

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S INTERVIEW WITH *TONIGHT ILVA TARE*

Ora News TV, 2 October 2012

Ilva Tare: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Our guest tonight is the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth. Good evening and welcome Mr. Ambassador!

Ambassador Wollfarth: Good evening, Ilva!

Ilva Tare: There were many reasons why I wanted to invite you but, in fact, I was further encouraged by the publication of your annual report in Vienna regarding Albania's progress during the last twelve months. I think that this report is very interesting, both thanks to its content, and the problems it identifies, especially when it comes to the recommendations for the future, all of which we should address. According to you, what was the report like?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Well, it was well received in Vienna. It is meant to inform the 56 participating States of the OSCE, including the Republic of Albania. It was about the work of the OSCE Presence over the last year, describing the political developments in the host country. The most important thing I can say about it is that it made clear that we have seen immense progress, and that the last 12 months were really different from the times immediately before.

Ilva Tare: What is the methodology of the report? How is it drafted? Who compiles it?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It touches on important issues that developed over the past 12 months. To make it clear, it was between September 2011 and September 2012. Among the really outstanding things in these 12 months, I would certainly see the election of a new President of the Republic, the reform steps, including electoral reform and, most importantly, I would say that the Parliament is back to what we consider to be normal working, with the participation of all parties, and also voting on qualified majority laws, and election of key state positions like the Ombudsman. So quite a couple of important decisions taken over the last 12 months, and events like that are described in the report, and also the way they were made.

Ilva Tare: I am sure you will allow me to touch upon all the issues you just mentioned one by one, since they are very important regarding the development over the last twelve months, but I was referring to the report methodology. Who compiles it? Who is the staff working on the report? It is the OSCE Office in Albania, I presume. How many people are involved in it? How is the report drafted? Is it done analytically, factually, are figures collected, what is the proportion between the diplomatic and the technical language used?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This report is information for the participating States on how the Head of the Presence sees the work and the drafting is done with the help of experts in my team on all the issues touched upon. The report in the end is the report of the Head of Presence. Therefore, you can take it also as a personal report, but backed by a team, called the OSCE Presence in Albania, which is here to help Albania to move forward on the reform path. This is very important. We have seen some headway, and this makes me extremely happy because there are very important decisions coming up in the near future, and I would

see even more progress, even more reform, and surely an integration of Albania into European structures.

Ilva Tare: And what is the proportion between the analytic language used in such reports and the diplomatic language?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I would leave that to the reader. I do not want to come up with a percentage. The people that know me and work with me certainly know that I prefer clear language. For me, it is also very important to give a hint to help to speed up reforms and especially over the past 20 years, when Albania opened itself up to democracy. There has been tremendous progress. 15 years of that time was accompanied by the OSCE Presence since 1997, and a lot of the reforms were facilitated by us. Some of it, I have already spelled out within the last 12 months. It is long-term work, and hopefully sustainable work, leading to further integration into European structures, by helping to build a stronger rule of law, stronger democratic institutions starting with the parliament. The fundamental thing is that Albania is now especially good at respecting human rights.

Ilva Tare: You mentioned those achievements, which you, of course, have also identified in the report, but some political factors read the report somewhat differently ... They did not read only the achievements, but also the problems identified, and some representatives of the opposition even considered it a warning for the Albanian citizens about what awaits them, especially regarding the next elections. I will also ask you later about this. I just wanted to know what were the reactions towards the report. Because I have to say that we, Albanians, are a bit hot-tempered, we tend to take things personally.

Ambassador Wollfarth: This is certainly true - the tendency to take things personal. If it helps, I think it is fine. I am even not unhappy if some people are upset if it then helps them to find back to the reform path, and really work for their country, because it is their duty. Sometimes I have the impression that people have to be recalled to order that every public official is not there for his or her own self-interest. They serve the national interest no matter whether in public administration, in politics, in the judiciary, or in the military. It is in service of society, receiving also public money. Perhaps I am spoiled because from the country where I come from, civil society is a citizens' asset. And I would find it legitimate that this is also being asked for in Albania. Of course, if these people are upset, fine, then they have the possibility to improve.

Ilva Tare: Can I ask you who are the ones that were unhappy?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Very few people. The large majority of feedback which I heard is approving, saying it is an objective report. It is also like a school report. You do not help a pupil when he or she does not know writing, but you say bravo, very well in writing. That can help a while but you cannot exaggerate. You also have to give the hint where to work harder, where to do more, and also identify where more perhaps assistance is needed to make headway. That is how I would recommend to read the report.

Ilva Tare: What about the ones who were unhappy? Were they among the ranks of the majority? For instance, I am thinking about the reception you organized on the occasion of the visit of the OSCE Chairman in Office representative, the Irish Minister for European Affairs. I did not see high personalities or authorities of the country there. The Speaker of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, the opposition leader, and other representatives of the politics

were not there. Was it a coincidence or were these the persons who were unhappy with the report?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This was a special visit from the Minister of State from the Irish Chairmanship, in this case from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry responsible for Europe. Ireland currently holds the Chairmanship of the OSCE. This is not to be compared with the events where we invite really large numbers of guests. This one was for senior officials and representatives. The Deputy Prime Minister Haxhinasto was present. He is also Minister of Economy. The Prime Minister we had just seen before in a talk of one hour. Minister for European Integration, Majlinda Bregu, was present. We had seen her before in a very, very good briefing meeting. The Minister for Innovation, Genc Pollo, was present and also the Minister of Defence, Arben Imami. So very important representatives from the Government. Therefore, on a Friday night, with so many events going on, we were delighted and what is even more important, the high ranking visitor from the Irish Chairmanship was delighted with the level of representation.

Ilva Tare: So, the unhappy ones were among the majority, the Government then?

Ambassador Wollfarth: You can perhaps find out the reactions they did. They are very few ones. It is less than the fingers on one hand, I should say.

Ilva Tare: Maybe the most important fingers though?

Ambassador Wollfarth: If that would be the case, that would also mean that they have read the report, and this is fine. That is what it is good for because it is in service of the Albanian citizens and of the reform process. This would be major news because then they would know what to do best. That also includes the opposition because what I really miss I did not write it in the report. What Albania needs to see is that its leaders from all sides form up as 'Team Albania' not fighting inside but fighting together for reforms and presenting these reforms when and where they are needed. And that is an important part of the international community, that is what we understand is a national goal of Albania and, therefore, 'Team Albania' has to form and play together. What do I mean by this? When you need reform laws adopted, very often a 60% majority is needed, the reknowned three-fifths, and this is not possible for the government coalition alone. This is not possible for the main opposition party alone. This has to be done through joint decision making - the election of the Ombudsman showed that this is possible. And we have seen more occasions where after good discussions with contributions from both sides it is possible. And I am among those who would like to see more of these decisions really bring the country forward.

Ilva Tare: Ambassador Wollfarth, do you agree with those critical voices in the media who noticed some kind of contradiction between your public statements and the content of the OSCE annual report?

Ambassador Wollfarth: No.

Ilva Tare: They are not right?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Not at all.

Ilva Tare: So, in the end, it was your voice in that report, too?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Yes.

Iva Tare: Ok. Let's take them one by one, because I have a lot of questions after clarifying the things related to the report. The constructive dialogue was again identified by the OSCE Chairman in Office, the Irish Minister, as a very important element when it comes to taking the reforms forward. And, as a matter of fact, I liked the summary of your report, which noted that the political developments in the country saw some "stop and go" periods. Where are we now?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Well. It has not changed dramatically since the publication of the report on 20 September. There is still some 'stop and go'. I do not want to seem absolutist in any sense. Some 'stop' is necessary. It is also very important to use the days left now, as it was necessary to use the months that are now behind us. It will also be necessary to use the months ahead for really maximizing all decision-making efforts when it comes to priorities set by the international community as this is the benchmark in which the progress is being measured and this needs to be achieved. It cannot be negotiated because like the centimetre, you cannot negotiate it today saying I want it to be half of the centimetre. In the context we are talking that is not possible.

Iva Tare: Your report mentions often the political will, and this is what the entire international factor also mentions. Political will by the main political camps to continue the reforms. Can we tell our viewers tonight what you mean by political will? How should the audience understand the political will? We often do see the large parties reaching consensus, and act together when it comes to laws that interest them. Then, when it comes to laws of no political interest to them, will is no longer there. How can we explain to the Albanian people what this will is, and how should the Albanian politicians be?

Ambassador Wollfarth: You described what we would like to see and we miss seeing very well. What we would like to see, of course, is political good will in the service of the Albanian people, in service of the reform agenda, respecting the Albanian rules starting from the Constitution, Albanian laws, and not playing with such documents. Full implementation is what is needed for good will and making good use of it. That means good discussions in the parliamentary committees and plenary sessions, full participation in the voting processes, participating in these important procedures with arguments. This is where the political life should happen - in the parliament, the forum that allows for sound discussions. It is not about political clashes, not about demonstrations and violence, nor about hunger strikes. It is about working for the people, bringing constructive proposals and joining the constructive proposals hopefully coming from all political camps because it must be inclusive. It must include all the parts of Albania and all the strata of the population, and not exclude any parts. It would be very detrimental to the society if you would include one half, like doing politics only for men and forgetting about the women, or the other way around, or doing it only for the young and forgetting about the elderly. It must be inclusive. You must include people from the mainstream, the ones that are healthy and are part of the majority background and forgetting the minorities would not be healthy. It must be good politics for all and with equal rights and equal service for all and hopefully in the end, through education, with equal chances for all. It is a big task. It is not easy, and it is going on also when it comes to improvement even among European Union Member States. So it is a constant task but one that needs to be done. This work needs to continue here in Albania, and hopefully with good initiatives in the Parliament.

Iva Tare: However, in order to have a constructive communication and dialogue, the political parties have to win within the interests that they have. A missed opportunity in this

direction was the election of the President, as noted by the international community. The report also notes that there are some reservations about the process of the Presidential elections. How could the process be done differently?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I reported on these reservations and you did not hear me saying that this is the end of the story. I continue to think that President Nishani's election was and still is good news for Albania. The parties were not in the position to come up with a consensual candidate and vote in the first three rounds and this was not the optimum. However, the Constitution showed clearly what the conditions for the fourth round were, and the presentation of the then Minister of Interior, Nishani was a good proposal and he was elected with the necessary majority, and this is fine. He is a gentleman with an excellent background in very relevant issues that have to do with the law, with knowledge of this very important factor. He also made it a priority for his tenure to look after judicial reform. This is altogether very good news.

Ilva Tare: But which part of this process do you have reservations about? The fourth round, as you mentioned, consisted of 71 votes. What made you say in your report that you have some reservations about the election of the President? And, above all, what are the implications of electing a non-consensual President?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This refers to what some of the players here on the ground were having and with even more effort in the first three rounds we would have probably seen something else. However, this is describing what has happened here in the ground and what some colleagues have also qualified as 'missed chances'. Of course, it is like in sport when you hit right or jump the highest in the first round then it is better than in the second round, then you are ahead of your competitor. But it does not change that it was a constitutional process with a very good outcome.

Ilva Tare: What implications, what consequences could have the election of a non-consensual President for Albania in this case?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Every state needs to have a fully functional system of checks and balances. In Albania, the most important thing is that it depends on personalities, and again on political good will of these personalities, especially when it is about the number one in the state. Here the stakes are especially high. I have full confidence that President Nishani has the mindset to do the maximum to provide these checks and balances. In the judicial system before 2008, according to the previous Constitution, it was forced upon the person elected, as there a 3/5 majority was required throughout, and made some issues easier to decide. But the rest also depends on the person. But let us talk about the present and about the future. I have full confidence that the outcome of that election was a good one and that it will help Albania to move forward.

Ilva Tare: There was another moment following the election of the President, i.e. some changes in the Government. I was impressed to see that you referred to the changing of the Minister of Foreign Affairs as unexpected. What is your comment about this?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Yes, this was a move that was not expected. And the way Albania had taken over in a very important step for the first time the chairmanship of an international organization, in this case the Council of Europe. It is, therefore, a noteworthy event when a successful Minister of Foreign Affairs is moved to another post in the Government, as has happened to others from one coalition partner. It is worth noting because what is true for the

politicians is also true for the civil service - you need to have experience, especially in demanding times, and reform times are extremely demanding. You need professional people at all levels, full of good will and good intent, able to perform at the maximum level, especially in a challenging environment. And the environment here in Albania, when it comes to the political tone, continues to be challenging.

Ilva Tare: So, are you saying that the new ministers were not that experienced? The New Foreign Minister?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is in the definition, when you are new, you are not that experienced, because you are new into the post.

Ilva Tare: Let us continue a little more with reforms. I would like to focus on the parliamentary reform. This has been one of the main points, one of the priorities for politics, but it is still being prolonged, as it was mentioned in the report, although it has been even one of the OSCE recommendations. It looks like things are stuck over two main issues: the return of secret voting on candidates decreed by the President, and the balancing of the speaking time for the Prime Minister and the Chairperson of the main opposition group in the parliament. We can also see on the screen what the report says. Why is the parliamentary reform stuck?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I would prefer that you ask that question to the political parties as I would have to refer to political good will. I can repeat the private and public appeals that we have already given: consensual rules of procedure are very important for the functioning of a modern parliament. It is extremely important to come to that consensus. It is part of a normal modern parliamentary democracy.

Ilva Tare: Are you aware of which party is keeping the process hostage?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This involves all the key players. Yes, I am aware, but I am not going to spell it out. They are more observers, and I will leave that to the Albanian society to decide. However, I am among those who want to see progress soon.

Ilva Tare: Since we are talking about the parliament and the way it has worked, the report takes note of the work of the investigative committees. You mention problems with their organization and functioning, and even mention the committee on 21 January 2011 events, which, as you say in the report, was considered by the opposition and also by the experts as a severe misuse of the investigative committees' process. There were concerns also regarding another committee, the one on the activities of the Deputy Chair of the High Council of Justice. Before writing down such a statement in the report, did you express these concerns about the functioning of the investigative committees to the ruling majority and the Assembly Speaker? Did you tell them beforehand that you had concerns?

Ambassador Wollfarth: That was shared with more persons than the ones you just mentioned. If I remember right, the reason behind it was also a different one. An investigative committee in parliament should be based on a broader consensus. Normally it also comes after another important state institution has failed or would have failed and that was by the time not the case yet and it is still not the case. This is when justice is not working. So, a too swift movement to investigations in the parliament is not helping fact finding; it is politicizing events even more.

Ilva Tare: How is it possible that the report lacked a comment on the 21 January trial, Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is still on-going.

Ilva Tare: So, it is still ongoing, that is why you didn't have a comment on way it is proceeding.

Ambassador Wollfarth: Yes.

Ilva Tare: Were you caught by surprise by the appointment of the new head of SHISH as soon as new President Nishani took office?

Ambassador Wollfarth: President Nishani signed it. That was following the Constitution and was to be expected. So from that side, no surprises about the steps taken by the President.

Ilva Tare: What about the fact that SHISH head was replaced so swiftly, as soon as the new president took office?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This is the choice of the Prime Minister. The former head had served already several years, some said successfully. Part of a democratic system is also to have limited mandates, not for eternity, so in that respect nothing unusual.

Ilva Tare: Were the Electoral Code changes a good work?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Since we just talked about committee work, this was, I would say, a highlight in the work of the parliament and we are very proud that we could work with Ilir Rusmali and Damian Gjikhuri and the other members of the Ad Hoc Committee on many occasions. It was really excellent work. Serious and good discussions, comprehensive, looking also at new options that will be done now with some electronic testing in smaller scale to stay on the safe side to develop full trust in a good, well-developed election process. So, from our side, this is a fantastic success story, where the leaders were clearly on the Albanian side from both political camps. Very important progress that led to electoral reform and the reform included also some amendments for example in the Criminal Code. What we would like to see for next year, and there I am back with very important word you have heard from me before and we have used tonight, is the political good will to bring the reform to life. Having elections in the law is one thing, but organizing and also campaigning and then doing Election Day and the time afterwards, this is where elections are really brought hopefully to a good life.

Ilva Tare: Did you follow today's elections in Georgia? Was a surprise to you the fact that Saakashvili accepted the defeat or you expected it?

Ambassador Wollfarth: This is what can I say on democracy?! Yes, I followed. This is always interesting. That election was also observed, as we expect an election observation mission from the OSCE/ODIHR next year. I would say that this is the expression of the people in that particular case. In Albania there is a completely different situation. For example, we have had no war here in the recent past. Fighting with words is still something different. Even so it can be harmful, especially when you look at a clock that is ticking, while reforms have to be moved ahead. So, I see a very different setting for next year's elections here in Albania, if you are alluding to that.

Ilva Tare: What is your personal opinion on the election of the new members of the Central Election Commission and their quality? I believe you have read their CVs. How do they compare to the previous CEC? Does the new CEC seem to be more professional? Will it be more politically independent in its decision-making?

Ambassador Wollfarth: My impression is that this is indeed the intention. The formal appointment has still to come. I understand that tomorrow there are hearings to listen to the candidates that are presented. So, it is too early. The CVs look promising so far. I would also be cautious in comparing how they could perform in the future compared to their predecessors. The CEC had a very difficult task in the past, challenged from many sides. Finally, ODIHR has written about it extensively and very precisely in a very objective report. It led also to some recommendations, but the elections were up to international standards.

Ilva Tare: Let us talk about the election of the new CEC chair. As you said, there will be hearings tomorrow. But it seems, also based on the Code, that the chair will be elected with the votes of the majority. Does this jeopardise the 2013 electoral process? Will we see again a political decision-making that will again undermine the trust of the citizens?

Ambassador Wollfarth: What should be looked for is a person that knows the law, is trusted in applying the law and is able to withstand any sorts of political pressures. This is not in direct contradiction with being elected by a majority. I would find that normal in any democracy. Again, it very much depends on a straightforward and trustful person being selected.

Ilva Tare: You know the candidates more or less. Are there any chances that one of them fulfils these criteria?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Eighteen names. You would not be surprised if I cannot spell all eighteen names right now.

Ilva Tare: Let us remain on the elections, because there were many questions by the viewers when I announced this interview on Facebook. As you say in the report, the campaign has already started and it is expected to be fierce. Analyst Mustafa Nano made a comment in the media saying that saying that next elections will see very fierce competition is something which the intelligence of a child can conclude. But my colleague Nano was curious about your kind of prediction that there will be by-elections. Let's see what he wrote and then I would like to have a short comment from you on that.

Mustafa Nano: The intelligence of a child would be enough to foresee that next Albanian elections will be fierce. It is like foreseeing that there will be newspapers in the stands tomorrow. But it is a different story predicting that there will be by-elections in a number of constituencies. On this, I would be very curious to know what are the data that brought to such a guess. If there are no data, at least what were the deductions and mental acrobatics that were used in this case.

Ambassador Wollfarth: I find that a charming way, indeed, because one does not have to be a great prophet or so to predict that some of the things we have seen in the past have tended to be repeated. Fierce competition in elections seems to be a standard not only in Albania, but here it is especially accompanied by distrust in the system. This is of great concern for the OSCE as it is not helpful. Unfortunately in the last elections, in 2009 and 2011, it was not

possible to have Election Day in all communities as in some, fortunately smaller areas, they were heavily obstructed, which led to by-elections. If there are no extremely serious proceedings to avoid that, the risks are high that it will be repeated and that protracts the final results. This is meant indeed as a hint to do the utmost to prepare well for Election Day according to the rules.

Ilva Tare: So you do not foresee that we will leave the past tradition of irregularities and by-elections behind?

Ambassador Wollfarth: No, by-elections are part of the legal process if they are necessary. However, the normal thing should be having a proper elections process in every voting centre completed, not hindered. I recall the discussions about the two stamps on the back side of each ballot paper in formal elections; one of the commissioners running away with one stamp, and all these hilarious attempts to jeopardize the process. This is something that should clearly end. This is clearly something which should be stopped.

Ilva Tare: This time I have found another comment on the report, by Andrea Stefani, who underlines that it is a cause for concern the admission of the fact that there will be election reruns in some constituencies. He also makes a statement in the end, but I will ask you later about it.

Andrea Stefani: "What the OSCE report states is very worrying, because it admits, in essence, that next year's elections too are not likely to be different from those of past years – i.e. they will not be free and fair. And who is to blame for this cancer that is eroding Albanian democracy? According to the OSCE, the blame rests with the main party leaders, who, despite talking about reforms for the improvement of the electoral process, continue strangely to preserve "the capacity to fundamentally wreck the process and to obliterate the positive achievements of the reform process". By underlining the superpower of the political leaders, the OSCE report has admitted the failure of the system of institutions, which, normally, are supposed to have the capacity to prevent bad political leaders from doing much damage. But at the same time, through this assertion, the report has also admitted the failure of the OSCE in Albania".

Ilva Tare: Is Andrea Stefani right when he says that, by admitting this superpower of the political leaders, in the OSCE report, you have also admitted the failure of the institutions, as well as the failure of the OSCE Presence in Albania?

Ambassador Wollfarth: There is always a way to improve. I commented on what Mustafa Nano said. I could also comment on what Stefani now says. It is probably not good to comment too much on the commentators, but they have good reasons for their opinions and much of them I share. We are not sacrosanct, so I do not pretend to be free of failure. My team, of course are, if needed, able to blame it on me. What we surely would like to be in the future even more, is to be more convincing in the point that Albania now has a good Electoral Code. In general, Albania has good laws in place, so I would strongly invite the national partners to apply these rules, these regulations starting from the Constitution. We also provide advice. Additional advice and also technical support also comes from ODIHR upon invitation and that is what I can say and offer. I would like to have been even more convincing because this Electoral Code reform could have come earlier, could have been there already for the last year's local government elections and this is certainly something which I would have clearly liked to see earlier.

Ilva Tare: I think you would have wished that the deadline for the CEC composition, 30 September, were observed too.

Ambassador Wollfarth: I did not want to make this conversation too administrative focused, picking on dates and deadlines, but I am grateful to you, Ilva, that you mentioned it. Of course, it was noted and not only by the OSCE by the way.

Ilva Tare: Is this a warning?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is just trying to help increase awareness that there is no time to lose. We are already in October. I am sure the interested audience has also read the newspapers in the last couple of months. You know which decision or recommendation might be expected to come in the next days, so every hour counts and every good decision is noted and every missed chance is also noted. I would like to add that the OSCE is just helping to meet deadlines that are put up by others. In the Electoral Code reform, there was a deadline by Albanians, which was not met, but it is part of a reform which on the international level is observed and it has to do with implementation. So when relatively easy things, like deadlines, pass without being meticulously met in times of scrutiny, then that is worth noting and I would indeed say that it is more important to work harder than not to listen to these hints.

Ilva Tare: In fact, this is what the political parties also say: “We are working, we are working hard, and we are committed.” But the problem is nowhere to be found.

Ambassador Wollfarth: Yes, the results in due time. This is like when you present candidates after the elections. They could have been excellent, but the voters have to vote on the Election Day, not afterwards. The same is true, by the way, in the Parliament: there was nobody to vote on, because in some of the rounds nobody presented a candidate formally. There were only talks about a candidate. There should be less talking, and more peaceful, good, sound, constructive action leading to decisions to bring the country forward.

Ilva Tare: Is there a recipe for this, Ambassador Wollfarth?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Doing.

Ilva Tare: What is your prediction for the coming months, regarding the elections, since the campaign seems to have started? You say that public attention will focus more on who will win the election rather than on the integration reform agenda that the country needs to push forward. Is there a way to avoid this, or there's no chance? In the coming ten months, will we hear only who will win the election, who's good and who's bad?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is normal that campaigning times find also the interest of the citizens that are voters in these times on Election Day. But, at the same time, the normal lives of citizens must go on. Those who have a job and family must concentrate on jobs and the family. This is what in the end is really fundamental for people, the wealth created in Albania here. After all, what have the politicians to lead, if there is nothing there, if the fabric of the society is too weak? So, leading a normal life, participating in it, voicing also what as a citizen you are interested in. You heard me, like other friends, like the U.S. Ambassador, appealing to civil society also in invitations – Act Now. That also has to do with the reform in bringing this country forward. One part is living a law-abiding citizens' life, in exercising the profession, in caring about the family, the children. The normal life must go on also in campaigning times and for politicians. Hopefully, it will also be possible to continue with

decisions adding to the reform steps initiated already. Assuming that certain next levels are reached, then this reform work needs to continue to reach the opening of negotiations, and so on and so forth. So that is a continued process which Albania is facing over the next years.

Ilva Tare: Since you mentioned Ambassador Arvizu's initiative, there have been initiatives also by Ambassador Sequi to move closer to the EU, to become EU, learning about the integration processes that must take place. What has become of the troika of the Ambassadors that we got used to seeing on 8 May with their sleeves rolled up and monitoring the election process? We haven't seen you all three together lately. Have you separated, have you grown apart?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The good news is that we continue to meet. We meet more in private than in public. It also has to do with the fact that some of the crises and escalations the country has seen are not happening anymore and hopefully not happening in the near future. But there were quite some occasions also this year where you could see us together in public.

Ilva Tare: So you will go back to being the Troika of Ambassadors in the 2013 elections?

Ambassador Wollfarth: If not one of us is being transferred, then I would say absolutely yes because there we are, like in all essential cases, absolutely on the same ship. We want to see really good elections for Albania. This does not mean who runs or who wins. We are talking about the process, a law-abiding, peaceful and, therefore, successful process.

Ilva Tare: We are now in October. This month has become in the dialectics of the media, but of the political class also, as the month of the status for Albania's EU candidacy. As the OSCE Ambassador, but also as a German, what is your forecast on this? Will we get the status this year, after two years of rejection?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It would be very nice, but this is not for me to answer. I would wish and continue to wish, and I also made this clear at the beginning. I wish progress for Albania and I share the national goal, but the maximum effort really has to be done and also delivery has to take place on the reforms. We have seen really immense progress in the last 12 months. Perhaps the decisive difference now is that the parliament is functional again, doing the utmost to speed the processes up, while taking time also to discuss the laws. It is also very important to have proper law-making discussion in the committees, discussing it with interest groups concerned when you consider, for example, legislation on the economy. Really working on the functionality of that institution, this is the big task for the future, but also the big achievement. So Albania, I would say, in this respect, and the parliament are pretty much back to normal. Therefore, I would count myself among the optimists. However, if I say this, the danger is that the people take it for granted and stop working, go to the coffee house and sip a coffee with some sugar. This is exactly what should not happen. The work must continue up until the very last moment, and then it is not over because the next phase starts. This is what I am trying to convey. This is not for getting any applause or something. It is about helping the country to really live up to what the Albanians want. And they can deliver. When you sometimes see the newspaper pages with the history and these tremendous changes that have taken place here, these developments in the mindset of the people, in the infrastructure. In many respects, this is really enormous work achieved here in Albania and with even more efforts more is certainly possible.

Ilva Tare: You mentioned a little bit before the problems related to the drafting of the law, which was also mentioned in the report, while noting that eventhough the work of the

Assembly is made transparent, it regularly publishes the minutes of the parliamentary committees and of the sessions, when it comes to the draft laws sent by the Council of Ministers to the Assembly, it is very difficult to find them in paper or on the webpage of the Assembly. How do you judge this lack of transparency and what has been the reaction of the respective authorities within the Assembly? It seems that there is no access in the first stages of drafting, but only when they are sent to the respective parliamentary committees.

Ambassador Wollfarth: This is very good when the media ask it. This is something I would recommend to address directly with the respective institutions and parties. Some of the drafting, at the beginning, I would say, has to be done in a sort of silence, because you first, when drafting or selecting existing laws - for example from European countries - you need sufficient reflection time to put a draft together. However, before you discuss it and before you proceed, you have to share that with the other parties in the committees and with the interest groups. That is one phase, but for the first drafting, I would consider this to be normal because that reflection time is necessary to come up with a good first draft as a better basis for the discussion afterwards.

Ilva Tare: Based on your monitoring during the last months, does the Opposition have the necessary guarantees in conveying their arguments about the draft laws in process? Do you think there has been transparency?

Ambassador Wollfarth: We talked with the relevant personalities about the proper timing in spreading all relevant information. There are certainly possibilities for further improvements. However, at the same time, we also note that important elements and sometimes important drafts on the whole also come from the opposition. This is a good sign. It contributes to what I would describe under the heading "Team Albania." In the end, good service is needed for the country, for the citizens of this country, as such, but also for an Albania integrated into European and NATO structures, or any others that help to provide peace, prosperity and liberty.

Ilva Tare: Mr. Ambassador, there is a weak point that is a concern not only for the international community but for Albanians as well, - the rule of law. As it is one of the things that are not functioning well, and in your report you spoke about well spread clientelism, the unjustified pressure on the institutions as a result of the continuous political fight for power, which have not improve the situation and have made weaker the rule of law. Why is this happening? How can it change? What should we do?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Very often I hear the excuse that Albania is not too big, and therefore the people know each other too well, either inter-related as family or good friends, or a friend of a friend, or a friend of an uncle. I am amongst those who would find this a weak explanation, especially when the civil service should be the same for all citizens. It should not make a difference if you know these people because they are from your village. These channels are then often used for pressure and improper influence. Another channel is using financial means. I could spell out a larger number of other possibilities that would lead to influencing the proper decision-making either in administration or in related sectors, like the Judiciary. This is inappropriate. The people, through public discussion, and also through education, have to go through a transformation process, and be more aware that this is not the right way. It is very simple, like with the Electoral Code - what is laid down in the law has to be brought to life, and no exceptions can be made because they are friends, clients or relatives. This pattern, or the tradition that is still being observed here, is not limited only to Albania. It is not something which is outstandingly different from any other country in the

world, but there are many countries in the world that have managed to work to change this kind of mentality. Talking about it and controlling it through their respective institutional mechanisms, including parliament, is a very important way that can lead to improvement. I am sure the way Albanians can learn quickly, they would also learn that. So, in the end, I am confident, especially when the Albanians would not buy these “Oh, it’s in our traditions”! ... so we park wherever we want; we drive through red lights when we feel like it, and so on, just to give some daily examples you can see in most local streets.

Ilva Tare: But Ambassador Wollfarth, do you think that the lack of the rule of law is simply an Albanian failure or a failure of the international community as well, because since years they have assisted, financially supporter, and trained the administration, the courts, the justice? How can you explain such a low level when there has been assistance, financial support and pressure as well?

Ambassador Wollfarth: When ambition or, let me say, when impatience and not being patient enough is a failure, then yes. But let me perhaps describe it the other way round, where Albania comes from. It was a big surprise for me when I learned - around the time when I arrived here - that in former times, Albania did not even have a Ministry of Justice. Although this is among the newer offices of government, still, for me, to be honest, it was quite unimaginable, that in the 20th century there could be a country without a Ministry of Justice. Since then, things have developed for the better in a much more practical way than one could have expected. Now you have a Ministry of Justice, you have a Constitutional Court with fine judges, not all of them there yet for the moment. You have a High Court. You have a regional judiciary. You have prosecutors. And this is all fairly well functioning but with quite some room for improvement. None of this existed in that form before. All was total injustice, in dictatorship, people in gulags, people locked away for teaching in villages to which they did not belong. So when you compare the dramatic progress made with a large number of international supporters, assistance and also funds, as I said, we are very proud that we could accompany so far fifteen years of that development. And, of course, we are ready to assist further. This is like any reform progress. It is not the optimum yet, because, some parts of the judiciary have to function fully according to the rule of law, when it comes to timing, and also on how decisions are being taken.

Ilva Tare: Anyway your explanation is in line with your optimistic nature Mr. Ambassador. Personally, I analyze things differently. I do not want to consider that it has been worse before. I want to analyze the present time, to consider where we should be, and how things could have been better and why it didn’t happened, and if possible to find the responsible persons and to try to improve. As far as we are talking about the future, in your declaration of 12 September, after the meeting with the General Prosecutor, Mrs Ina Rama, you expressed your appreciation for the work carried out by her and expressed your positive impression on her work as General Prosecutor. You also offered a description of what kind of qualified personality you would like to be elected in the position of the General Prosecutor. But what really made the news was your declaration that the constitutional amendments entered in power in May 2008, which means that even the General Prosecutor mandate ends in May and not in November, as it has been declared by the actual majority. Would you say again in November, when you would wake up in a beautiful day and read in the press that the new general prosecutor has just been appointed, the same declaration you said about the Head of SHISH? Have you made known to the Albanian authorities your preferences about the General Prosecutor?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I do not remember saying anything on the General Prosecutor when she was nominated. I do not think I am correctly quoted. I stated that it needs to be discussed. In a nutshell, that there are different schools, some say in November, while others, with very good reason, say May. The important point, and that I find important, is that nobody has any doubt that Albania now has a limited mandate for a general prosecutor, because at the time when Mrs. Ina Rama was nominated, it was a life-long term. The amendments were made during her tenure, in the November, and entered into force in the following May. So depending on which line you take – and this is for lawyers and the legal experts to sort out, and this is certainly worth discussing. I believe that Mrs. Rama is willing not to insist on a life-long mandate because that would be the third option that could be considered. So the good news, in that respect, is no more eternal mandates. Renewal in what is a very crucial function in a judiciary system as this opens the chance also to find a good successor to a person that has so far done good work in our eyes.

Ilva Tare: So, it won't be a problem for the OSCE if in November Mrs Ina Rama is dismissed and another General Prosecutor is nominated?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It depends on the circumstances.

Ilva Tare: There is only one month time for such circumstances. It is expected to happen in November.

Ambassador Wollfarth: Others expect it in May which is not that far away, either.

Ilva Tare: Considering your communications with politicians, do you think the decision will be taken in May or in November?

Ambassador Wollfarth: That remains to be seen.

Ilva Tare: But have you done any suggestions to the Albanian authorities about the most appropriate time to replace the General Prosecutor?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I think that through my public line, I have made clear that also for the time between November and May, besides talking to the holder of the mandate, it would be extremely important to identify persons that can perform this very demanding post. This is even more important than a day earlier or a day later. I find it quite remarkable that the date is so widely discussed, while the date on the CEC nominations is already missed. So I see flexibility on some issues, although not always a very good use of it, I would invite, first of all, a 'making up the minds' because it should not come as a surprise that a successor for the General Prosecutor is needed. The time should be used also to identify a good person and then proceed, for the good of the country.

Ilva Tare: In other words, personality is more important than the moment at which the new General Prosecutor is elected? And in your next year's report, will you focus more on the analysis of the personality and integrity of the new prosecutor?

Ambassador Wollfarth: We will see. Usually we try to not to make it too long, so not all that has happened was noteworthy in the 2012 report. Similarly, not all that happens from now until September 2013 will be noteworthy for the following report. So we will see.

Ilva Tare: Since we are touching on issues of the justice system, do you have any comment on the restriction of immunities, which was one of the main and highly debated issues for the top politicians and state leaders? Did you think that now that immunity has been limited, more top officials will be held responsible and/or be indicted for what, so far, have remained merely verbal public allegations?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Hopefully not, and I will explain to you why I say this - because that would mean that the people you just mentioned, or the group of people, would commit acts against the law. Therefore, I hope they abide by the law, as they should, and these cases will not be necessary. I mean this seriously, but also with an element of wishful thinking. You pointed out parliamentarians, meaning politicians. This is just one group where the lifting of immunity at given occasions was also done in the past. Much more critical and much more beneficial to the country is the other novelty, that of the possible restriction of the immunity of judges. There the prosecution was limited, it was not allowed to investigate and therefore it was next to impossible to gather information to come to a trial when necessary and that can now change. However, before entering into technicalities let me also say the reform and the steps and the success is also demand-driven; when people observe infractions - let us assume that the judge is bribed, or something like that - they must report it, and then there must be an investigation. When there are findings, then there must be a trial, and then this will stop. But it comes by demand. It does not come by gossip. It does not come by evil talk. It does not come by inventions. It comes by legal actions, following infractions, though this is where every citizen - man, woman, older, younger - has to act, when observing infractions. That can then bring the change, because the disciplinary effect for the rest of the colleagues will be very, very important and will bring the change.

Ilva Tare: So, if we turn up at Court, with evidence, with allegations, do you think we have a justice system which will provide them with justice, or will this just be channeled into another instance of allegations of corruption, political appointments, trials that are closed with procedures that...

Ambassador Wollfarth: Not excluded, but not pessimistic. You have a well-functioning Constitutional Court and perhaps a top-down approach can help clean the system. I would leave that to the experts to discuss. The important thing is that it is an extremely viable first step for a more complex and wider judicial reform.

Ilva Tare: Mr. Ambassador, allow me to ask you about another process, - and in support of this question I saw you with Minister Imami in Mjebes, at the demolition plant there - a process for which Albania is frequently mentioned as a success case when referring to demilitarization. Meanwhile, however, there are so many cases of killings by firearms, especially over the past few months, and it seems as though the population is armed. How would you explain that, there is a contradiction - we are both, disarmed, but, at the same time, armed!

Ambassador Wollfarth: Unfortunately I do not see a contradiction. One thing is military ammunitions. We inspected the work in dismantling surplus ammunition from the former dictatorship times - tank mines, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft ammunition - material you would not use for street robbery. The other item for the future is also to help to look for efficient and successful ways to get rid of larger stocks from surplus small arms and light weapons. The ones that are in military and police stocks are safe in custody, but the country also has a difficult past, one part of it is called 1997, this looting of barracks, the stealing of large amounts of weapons and ammunition. Some of it might be used in crimes, but like in most

parts of the world, there is also a black market also for imported weapons, for people decided on violence. This unfortunately does not limit that these arms may be used. I do not want parallel police investigations, but it would be an illusion to think that destroying all the small arms and light weapons from the military sites which come from old times, would lead to an absolute abolition of weapons in the hands of criminals. This would be unrealistic. So the police work must continue, also the reports on illegal weapons used or held in stock. It is certainly a complex and an on-going task when you have to calculate that many weapons were stolen and are in private possession.

Ilva Tare: You also mention in your report the importance demilitarization has, because of the risk that the light and small weapons could be misused or even trafficked. Do you have any information that these arms are trafficked or are being used illicitly?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I do not say the name of the town. It is still not so uncommon to go to the countryside where there is a wedding nearby and hear happy shooting from automatic rifles. This is what my ears directly heard. I could cite more, on a more substantial basis, what we also observe, but there is clearly some of that around, and there is irresponsible use of it. Happy shooting on a wedding is unhappy news.

Ilva Tare: In fact, I meant more for arms trafficking, their sale or purchase, I refer to the allegations that Minister Imami, with whom we saw you in Mjebes yesterday, has sold and purchased weapons illicitly and without any transparency, via the companies he had dealings with. Do you have any information about this?

A: We all read papers. He is accused, you say, but is there a trial?

Ilva Tare: No, so far, we have no information on this...

Ambassador Wollfarth: Because there is news spread of that.

Ilva Tare:.. we haven't heard that there are proceedings... Do you have any more information on this? Was your visit to Mjebes with Minister Imami planned or...perhaps it was high time for a visit to a demolition field when there are allegations of arms trafficking from the Opposition?

Ambassador Wollfarth: No, this was planned well before. Fairly recently, we had a visit to another facility with Deputy Minister of Defence Spahiu, also on the destruction of ammunition. We do that regularly. It is very successful on-going work on the destruction of old surplus ammunition and also, in the past, of dangerous chemicals. It was clearly pre-planned, because we also donated some additional equipment for the safety of the workers, to increase the already relatively high standards even more with surveillance cameras, to ensure that all possible security loopholes in the future are closed. This is an on-going process, since working with ammunition, by nature, continues to be high-risk.

Ilva Tare: Mr. Ambassador, another concerning issue that was mentioned in the report was the evident stagnant development of forensic expertise in Albania. How can you explain the fact that even though there has been international assistance, every important evidence in Albania should be sent outside the country? Couldn't we build a laboratory in Albania? Or there is a lack of trust, not of a laboratory?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I would expect that. I am probably not the one you have to ask first on this issue. I do not see any reason why Albania could not have it. Even so, there are some

limits - one might be the funding and the training. It would have to start with these. Although talking with the Finance Minister certainly would be necessary, the Ministry of Justice should be involved, the Ministry of the Interior and the State Police, and also the Prosecutor, so that all the aspects are there to have a forensic institute that can work on what is needed in the system. That is also done in special occasion in other countries. Sometimes, when you have very difficult cases it is a helpful step also to have what you consider as independent advice from outside so that is completely normal to do it. However, that does not prevent Albania from developing further its own facilities.

Ilva Tare: I would like to ask you about the People's Advocate, which was mentioned as an achievement that was approved last year. But how do you explain this? Who is responsible for not implementing his recommendations, as you note in the report?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The legal definition is our recommendations. They should be followed, but that is not legally a must. The Ombudsman addresses shortcomings and his recommendations should lead to the respective corrections. If there is not a good reason for not reacting to the recommendations, there is certainly a possibility to repair it. One can say that there is no reaction, and when there is no reaction to change it. One possibility is to address the recommendation to the Parliament; the other is for the civil society to nominate it, to spell it out. The same is true for the media. However, in the end, it is for the voters to decide, based on what progress is made in dealing with the recommendations. What is not satisfactory is when a large number of the recommendations just pass by, seemingly not even noticed. This is not so good. The Ombudsman has a very important position. It is also very interesting to see that it is defined in the Constitution; the post is defined even before the post of the President and this is also sending a remarkable message that the advocate of the people really makes a difference.

Ilva Tare: In the report, Mr. Ambassador, you say that the administration, the centralized system has been centralized even more than before, which brings consequences in the normal functioning of the institutions. How far does this reality go in compliance with the European standards that we want and aspire to have?

Ambassador Wollfarth: More importantly, I would say that centralization in a country with three million or more citizens, you have to have a degree of centralization. The more important one is professional administration with experience, and well-selected people stay over time and do not depend on political changes, but are experts providing technical advice to politicians who then take the final decisions. Although this is the key issue, the country needs to see more developments, building up that expertise and keeping it over time.

Ilva Tare: I would like to continue with properties. I read your report, where you note that there are obscurities in the policies that have been taken and a presence of unconnected laws, which lack harmony between each other. While the issue of properties has reached high levels of conflicts; we see it everyday, those who have properties and can not take them also see this; we see them in the news when they debate with each other, and of course, as it was justly noted by you, this brings the restriction of foreign investments. Do you think it is high time for a fundamental property reform?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The answer is yes. That would be wonderful, but whether it is still possible needs to be seen. It should have been done much earlier, because now quite a large number of illegal constructions have been built in many parts. That leads - or could potentially lead - to a new eruption of social unrest, which is certainly something that nobody

wishes for. This is a long story unfortunately of missed opportunities. What we try to do is to help, to facilitate some selective areas, and also to prepare the legal side, to help the people that claim to be the legal and rightful owners to prepare the papers for later registration through the respective state authorities. This is a very difficult job involving many hours of work for every single case and proceeding very slowly. One of the problems, especially in the areas where people hope for tourism development, is that the situation is impeding investment and therefore putting limits on developing job opportunities, which are clearly one of the priorities for any country in this phase of development where Albania currently is. Therefore, what can be done should be done with the highest possible efforts and leading also to these clarifications.

Ilva Tare: What happened with the project you started, financed by the EU, on the property registration in the Southern part of the country?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is on-going. We expect to come to closure toward the end of this year. A large number of cases are prepared so they could be registered, but as I said this is left for the Albanian state authorities. This is not done by the OSCE. It is meant as a helpful support but the decision itself is taken from the Albanian side. The lead agency in the Government is the Ministry of Justice.

Ilva Tare: So, your project will only give recommendations? This will be the final result?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Not recommendations, preparing the cases and the paperwork for the cases, as far as possible, to be then registered.

Ilva Tare: The report also says that the process of legalization for constructions is mainly non-effective and earmarked by the public perception as corrupted. Then, how come we have not heard about cases of investigation by the Prosecutor's Office?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I have seen information that there were cases under investigation.

Ilva Tare: So, there are some cases that are being investigated for corruption in the legalization process. I have another question that is related to the protection from the exploitation of children. An issue which is related to the protection of human rights, which OSCE has close at heart. What should Albania do at a time when there is such a large number of beggars?

Ambassador Wollfarth: One important thing is better funding for the child care centres. Very often children begging in the streets are the result of efforts that should be increased with the goal of the inclusion of the minorities which is directly connected to the need in making the utmost effort to bring children to school, to offer that possibility to poor children, also minority children. Very often there is a reluctance to do so. On the human side, it is understandable because when you send your own child to school you want that the other children are also clean and so it is a larger investment. I would like also to appeal to the parents of children that have the privilege to go to school to help also that the people that cannot provide that to their children, and in that respect and accept also some responsibility. Positive change in a society can be facilitated when you have respect for each other, when you develop that respect. Children are especially the first victims when this respect is not functioning well. As adults, they can function much better, when they have had the opportunity to learn in school with others writing and calculations and all the other things

necessary to become contributing members of society. In my eyes this is the most important thing, to facilitate greater access to schooling.

Ilva Tare: We mentioned many aspects that do not function, the Rule of Law, the administration, the justice, legalizations, the property, and many other issues. We can continue, and maybe all these things happen because there is another weak point. Civil society is weak in the fight against corruption, in the actions it takes. In your report you say that some NGOs are perceived as political ones. How can this moment be overcome and what should a sound civil society do in the actual situation?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Now with the Internet there are also additional possibilities. It voices these concerns when observing shortcomings and it starts with writing to a newspaper. One possibility we mentioned already, that is addressing the Ombudsman, the People's Advocate's Office. Another way is addressing Members of Parliament with requests. I would be very surprised if they would not listen to the electorate. There are many ways to make the public voice heard. I just wanted to spell some out. This indeed can bring change, not a sudden change but a sort of mental clearance in knowing that with all this demand there is an improvement in the application of legislation. If the general attitude is that it is OK as it is, then, of course, nothing changes. To bring that development it is important to discuss issues and also look for the reasoning behind some decisions: were the conditions which led to that decision rightfully done, on which legal basis were the people heard and so on, so that some transparency can be provided, - in the media, in parliament and in front of the Ombudsman.

Ilva Tare: Allow me to give an example: as it rarely happened during these years of democracy, the civil society came together, it summoned 60,000 signatures for the referendum on waste, a decision was given by CEC, which in your report was defined as an unclear and contradictory provision, which seems to ask the postponement of the request. When the civil society is discouraged to deal with these kinds of issues, and when these issues are related to the environment, then how can it find the strength to be active again?

Ambassador Wollfarth: One possibility would be to continue the discussion, highlighting the need and to adjust the voices of concern accordingly. So we talked about the limitations on the property side to the development of tourism; another big limiter is the issue of dirty water, plastic on the beach, and so on. And, of course, there are many reasons to be concerned about the environment because it also translates directly on the income side. Imagine a tourist coming from the region - if they go to the beach, they do not want to swim among plastic bottles, they want to swim in clear water.

Ilva Tare: What should the citizens and the tourists do to have a clean environment?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Talk about it and also support it. There are now in towns and cities and also through the different parts of the country either first recycling efforts or ways for you to separate the kinds of trash - if you actually throw it in the trash can and do not just dump it in the countryside. So there are quite some efforts in that direction, which should also be supported by civil society, or should I say the citizens because civil society reaches out to every individual and virtually every family and also trying to co-operate in keeping Albania clean.

Ilva Tare: One of the last questions, because we are running out of time, is related to the media. For the first time, in your report you criticized the media in relation to the quality of journalism and you mentioned the absence of investigative journalism, an issue which I

covered in an interview with the OSCE Representative for the Freedom of the Media, Mrs. Dunja Mijatovic, whom I had the fortune to interview for Tonight show. How can you explain this decrease in the quality of journalism in Albania and the absence of investigation?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Journalism is a very demanding profession too. It requires certainly intelligent people, with a capability to listen, to write and to speak well. This comes with experience, and it is also the discussion on how it is properly paid. To obtain a quality product, you usually pay a team with a mix of people - ones that gain experience and ones that are more experienced. From the information we gathered in a number of cases, there are occurrences of journalists that do not receive proper payment and, in some extreme cases, no payment at all for their work. This is very concerning because journalism can greatly contribute to preserving the development of democracy. You mentioned investigative journalism. This is also very important because it leads back to the demand from the citizens for good service from the administration. Where there is a demand, the offer then comes, because there is competition, the latest finally on the Election Day.

Ilva Tare: I would like to focus a little on the media. You mentioned that the media draft law is still pending. What are the reasons for that?A: You have suggestions? I mean, from what you highlight here, one thing is digitalization. While the technology is very important, this is one element where we would like to see proper licensing. First of all, it leads to security on the investors' side, but it also brings in further revenue into the Ministry of Finance which is what the state needs to be run properly. This is just one example of what needs to be tackled in the near future to secure functioning not only of the media system, but also of the state. It is all interlinked.

Ilva Tare: And, is there a deadline for the media law to be approved?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is overdue. It should have been adopted already. Let me say that it should be approved as soon as possible.

Ilva Tare: And one last question. This time, it does not come from me, but by one of our viewers on facebook. Abaz Sulejmani asks "Are the internationals going to be clearer in their stands regarding the Albanian politicians? Are they going to be direct, and not just implied?"

Ambassador Wollfarth: Thank you, Abaz, first of all, for your interest and also for this question which indeed sometimes is tempting. The selection and the election of who should represent the Albanian People, this is a privilege for Albanian citizens. It is, for example, not for us to give a recommendation with names, as this is your privilege. I would opt for people that have a clear vision of where they want to see Albania, with the development focusing on rule of law, continuing on the reform path, delivering and doing so in a smooth way, not fighting too much in political circles for the sake of fighting, but fighting for good solutions and then bringing these solutions. Some capable people are around, some others sometimes speak louder. I have the impression that also with the help of the media the people get a clearer picture, at least when they also follow different sources, who they could trust in the future. I have quite some confidence in Albanians.

Ilva Tare: Talking about the future, the future is a lot about the 2013 general elections. You will, again, be leading the OSCE Presence in Albania in following and monitoring them.

Ambassador Wollfarth: I expect to be here. I also look forward to the election observation mission from ODIHR. I find also very encouraging that the Prime Minister said to the visiting

OSCE Chairmanship from the Republic of Ireland last week that he would welcome very much if ODIHR could send an election observation mission. I think that would help to facilitate again good elections here in Albania.

Ilva Tare: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador! It is certainly the will of all the Albanian people to finally have a good election process accepted by all. And since there will be an electoral campaign, I believe we will have you again on Tonight when you have more comments and things to share.

Ambassador Wollfarth: Thank you.

Ends