

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FORUM

19 November 2020

Your Excellences, dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to open up this event together with our international partners in Tirana only four days after I have arrived in the country and have taken over my new position as Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania. This is actually my very first public event in Albania, and I am particularly glad that this media development forum is providing me with this special opportunity.

Let me thank the distinguished panellists for their attendance or e-attendance today, starting from my colleagues the Head of the EU Delegation, the Director of the Council of Europe Office in Tirana and the Director of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media. I am grateful to all those who are following the proceedings of this Forum remotely.

This event is a very timely one. As you all know, the OSCE is marking the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, which laid the ground to the fundamental principles and commitments of its comprehensive approach to security. A fundamental document that acknowledged the importance of information for democracy and security, while setting the principles on the improvement, the circulation, access and exchange of information, including the co-operation and improvement of the conditions under which journalists exercise their profession.

And the Presence has been consistently working across the years to translate these principles into assistance, working hand-in-hand with the Albanian institutions, with civil society and the media. We are here to make available our technical support through the implementation of thematic projects that aim to improve the level of professionalism in reporting, to make more transparent the ownership of media, to support media to self-regulate, to raise awareness on safety of women journalist, to improve the performance and professionalism of the public TV broadcaster. As I understand from my Colleagues in the Presence, these are all priorities, I share instinctively and my intention is to continue to focus on them.

Let me avail of this opportunity to underline how critical our co-operation in the media sector with the EU Delegation is, and how much I look forward to continuing and expanding it. Grazie, Ambasciatore Soreca for your support!

In the titles chosen for this Forum panels, I have spotted interesting and inspiring words, which I am sure, will help feeding your exchanges and will animate the debate that will stem thereafter. The idea of a “journey” implies the idea of dynamism and also of a sense of direction in support of media freedom and freedom of speech, to improve the general professional environment for journalists, in light also of the current difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic.

I praise the idea of looking at the quality of information as an investment for the future. Professionalism and quality are key ingredients for a mature media consumer society,

especially now that we benefit from an immense quantity of information circulating freely and made accessible to a very wide public.

Internet is a fantastic ocean, and I could not imagine my life without it and its immensity, but I am aware that it does not provide me with a compass to guide me through its uncharted waters. The idea of a compass is part of the wider notion of national resilience to disinformation and fake news. And I cannot pass here without pointing at the importance of media literacy and especially at the crucial role it has among the young generation. I am wondering whether the debate is – inter alia - about guaranteeing freedoms and in parallel empowering citizens to demand from the media information that is unbiased.

Before I pass the micro to Amb. Soreca, let me thank my colleague Ms. Sihana Nebiu and my excellent colleagues in the Presence who tirelessly worked to organize this event, the sixth of its kind already, even under these difficult pandemic times!

I wish you all the best with the event and please remain close partners with us. Thank you!

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