



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Address by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Albania, Mr. Alqi Puli**

**As delivered at the 20th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
Kyiv, 5-6 December 2013**

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honored to take part in the 20th OSCE Ministerial Meeting and address such a distinguished gathering. I would like to extend my appreciation to the Ukrainian Chair for its successful work throughout this last year and for the gracious hospitality here in Kyiv.

This OSCE Ministerial Council meeting coincides with serious developments in the host country which matter to the OSCE and are of critical importance for the future of Ukraine. We wish they would serve to the government and opposition to engage in dialogue and launch a reform process. In particular, we emphasize the need to uphold freedom of expression and assembly, thus preserving the commitments and principles of the OSCE.

Albania commends the Ukrainian Chair for its efforts to advance the Helsinki+40 process throughout the year and for stimulating our strategic discussions on the future role of the OSCE in the European security architecture. As the first year of the process comes to an end, we must now move forward with a roadmap of small and realistic deliverables that can be achieved under the consecutive Swiss and Serbian Chairs.

In our view, this process is about calibrating the role of the OSCE to the challenges of our time and not about altering its current structures, flexibility and decision making processes. Hence, the OSCE of tomorrow should build upon its remarkable achievements of the past. Thanks to its comprehensive body of norms and commitments, its institutions and field missions, our organization has provided security and stability in a large part of Europe. It should continue to do so, by assisting participating States in solving existing conflicts, consolidating the rule of law and democratic institutions and improving the implementation of their commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

During the course of 2013, we had the pleasure to work together with the OSCE Chair to organize the High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-discrimination, which was held in Tirana in May of this year, an event of particular importance to the OSCE and to my country as well. We believe that tolerance and non-discrimination are cornerstones for peace and

stability and we are convinced that Albania, with its centuries-long history of religious harmony, can serve as example for building a better and more peaceful future in the OSCE area.

Albert Einstein is often quoted in the context of the OSCE, and rightfully so, for saying: “Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding”. This is exactly what we do here in the OSCE, in this unique political platform for dialogue, cooperation and peer review.

We consider the implementation of the full range of OSCE Human Dimension commitments by the participating states as of paramount importance. Consolidating what we have jointly agreed upon in this dimension would only show our determination to uphold the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Respect for human rights in our countries guarantees security among states. Therefore, Albania endorses the approval of the Ministerial Council Decisions on Roma and Sinti populations, freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief and the *addendum* of the action plan to fight trafficking in human beings. We would have liked to also see the draft Decision on the protection of journalists come to life, here in Kyiv.

I would also like to express my country’s full support for the institutions of this Organization that are mandated to monitor the implementation of democratic values and human rights, such as ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. I am pleased to, once again, have the opportunity to mention the excellent cooperation that Albania has with ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and emphasize the support that they provide to our country in its path towards European integration.

As you know, last June we held the fairest and most democratic elections to date. In the words of ODIHR, they were “competitive with active citizen participation”. Addressing the recommendations made by ODIHR in its previous election reports, helped us raise the bar and set standards that can only be improved in the future. We are determined to continue our reforms in this field, and to continue our work with ODIHR in identifying ways of implementing their latest recommendations.

Excellencies,

Regional cooperation is of vital importance to the Western Balkans and its ongoing Euro-Atlantic integration process. I am glad to acknowledge that the OSCE, with its field operations and institutions, provides a significant contribution to this process, thus fostering security and stability in the region.

The successful facilitation of the municipal elections in the north of Kosovo is a vivid example of the unique role of the OSCE in the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. I will take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the results that have been achieved through the Brussels Agreement. We congratulate the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia for yet another fruitful meeting held in Brussels on 5 December. I would also like to reiterate Albania’s stance with regard to the participation of Kosovo in international and regional fora, including in the OSCE. Kosovo

and its institutions should be able to participate and make their voice heard on all issues pertaining to the OSCE. We strongly believe that giving Kosovo the status of a participating state of the Organization would serve to the stability and security of the region, and would further increase the efficiency of OSCE's engagement in the Western Balkans.

Dear colleagues,

The situation in Afghanistan is reaching a critical juncture, which is certainly fraught with security implications for the whole OSCE region. In order to make the progress on Afghanistan sustainable and to continue promoting its long-term peace and stability, we believe that the OSCE must enhance its support for the Afghan people and Government in all areas of its comprehensive mandate. In this regard, Albania supports the approval of a cross-dimensional Ministerial Declaration on Afghanistan, which would signal our strong commitment and political will to help the Government of Afghanistan to take over the process of further democratization of the country.

The OSCE provides a suitable platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices with our Mediterranean partners, where important transitions are underway. Albania has used various OSCE fora to share our experience on transition to democracy and will continue to step up its engagement in this framework. With this in mind, I wish to express our strong support for Libya's request to become an OSCE Partner for Cooperation. Let me also express our willingness to host the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in the near future.

As a country which boast an excellent and productive cooperation with an OSCE field operation, Albania voices its full support for the establishment of an OSCE mission in Ulan Bator, in line with the request and the needs of the Government of Mongolia.

Mr. Chairperson,

In recent years, Albania has proved its ability to take the lead in working for peace and security in the Western Balkans. We will continue to play a constructive role in the region and remain confident that we can play a leading role at a larger and more challenging scale, including in the OSCE. In this context, Albania is pondering to further increase its contribution within the Organization.

Finally, allow me to congratulate Switzerland and Serbia for their consecutive Chairs in the two years to come and wish them well in their endeavors. Both countries can count on our support in pursuit of their ambitious priorities. We look forward to closely cooperate with the incoming Chair in Vienna and Berne on all issues of interest to our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.