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Interview with Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Osmo Lipponen

Q: You have had a series of meetings with senior political authorities lately. What have been the main topics of discussions?

A: The main topics of discussion have been very concrete – the bi-partisan committee, the draft property law, but also other issues on which we have exchanged interesting viewpoints.

Q: OSCE has been active in achieving the electoral reform. What role will your organization play in solving the property issue, which remains very sensitive here?

A: I believe our role will be very important. In this respect, we have established good working relations and a good dialogue with those parties interested in having the property issue solved. We have talked about the basic ideas on how we will support this process. We have agreed on two major details and we will help in drafting a working law.

Q: The Government has already prepared a draft law on property. In which of the drafts you will offer your assistance?

A: We are aware of two drafts on property, which will be brought before three parliamentary committees for discussion and the committees will afterwards make the proper amendments. The government draft is an important basis and we have prepared a supplement to the above drafts. I believe this process will contribute to drafting a good law and approving it through consensus.

Q: In the annual report that you delivered to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna recently, you said there is still room for improvement in the government draft law.

A: The most important thing is that the parliamentarians think that the government draft needs to be improved, so the people should be less concerned with fact that the OSCE is saying that the draft needs to be improved. The law should be workable and lasting. One can say we are critical, but our criticism is constructive.

Q: Being a diplomat heading an important international organization in Albania, what do you think is not going well in the country?

A: There could be many things which need to be improved and in our reports we have mentioned that there are things which do not go well. But it is worthwhile to say that there is always hope at the end of the tunnel. The work of the bi-partisan committee is a good example to show that things can work well. Also, the way the Albanian government is co-operating with the international community is very constructive.

Q: Lately, there have been a number of critical reports of international organizations regarding the situation in Albania, but the most frequent criticism is directed towards corruption and illegal trafficking. Do you share this concern?

A: We share this concern and in our reports we have made reference to some of these issues but, on the other hand, we have also commended the government's efforts to improve the situation.