



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

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT A ROUNDTABLE
ON ELECTION-RELATED ISSUES ORGANIZED BY CIVIL FORUM 2010**

12 March 2013

President Moisiu, thank you again for the invitation to let me be present at this very timely roundtable today, focusing on issues related to elections 2013. The draft, I have read it carefully, is a fine draft and I like it especially because it starts with an important item: *freedom is not for free*. Albanians in Albania in 2013 are free people, they are sovereign people and they have the right to elect. This is an extremely important achievement in history. It is also needed that the political parties render the service to the citizens that carry the sovereignty, in telling who they are able to elect, which personalities that are proposed to possibly carry the duty for the next four years. The draft here on the table also refers to high standards of ethics and culture, and I absolutely agree with this. President Meidani has mentioned also the important issue of integrity of personalities running for an election. There is also some progress to be observed in the mix that men and women now work even closer together than in the past and also that there might be a mix of more experienced and young people also representing the people in parliament in the future, in opposition and in government. Besides the personalities representing the sovereign people in the parliament, also the programmes, the content are very important and there the focus should be.

So, from my point of view, this is a timely and very constructive call to order and an invitation to render a good service to the citizens.

I can say that from my team, from our side, we fully support that. Let me highlight that during these days we have an OSCE/ODIHR needs assessment mission also in town to add to the services rendered to the citizens here to hold free and fair elections. But this is a process; the content which you are pointing to is programme and also personalities coming from the Albanian side - they are of utmost importance. That is what I would like to say from our side: that international standards must be and should be met – this is clear. The international standards coming from the OSCE, from the Council of Europe and also most importantly in these days from the European Union are not contradictive at all. They are all in the service of the citizens. In reality, they are simple, but they also should be met and that should start also with the political parties. This is a timely initiative and let me again congratulate you for this activity. Thank you!

Head of Presence's remarks to the media following the event

Question: The Prime Minister made a proposal yesterday to lower the voting age to 16 years. Can this be a functional option for the June elections, giving the fact that elections are near, and can it be an option that Albania can include later in its Electoral Code?

Ambassador Wollfarth: “Maybe for the larger future in 2017 this could be something. Because nothing is completely set in stone. It can be discussed and this is an issue that should be discussed largely in the public and in the parliament. I doubt that there is time till June, it is three months to go for elections and the voters list, now called extract, I think is ready.

I would also like to add it is very important to have stable situation before elections and not changing things. When you have issues like changing or not changing a name of a community just before elections, why should you change such an important thing just weeks before Election Day?”

Question: Mr. Ambassador, have you received such a proposal as an official suggestion by Prime Minister Sali Berisha to be consulted with the OSCE?

Ambassador Wollfarth: “That you have to ask the Prime Minister. I am not aware that besides any public discussion there is an official proposal.”