



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

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S ADDRESS AT THE WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE PROJECT
SUMMER SCHOOL FOR ELECTED WOMEN COUNCILLORS CLOSING
CEREMONY, HOTEL ADRIATIK, DURRES, 14 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am very pleased to be here this afternoon to what I understand has been a very successful Summer School.

This Summer School was organized as part of the project entitled Enhancing Women's Role in Governance funded by Swedish International Development Agency and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and I would like to thank them for their continued support.

Today's ceremony marks another successful step in Presence's efforts to promote gender equality, and I congratulate you all for your success and thank you for your active participation.

This main aim of the Summer School was to strengthen the capacity of all participants by providing them with tools to mainstream gender into local policies.

Greater gender equality is vital to achieving security, prosperity, and full democratic standards in Albania and hence to security and stability in the OSCE area.

In light of the recent local government elections, the obstacles to increased political participation of women clearly still exist as only 12.5% of all elected councillors are women.

However, there is some reason for optimism, in particular concerning the impact of the Project.

First, out of the 785 women that successfully ran in the elections, 60 received support from the project.

Second, it appears that the percentage of elected municipal councillors increased above average in those rural areas in which the Project had focused its activities.

The 30% of women candidates for municipal councillors might suggest that the campaigning for the respecting of the "1 out of 3" requirement in the Electoral Code was successful.

This of course leads to the question why only 12.4 % women were elected.

One reason for this is that the "1 out of 3" rule stipulated in the Electoral Code appears not to always have been respected.

Another reason is the fact that the parties did not provide for forums -- for example, internal pre-elections in which women could internally campaign for themselves.

It seems that the obstacles to increased participation of women still lie in:

- Too many political parties still not respecting the Gender Quota out.
- The election administration structures not strictly policing the Gender Quota.
- Lack of democratic processes within the parties and no local control over candidate lists

While the preliminary results for all councils show a slight increase in the number of women, the results for the Mayors and Heads of Communes were less favourable compared to 2007.

Only five women were elected even less than in 2007.

On a positive note, one third of the women who actually ran for mayor, were elected.

This can be understood in women having a good chance to be elected as heads of local government units once they are candidates. The *bottle neck* is at the stage of becoming a candidate.

The same reasoning applies as for the candidate lists for municipal councils.

To end on a positive note, now is the time to look to the future.

A particular focus should be put on overcoming the existing gap between women representation on municipal councillor and mayor level.

The lack of democratic mechanisms in selecting candidates needs addressing.

Changing attitudes of political parties and its male-dominated leadership and building the capacities of beneficiaries remain a challenge when talking about enhancement of women's participation in public and political life.

Further co-operation between men and women from different parties and civil society, both at local and central level, to ensure their participation in the project's activities remains a priority for the Presence.

A stronger implementation and possibly also amendments to the Electoral Code and gender related legislation before forthcoming 2013 parliamentary elections might still be required for significant gender power representation in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies.

Let us see how serious political parties really are in stepping up to the mark in fulfilling their democratic obligations so that 50% of the population finally get to have a real say in how this country is actually governed.

To conclude can I just say that opportunities for women to be represented in political bodies and to influence political matters are an important parameter of democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once more for your active participation in this summer school.

Thank you.

E.o.T.