



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 19, 2024

Ambassador Tarran, welcome to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your report on the OSCE Presence in Albania's support to the Albanian government and for the field mission's dedication to deliver tangible results for people on the ground.

We applaud your successful efforts to facilitate election reform, fight corruption, strengthen the rule of law, and advance good governance at the local and national level. We also recognize the work of the Presence to promote the active role of civil society and respect for human rights, improve gender equality, contribute to a free media environment welcoming to independent media, and address transnational threats.

Albania faces a significant challenge from corruption, which is an obstacle to Albania's economic development and contributes to high emigration. We welcome the government's strategy to combat corruption in high-risk sectors such as public procurement and tax administration. The field mission's support for judicial sector reforms will lead to consistent collaboration between law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges to address high-level corruption. Your team's training for the Supreme Court against Corruption and Organized Crime and assistance to Albania's Constitutional Court are improving decision making and increasing transparency.

The field mission's programming with the Central Election Commission to strengthen Albania's election administration is also vital. From training trainers to improving voter access to information, we value the Presence in Albania's commitment to strengthening democracy, particularly at a time when democratic principles are under threat throughout the OSCE region.

Unfortunately, the OSCE Presence in Albania – like all other field missions – faces significant operational difficulties due to severe financial constraints. The inability of participating States to adopt a unified budget has placed undue strain on all field missions' abilities to effectively carry out their mandates, affecting everything from staffing and resources to program implementation. We encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve their differences regarding the budget for the good of the entire OSCE, and we urge all participating States to engage in good faith negotiations to adopt the 2024 Unified Budget as soon as possible.

Ambassador Tarran, thank you for your leadership at the OSCE Presence in Albania. I also offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to your team for supporting the government of

Albania in implementing its OSCE commitments and for doing so with dedication and determination despite the hardships we have inflicted on them by our failure to adopt a Unified Budget.

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