



Organizata për Siguri dhe
Bashkëpunim në Evropë
Prezenca në Shqipëri

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT ONLINE WORKSHOP
ADDRESSING ORGANIZED CRIME AND CORRUPTION THROUGH
THE RE-USE OF CONFISCATED CRIMINAL ASSETS - ALBANIA**

24 November 2020

Dear Deputy Minister, Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to open this online workshop, and to focus on a sensitive and critical topic for South East Europe, and, if you allow me to say so, for the entire OSCE area.

We can tackle this issue from several angles and with an array of instruments, and I am wondering whether one of the main difficulties lies in the right mix of policies and measures.

On the one hand, we have the traditional law of the sanction, in other words the criminal code. On the other, we have prevention policies, where transparency and a widespread culture of legality within a society are key factors. We may all agree that preventive medicine is often cheaper and more effective than intensive care therapy.

Actually, today's topic of discussion raises an additional major challenge, beside prevention and repression: we are talking about how to manage confiscated assets. In this respect, the EU Commission Report 2020 clearly recognized the progress made on seizures and the confiscation of criminal assets, but also recommended the adoption and implementation of rules that would ensure the confiscated assets are quickly and efficiently re-used, so that they do not lose their economic value.

I think that in the entire OSCE area, Governments, scholars and experts are confronted with the same dilemmas and the same questions, in search of non-traditional methods, of a right balance between well-known recipes and new formulas. The presence today of the US Ambassador, of the Head of the EU Delegation, of Deputy Interior Minister Lamallari, of our distinguished panelists and participants, is yet another evidence of the width and of the multi-dimensional nature of this complex topic on the re-use of confiscated criminal assets.

The starting block is the ability to conduct accurate financial investigations. We are talking about investigations of a very difficult nature, requiring specific skills and tools.

Another challenge lies in the social impact of judiciary measures leading to confiscation of criminal assets. There are jobs at stake. There are innocent workers and families who are unaware of the fact that the companies they are working for have an illicit origin. These people are victims twice. How to disrupt criminal activities without harming innocent and honest workers? How to make available to civil society goods and properties confiscated to criminal organizations? How to promote an inclusive dialogue between institutions (both national and local) and civil society on the re-use of confiscated assets, with the active involvement of young people, of women, and of vulnerable groups? For instance, the experience matured by Libera is certainly very relevant and inspiring.

I am convinced that a regional perspective and approach is paramount when tackling the multi-faceted subject of today's exercise. The OSCE, for its own nature, is in an ideal position to facilitate this exchange of views and experiences among key actors. I praise this project implemented by our TNTD and OCEEA colleagues, being convinced that your experiences and knowledge "tous azimuts", and your holistic approach to asset seizure and asset confiscation can benefit the region overall.

Actually, the proceedings of this reflect the the OSCE Ministerial and Permanent Council Decisions (Ministerial Council Decision 5/06 on Organized Crime, Ministerial Council Decision 4/12 on OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats, Ministerial Council Decision 4/16 on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity, Permanent Council Decisions 1049 and 1063). All these OSCE Decisions have repeatedly underlined the importance of addressing the financial side of all forms of crime, preventing transfers of the proceeds of crime and pursuing recovery of criminal and stolen assets. This sequence of actions is also particularly important in preventing the financing of terrorism.

I am confident that our support to our host country will make a difference. The OSCE Presence in Albania works to strengthen the overall capacity of the Albanian law enforcement agencies, especially in the area of financial investigations, seizure and return of property acquired through criminal activities. I look forward to the continuation of this workshop through other similar events.

I would like to express my gratitude to the financing partners, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy.

And I encourage our Albanian partners to continue the progress, share their success stories, while learning from peers in the region and in Europe overall.

As a conclusion let me point out that the OSCE will continue to strongly support activities to strengthen the overall capacity of Albanian Law Enforcement Agencies, and in particular Agency for Seized and Confiscated Assets. We are your partners for the long term and we are here to help.

I wish you a productive workshop and a vivid discussion around specific country experiences.