

HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES AND CO-OPERATION OF LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

28 September 2011

Mayors and Council Members,
Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning.

First, let me extend a warm welcome on behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania to all the Mayors and Heads of Councils present here today.

Let me congratulate you all on your respective election victories in May, a considerable number of whom I have had the pleasure to meet with personally since Election Day.

As you know, I have followed closely the elections and was deeply impressed with the energy of the campaigns and the dedication of citizens to cast their vote to elect you as the leaders for their community.

We often hear the phrase that 'local government is closest to the people'?

In fact, I would go even further by saying that "Government that governs closest to the people governs best!"

Real leaders see what is needed and take action accordingly to get the job done!

You are now in the key position to make a difference in the lives of ordinary citizens in your communities.

You have gained the noble duty and obligation to serve the whole community and to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

I invite you to seize this moment!

The greatest reward you should expect is that you will have the honour of serving your community!

I invite you to fully embrace standards of excellence in your daily work based on the principles of honesty, transparency, effectiveness, accountability, ethics, integrity, and sound stewardship of public finances.

I invite you to:

- Act as a role model for ethical practices and a democratic process;
- Provide a vision for public service delivery to the community;
- Reach out to citizens and engage the public in decision-making;
- Build a professional working environment;
- Anticipate and resolve community difficulties;
- Advocate your local authority's needs in other forums; and
- Foster co-operation across the political divide to the benefit of your communities.

Let me re-emphasize the last two points once more

You must have the right tools and resources at your disposal to allow you to perform your duties in serving the public good.

You equally need a proactive national bi-partisan body advocating for local interests and which can support you as you expand local services.

Regardless of political party affiliation, strive to work together in lobbying central government on state initiatives that impact upon your communities.

It is in the interests of your communities for you to be constructive and, at certain times, non-partisan to ensure that citizens are best served by locally taken decisions.

A local government association provides the ideal platform for promoting and supporting local needs and the sharing of information and best practice.

An association provides a forum to build cross party alliances on issues of common local concern such as territorial planning and decentralisation reforms.

An association should also be able to build an annual bi-partisan local government legislative agenda and foster broad coalitions needed to pass helpful laws in the Assembly and prevent laws that are harmful to local people in your communities.

I finally would like to invite you to reinvigorate the association of municipalities and give your communities a strong voice in the national policies that impact their lives.

A successful association needs your active support.

Let me close by thanking you for your dedication to serving the public.

In wishing you all the best over the next four years of your mandate, let me stress again that we stand ready to offer you support when you need it.

Thank you very much and good luck!

Ends

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