



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

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS - CIVIL FORUM 2010 ROUNDTABLE

29 June 2012

President Moisiu,
President Meidani,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning.

The Civil Forum 2010 largely contributes to public discourse in what I would qualify as a high quality segment. I listened carefully and I think your voice is heard, but, of course, miracles are not about to happen, as we learned throughout the 20 years. But allow me to commend this Civil Forum 2010, under the able leadership of President Moisiu, for this initiative to exchange views on such an important topic as electoral reform.

All gathered around this table, at least this is my deep conviction, share the view that free and fair, and let me repeat 'and fair' elections are the keystone of political life in a democratic country.

Free and fair elections constitute a defining moment in the progress towards a genuine democratic society.

The Albanian Assembly has made major contributions in respect to the reform process.

I, together with my team, applaud these efforts and please rest assured: the OSCE Presence and ODIHR will continue to support this process wherever possible.

Unfortunately, in the last period we have also witnessed a considerable slowing down of the reform momentum.

I take this opportunity to encourage the Assembly to look for a swift conclusion of electoral reform. Time is running short.

All political sides need to engage in a constructive manner so that sustainable solutions can be found and concluded.

Reform should seek the widest possible political consensus. This is necessary for agreements to be sustainable and withstand the test of time.

Let me add, it cannot be that with one election held then there are tendencies to change the rules again. This is not sound, this is not reasonable, and this is not fair to the people. Sustainable rules would serve the interests of the Albanian people and their European aspirations in the best way.

In particular, I would urge political leaders to swiftly reach agreement on the key pending issues on the table: election administration, post-electoral appeals, improved voter identification and counting procedures.

A timely conclusion of the reform is also important in order to perform all the administrative preparations for free and fair elections.

OSCE/ODIHR recommendations must be fully implemented, showing the political will we still need to see.

When you review the 2009 and 2011 Final OSCE-ODIHR Reports, there are some 31 recommendations.

I would like to draw your attention to just one of them. I cited it already, you have heard it before. But the political leaders and the ones that want to be political leaders must note them and live up to them. For good reasons, it is the first recommendation, relating to what political parties need to perform.

Quote: *“Parties should demonstrate the political will for the conduct of democratic elections commensurate with the broad privileges they enjoy under the law in regard to the conduct of elections. They should discharge their electoral duties in a responsible manner for the general interest of Albania.”* Unquote.

This, I think, is clear language.

However, assuming these responsibilities for the general interest of Albania and its public good, putting it over short-sighted partisan self-interest, still needs to be seen.

President Moisiu,
President Meidani,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Albanian citizens deserve good elections, free and fair elections. Elections that comply entirely with international standards.

I urge all political parties to move forward and deliver to the citizens of this country a successful product based on mutual dialogue, co-operation and respect.

They must then honour it and bring it to full life.

In this way, I would also like to call on civil society actors to *act now* and play their part in putting pressure on political parties that otherwise do not move. They should move

This would enable that any agreed Electoral Code reform is in line with civic interests and not just those of political parties.

Let me conclude by reiterating that the entire OSCE is behind the issue when assisting in this process.

Yet, the final responsibility for both a successful completion of reform process and elections that meet international standards, clearly lies with Albania as a sovereign country.

To this format, to you, the Civil Forum 2010, I just want to say: please keep up the good work. It is much needed.

Faleminderit shumë! [Thank you very much!]

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S CLOSING REMARKS AT THE ROUNDTABLE

Ambassador Wollfarth: “On the issue whether to be even more present during a process, which has to be a sovereign process in a sovereign country, which I mentioned also in my speech, I would like to make some comments.

What is in the context of the Electoral Code reform or electoral reform, the technique OSCE/ODIHR use, is offering advice on the results of what was observed during elections and then what is concluded or recommended afterwards. That is an advice or recommendation or a set of recommendations given based on the observed and on the legal situation versus what was observed, in other words, how the law was brought to real life.

What is very important in a sovereign country is that this is done by the national representatives, including a public discussion, properly, independently, in time and fully. It is not about that foreigners run an independent country; it is about the citizens of this country running the country. So, nobody from ODIHR will be here to instruct or impose any solution. It is just an offer. Who can decide, is the parliament here. They are the only ones entitled to formulate, make laws and decide on laws. Therefore, the entitled group of people at this stage, inside the parliament, are, first of all, the members of the ad hoc committee on electoral reform. But also outside parliament it is very important that this is followed by the parties, by the party leaders, by civil society, by the media and that is being discussed and that there is a pressure to move on, to come to good drafting and to come to good closure.

This process is accompanied by the OSCE/ODIHR, but the decisive difference is that it is accompanied, it is not driven by the OSCE/ODIHR. This is a very important difference: it must be and it always should be an Albania-driven process, driven by Albanians.

Just to remind you, it is a sovereign country that needs to be respected, but this also brings some responsibilities. Blaming something that should and must be decided here on people outside Albania is not the right way. It is a wrong way, it is a misleading way and it is an unacceptable excuse for not acting.

The facilitation that comes from the OSCE/ODIHR and also from others, like the Council of Europe, is there: it is an advice, it is not an order. It is an offer of advice, but it must be respected and implemented here. And if that implementation does not come, blame it on Albanians, do not blame it on internationals.”