



## **Remarks of President Riccardo Migliori**

*As prepared for delivery*

OSCE PA Fall Meetings

Tirana, Albania - 5 October 2012

Mr. Prime Minister, Madame Speaker, honourable guests, colleagues and friends,

I am honoured and pleased to be here in Tirana and to meet again with all of you after our last intense and productive Annual Session in Monaco.

The last three months have been busy ones, and it is nice to regroup and refocus our co-operation.

Thank you Speaker Topalli for your warm welcome and for hosting us in this beautiful capital city, where Ismail Kadare used to draw inspiration for his fascinating novels of freedom. One year after our meeting in Dubrovnik, I am so glad to notice how the Adriatic area continues to play a key role in the OSCE.

We gather under a theme of good governance and integration –concepts are at the heart of stability and security.

In a place known for its tradition of religious tolerance, where the coexistence of Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics can be an example for the whole OSCE region, may we learn new ideas to promote multiethnic and multicultural communities.

In Albania, which as of last week is set to become an energy hub bringing natural gas from Central Asia, may we be reminded of how closely interconnected and interdependent we all are in this region for stable energy supplies and secure economies.

And through our open deliberations, may we underscore a crucial and cross-cutting matter for the OSCE: the role of media to stimulate good governance.

Since joining our Organization in 1991, Albania has shown tangible development, notably regarding democratization, rule of law, and human rights. The Albania once seen as an isolated outsider in Europe, has now started negotiations to join the EU, signaling the growing cohesion between this region and the broader European family.

I hope Albania will continue this progress and in next year's elections show an ability to settle political issues within its institutions, not on the streets. We're parliamentarians here. We know campaigns are tough. But democracy depends on peaceful debate and public participation. There is a place for strong rhetoric, but not hostility. Citizens need to feel engaged, but not pressured.

The OSCE Presence here since 1997 has contributed to mutually beneficial co-operation between Albania and the OSCE. The impact of our mission here is incredibly valuable. Ambassador Wollfarth, thank you for your commitment to the OSCE cause and for the outstanding work the Presence here in Albania carries out on a daily basis. Yours is a further demonstration that our success, the success of the OSCE and its participating States, resides first and foremost in our field activities.

But parliamentary diplomacy has its place too. Meetings like this one are essential to helping build support for the OSCE in our own countries and building bridges between nations. During these first three months as President, including in my visits to Belarus, Georgia, France, Iceland, and Poland, I have often recalled these fundamental concepts.

In Belarus I mentioned the need for all OSCE countries to end the practice of keeping political prisoners. In Iceland, speaking to the Arctic Council, I called for nations to joint together to ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty. And just last week in Warsaw, at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, I rang the bell to call on the human rights office to get back to its core work – human rights.

In Warsaw, I clarified our Assembly's invaluable role within the OSCE, and I encouraged ODIHR to avoid falling prey to bureaucratic temptations that let budgets set in Vienna dictate how and when they will speak up on human rights abuses. I encouraged our colleagues in Warsaw to live up to their real mandate, their vital humanitarian role. I encouraged them to be active.

Therefore, dear colleagues, I am here to call upon you to be active, as well. Make good use of this meeting. Use it to establish new contacts, to stay in touch and to work cooperatively towards a common goal. Use it to produce something concrete in your parliament before our next reunion in February in Vienna. To anybody who doubts for a moment the power of their personal contribution, I am here to remind you that your work is magnified by the partners you have among you in this room.

I know that many of you are regularly participating in election observation missions and I really appreciate that. However, I ask of you something more. Because when we participate in an election observation mission, we must take advantage of the role we have: we have expertise and we, more than anyone else, are in the position to take a courageous stand. We must do it. We

must speak, and after elections we must echo the words of the OSCE back home in our countries to raise international awareness and remind people that nearly 40 years after the Helsinki Final Act, we all still have work to do to live up to our commitments, in all three dimensions.

Because we know there is no security without human rights, and no country alone can protect the global environment or preserve the global economy unless all countries join them. We need your help, and here in Tirana, I hope we will revive the “combative” spirit of our Assembly and blaze the trail for a successful continuation of our parliamentary action. Make this the autumn of action.

Thank you.