

Remarks made by Head of OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, to the media in a visit to Fier

2 March 2012

Question: Serbia was granted yesterday EU candidate status while Albania may be rejected for the third time.

Ambassador Wollfarth: This is clearly a European Union decision being made on a recommendation from the European Commission. It is a very important step to think and to do the step of making that a national item, very high, number one on the agenda. This first of all needs a joint effort from the Albanian leading politicians. It is clearly an Albanian step to do first and to deliver reforms for bringing the country forward and then leading to further European integration steps. I think it is extremely important to do that.

Question: How about electoral reform? The parliament extended the term of the committee for another two months yesterday.

Ambassador Wollfarth: That is important. It is important quality work what we need to see, what the nation needs to see now, and I am pretty confident that both sides, both political camps will come forward with very good proposals and adopt them in the due time. The OSCE Presence will support that and ODIHR will support that and continue to support it.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, do you think that the consensus reached last night in the Assembly is a step toward integration and how do you see the change of position by the SP in the Assembly?

Ambassador Wollfarth: In my view it is an important step forward. Let me use the word cooperation. Good cooperation in the parliament across the aisle is needed to move important projects, legal projects forward. This was the case in the parliament on an important issue, and I am convinced that that will be evaluated in a positive way. To move the country further forward more steps are needed. I hope and I am optimistic that we will see that also in Electoral Code reform and the parliamentary reform, to mention just a few. And I also hope that it is a good step, a good landmark, but not of course the end of the story, but a chapter that needs to continue with other chapters. But it's encouraging, it's very good, and I'm happy about it.

Question: What do you think the parties should do about the laws requiring three fifths?

Ambassador Wollfarth: Constructively working together is the best attitude now. Albania needs intelligent, good, thoughtful contributions from all the political parties, especially the big ones. But the small ones can also contribute, there is no limit to good ideas and good cooperation. The whole nation, all the people living in Albania, would profit, would gain quality of life in a successful integration process. So, cooperation, working together for common future is the name of the game.

Question: What do you think about the sudden change of position by the SP in the plenary session?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It depends... I would not qualify it in this way. It depends on what you have the possibility to vote on. When a draft is good it can be voted, and when a draft is considered not sufficiently good yet, then it makes sense to negotiate. So, this is normal in democracy I would say. Good quality projects are very important. Time is a factor, but only one factor. Quality first.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, you spoke briefly about the historic background. How do you see respect for human rights and freedoms in Albania?

Ambassador Wollfarth: They are of high priority. We look and we help to look after human rights in all aspects, including the prison system. Thank you.

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