



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT GRADUATION CEREMONY OF ALBANIAN SCHOOL OF MAGISTRATES

5 October 2018

Dear Minister,
Dear representatives of the justice system, of the Albanian parliament,
Dear colleagues from the diplomatic corps,
Dear guests and, in particular, dear graduates!

I am pleased to be here today and to attend with you the graduation ceremony of a new generation of magistrates.

The OSCE is and will be committed to support the rule of law and a fair, accountable, transparent, accessible and efficient justice system in Albania.

Judiciary independence, impartiality and integrity are essential for citizens' trust in public institutions, for the proper functioning of a market economy and also for the development of a diverse and open society. Justice professionals, such as yourselves, are fundamental pillars of democratic consolidation in Albania and play a crucial role in the European evolution of your country. Proper selection and training of justice professionals is paramount to the building of an efficient, impartial, independent judiciary.

The more I regret that the selection of new students for this prestigious institution is blocked in politics. I am aware of the arguments of those who block it, but they criticize *inter alia* the selection mechanism for a new generation, but what is easier than to sit down with all the parties and to discuss if there are better ideas and how to do a better selection? These are decisions which need to be taken in the interest of the country and of its citizens.

The OSCE Presence in Albania is proud to have been a long-term partner of the Magistrate School. For years now, we have contributed to the training of judges and other justice officials on a variety of legal issues, including on prisons and probation, administrative justice, and recently to a very large extent on case management.

I take the opportunity to thank Director Sokol Sadushi for our continuous partnership. We highly value your openness and willingness to partner with us and we are ready to continue this longstanding and successful partnership.

Everyone in this room is aware of the difficulties faced by the Albanian judiciary. The justice reform is the issue of the day. Albanian citizens have low trust in the judicial system, as revealed by many surveys and opinion polls. Meanwhile, the crucial vetting process of justice professionals is on-going, focusing public and international attention on Albania and setting an example for the whole region and beyond. You yourselves will feel this attention to the judiciary reform in your future work, as you will be, and when you will be newly appointed. Our advice is: feel encouraged by this attention. Feel the support that you enjoy for becoming independent and fair judges. That means also be mindful that your actions have

consequences. The vetting is ongoing. Quite a number of judges see the consequences already. Be mindful that every decision you will make will prove your knowledge, your strength, your integrity, and your commitment to rule of law and to your country.

Be mindful of the oath that you take, and I quote: *“I solemnly swear that during the exercise of my duty I shall remain faithful to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, applicable laws, and I shall respect professional ethics”*. That puts it in a nutshell what is expected of you.

With that in mind, I commend you once again for graduating, that is an enormous achievement, from this prestigious institution, and wish you a successful career in an independent justice system in the service of the citizens of your country.

Thank you very much for your attention!