working on advancing shared values and objectives.

As a core aspect of its mandate, the OSCE Presence in Albania sees countering violent extremism as crucial for regional security, and wishes to help broaden the field of involved actors.

We have taken a multi-faceted approach working closely with state actors, civil society, young people, and national and international experts. Through such co-ordination, we are all better positioned to address issues such as returning foreign terrorist fighters, radicalization of

young people, and also about the problems that the prison system is faced with in this context.

In the first half of 2018 the OSCE Presence supported young researchers by providing training and technical guidance in preparing research on women's role in preventing violent extremism and enhancing security in communities.

The Presence has also organized workshops and trainings in cities across Albania to raise awareness of the adverse effects of violent extremism, engaging over 200 participants from all corners of the country; and to encourage local participatory decision-making and policies related to safety and security. At the national policy level, throughout the year, we continued to work closely with Mr. Sojati and his Coordination Centre on CVE.

However, as progress is made, new challenges also arise. This is why I am glad to see you all here, and to wish all participants productive discussions in the next couple of days.

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