

Remarks of the Head of OSCE Presence in Albania for the Media

18 April 2013

Q: The resignation of two CEC members... What does this mean for the electoral process?

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is very important to recall what ODIHR has recommended and this is appealing to the responsibilities the political parties have for the electoral preparations throughout the process. That includes also participation in the CEC. Apparently it did not go through yet, but I appealed several times to enter into dialogue, and I do not see enough happening. The CEC at this stage can operate, but it would be better to have representatives in there that come after nominations from all relevant parties, and the relevant parties are mostly in the Assembly of Albania. So staying out of the CEC for an extended time, I think this is not a good way, it is not the way in the service of the Albanian citizens. The country is looking forward to elections, it is looking forward to democratic elections and those should be prepared properly.

Q: Mr Ambassador when you speak about dialogue what do you mean with this? Should it be the DP who caused the stalemate and who should retract from its move to replace the SMI-appointed member...

Ambassador Wollfarth: It is not about naming and blaming. I expect dialogue and constructive contributions, and I would invite to that contribution all relevant political parties. The legal framework of Albania requires a 60% majority for many reform steps for the reform agenda ahead. There is also a life after 23 June. And that must be the reform agenda to build the future of Albania, to help build the lives of the people here in Albania. I would call for more dedication for service for the citizens, to push the reform agenda ahead, to be constructive, and also to live up to the goals of the country, that I understand is the European integration. I have it with me, let me cite from the ODIHR Report and the recommendations for the 2009 parliamentary elections, which they repeated also after the 2011 local elections. And I cite the ODIHR report in the first recommendation, which is addressed to political parties: '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.' In all modesty, I would like to appeal as a friend of Albania to render this service to the citizens of Albania, who merit democratic, free elections. So, what do we see?

Q: Mr. Ambassador, the situation in the Central Election commission: 2 resigned members, 48 hours to bring proposals on two new members, which are not there yet. What is your opinion on that?

Ambassador Wollfarth: I have respect for the personal decisions of the CEC members, who have resigned, but now it is very important to see steps according to the law in presenting the new candidates. The political parties enjoy privileges stemming from the electoral legislation of Albania and therefore they also have duties; and the joint preparation of and contributing to that preparation of free and fair elections lies with all parties, especially those represented in the parliament. Albania is in the middle of a serious reform agenda and much of that requires 60% decisions in the Assembly, and how that can be achieved in such circumstances is an open question, an important question for the future of Albania. Therefore, cooperation based on the law and dialogue is needed to define the way forward. The law should be abided by, too, and that includes also the timely proposal of candidates when required.

Q: If the proposal is not made in due time, to what extent the electoral process may be affected?

Ambassador Wollfarth: The voters have a say on election day, which is on 23rd of June. And let me just cite from the last two ODIHR reports, on the 2009 general elections and on the 2011 local elections, the recommendation number one. Addressing political parties, ODIHR highlighted the following: '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.' Holding democratic elections is clearly in the interest of the citizens of Albania and we strongly encourage moving on that track.

Q: If we reach the elections with this CEC format: a 5-member CEC, how healthy, reliable and lawful would be this CEC?

Ambassador Wollfarth: There is much work to do, so it is not impossible to do it with five members, but it is preferable to have 7 members on board, working in a sound, professional and apolitical way. Preparing elections is teamwork; and let me use a football picture, if you lose one person during the match for whatever reason, then it is a heavier burden for the others, so I would invite to fill up and come up to 7 members, which are there for good reasons.