



PC.DEL/869/13
31 October 2013

ENGLISH only

EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 969
Vienna, 31 October 2013**

**EU statement in response to the Report by the Head of the
OSCE Presence in Albania, H.E. Ambassador Florian
Raunig**

The EU and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Florian Raunig, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, for the first time to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report.

Albania has made some progress in improving the stability of public administration institutions, and in guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and human rights. We welcome the activities of the Presence in assisting Albania to meet its OSCE commitments. These activities also bring added value to the country's strategic objectives, in areas where the EU believes a solid track record should be built.

Throughout 2013, Albania has made further progress in reforms and important legislation has been passed with cross-party support. Promoting a national reform agenda remains paramount to successful European integration.

Building on the progress achieved so far, Albania should further intensify its efforts, particularly in the area of public administration reform, to strengthen the independence, efficiency and accountability of the judiciary, to fight against corruption and organized crime and to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

We welcome the measures adopted in the fight against corruption. However, corruption remains a particularly serious problem and more needs to be done in this field, especially on effective implementation of anti-corruption measures,

and insulating relevant bodies from political interference. We appreciate that the Presence will support the Albanian Government in the drafting and consultation process for a revised Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan.

We acknowledge that some progress has been made in the fight against organised crime, money laundering and drugs trafficking. Nevertheless, much greater effort will be needed in order to improve the track record of convictions and the effective implementation of the legal framework. We take positive note of the adoption of a Strategy and Action Plan on fighting organised crime.

We welcome the steps taken in completing the legal framework for judicial reform, through the adoption this year of an important legislative package. However, greater effort will be needed in order to build an independent judiciary, which is able to effectively implement and uphold the rule of law.

The EU welcomes the commitment of the Albanian authorities to pursue public administration reform, and emphasises the need for further progress in developing a professional and de-politicised public administration. The adoption, this year, of the Civil Service Law was a major step forward and it is now essential that the necessary steps for its implementation are accelerated. In the area of territorial and administrative reform, we appreciate the assistance offered by the Presence to the Albanian authorities. We also stress the need to address persisting problems in the areas of property rights, restitution, compensation and property reform.

The European Union welcomes the assessment of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, that the parliamentary elections of 23 June were competitive, with active citizen participation throughout the campaign and genuine respect for fundamental freedoms. We encourage the authorities of Albania to work with the OSCE/ODIHR and welcome their readiness to follow its recommendations for further electoral reform, with a view to continuing progress on the path of democracy and the rule of law, in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We call for a substantially reinforced dialogue between the government and civil society. We welcome the adoption of the Law on audio-visual media this year and encourage efforts to strengthen the independence of the media.

While the legal framework for the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination has been improved, legislative gaps still need to be addressed and its implementation continues to be a challenge, including in relation to Roma. Adoption of legislation in order to provide equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all persons belonging to minorities is crucial. We commend the Presence for its work on gender mainstreaming. We welcome the fact that the gender quota has been respected in the composition of the new government of Albania.

We emphasise the value of regional co-operation, in particular between Albania and its neighbours, and strongly support Albania's constructive role in this regard.

We call on the Presence to continue using the full capacities of the OSCE institutions, to develop closer co-operation with other field missions in the region, to deepen partnership with relevant international partners, in particular the EU, and to avoid duplications and optimise results, in line with Albania's EU-integration aspirations. We also appreciate the fact that the Presence indicates some reductions for its budget for 2014. Nevertheless, in the context of current budgetary constraints, we believe that the Presence should try to identify further savings in administrative areas as we indicated at the ACMF on 29 October.

We hope that 2013 marks an important year in Albania's European integration process, and we encourage the Albanian Government and all political forces to focus their efforts to achieve this end. The December European Council shall decide upon the next steps in the European accession process of the country.

In conclusion, we remain committed to supporting the Presence in its work and would like to once again thank Ambassador Raunig and his dedicated staff for their excellent work and wish them every success in their activity.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.
