



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

**REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA
TO THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL, 9 SEPTEMBER 2010**

INTRODUCTION

Since the last report to the Permanent Council, the Presence has continued to follow the guidance provided by Participating States and the Secretariat, reflecting upon the national priorities of the host country. Appreciation should be expressed to the host country and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, for their continuous support and good counsel throughout the year, which has greatly contributed to the work of the Presence. Gratitude should also be offered to all the other central and local institutions with which the Presence has actively engaged. Thanks must go to all the multilateral institutions and participating states that have funded our programmes over the last year. The Presence focused its resources in the most efficient way possible, and aimed at undertaking large, outcome orientated projects. Indeed, the Presence reduced the number of projects on its project catalogue from 34 in 2009 to 24. This report will provide an overview of the political and programme highlights of the last year insofar as they relate to the mandate of the Presence.

POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The political climate since last year's report was marked by the political dispute between the Government and the main opposition Socialist Party (SP) regarding the 2009 parliamentary elections. Although a legislative agenda was maintained over the last year, especially in the crucial areas pertaining to the visa liberalization process, fight against organized crime and corruption, economic reform and judicial police, the lack of political dialogue hampered the ability of the legislature to pass some pieces of legislation needed to further the integration agenda. In September 2009 the SP initiated what turned out to be a six-month boycott of the Assembly, conditioning their return upon the fulfilment of conditions relating to the election process, including a recount of ballots through the creation of an inquiry committee. As a result of this boycott, the passing of important legislation for the implementation of the reform agenda, for which a qualified majority was required, became *de facto* impossible. The Government, for its part contended that all legal steps with regard to electoral disputes were fully exhausted after the formal electoral appeals process had concluded. The Government remains willing to accept all the SP requests as long as this does not include that the ballot boxes are opened, claiming this to be against the electoral code and the constitution. Needless to say that the SP refutes such arguments.

With no agreement in sight, the SP initiated in November a series of national protests that lasted until April 2010. Disputes over the nature of the inquiry committee the SP had asked for has meant that the committee never started functioning. May finally saw the SP end a two-week long hunger strike, held also in response to the ongoing impasse, after both main party leaders were invited to Strasbourg by key European Parliament leaders to discuss possible solutions. The

meeting resulted in the establishment of an informal facilitation process, with support from the European Commission. This process also proved to be inconclusive. During this period, one idea that was publicly aired was the immediate opening of the election material boxes while deferring the issue of opening the vote ballot boxes to the Venice Commission for review on its legality. The Government, however, pointed out that this was counter to the letter of the Electoral Code which states that the ballot papers have to be destroyed immediately once the election material boxes were opened. Despite a sustained public debate on this issue, no solution was found before the summer recess but it is understood that talks go on behind closed doors.

In several instances, both through public statements as well as during meetings with local interlocutors, the Presence has encouraged the Albanian political class to find the same level of political will they managed to find in order to approve constitutional changes in 2008, although these changes were definitely not welcomed by the smaller parties. Indeed, the standard of Albanian elections are fundamentally founded upon political goodwill built by the political class themselves. The system of politically appointed election administrators has been a key reason for concern and, while at some stage, Albania may finally move to a non partisan system of the electoral administration, greater political will be needed to ensure that the next local government elections will fully meet International standards. The ODIHR recommendations and other suggestions for further improvement of the system should be implemented soonest. After 20 long years of transition, the Albanian public expect their political leaders to put the issue of contested elections in their country to a close.

A further consequence of the impasse has been the inability of the political class to commence work towards the adoption of the necessary electoral reform in order to further improve upcoming local government elections. International best practice suggests that such a reform should be concluded some six months before any such elections. With local elections scheduled to take place in May 2011, this means coming to a conclusion by November 2010. Given that we are now in September and no progress has been made, it is difficult to see how any November deadline will be met, especially as previous Assembly Ad Hoc Committees have invariably taken in excess of three months to complete their work. Indeed a consensual reform process, based on the recommendations from the last OSCE-ODIHR Report, should start soonest and conclude after a proper consultative process, one that is inclusive in approach. The CEC will then be able to effectively implement whatever changes are finally agreed. A major condition for getting successful elections - and this is again closely linked to the issue of political will - will be the completion of the voter lists in due time, where a collaborative approach between central and local government, irrespective of political hue will be essential for the successful conduct of the elections.

On the rule of law, judicial independence remains a challenge. The judiciary can often be subject to external interference and, despite public statements on the need to select the best judges possible, judicial appointments and transfers often lack sufficient transparency. The Constitutional Court has asserted increasing independence since 2005, and this should be seen as a positive development. It is hoped that this trend will continue once the replacement of two-thirds of the Court in 2010 is finally completed. The possibility to appoint six members of the Court in 2010 is in violation of the Constitutional provision that one-third is to be replaced every three years, though failing to appoint all six would violate the provision setting the term limit for judges on this Court. This situation calls for a legislative solution within the next few years to

ensure that it does not repeat itself. The ongoing process of appointing new judges both for the Constitutional Court and for the High Court, where the President proposes candidates to be confirmed by the parliament, has led to tensions between the governing Democratic Party (DP) and the President (also originally from the DP) as some of the proposed candidates were rejected because, according to the Government, they did not fulfil the criteria set out, as they claim that they were politically active during the former communist regime.

In discussing judicial organization, as the Constitution calls for a qualified majority for the approval of legislation regarding judiciary powers, the long term absence of the SP in the Assembly and their subsequent policy of not voting for any laws requiring a qualified majority has meant that the Assembly has not been able to approve key pieces of legislation, most notably laws: on the High Council of Justice, to replace the unconstitutional law on the National Judicial Conference and, crucially, to establish Administrative Courts. Throughout the year, the SP was repeatedly reminded by many International actors that they had a responsibility to fulfil their constitutional duty as a constructive opposition and to some very important pass legislation in spite of their rancour. The tense political situation led to that they largely failed to heed such calls.

In March 2010, the Constitutional Court declared the law *On the Cleanliness of the Figure on High Functionaries* unconstitutional. This law was designed to inquire into the past of senior elected and appointed public officials regarding their involvement with the communist regime. The decision stated that the matters addressed by this law made necessary to adopt it through qualified majority in the Assembly, that the provisions concerning the competencies of the Authority for Checking the Figures directly and inappropriately limited certain Constitutional rights, and that the law violated the separation of powers by establishing an executive body which would be responsible for investigating senior officials of the Assembly and of the judiciary. While some form of lustration law may be acceptable and necessary for Albania, it should be fully in line with international standards and the Albanian Constitution.

Having met with strong resistance from the opposition and parts of the international community, a draft law *On the National Information Service* was formally withdrawn from the legislative process at the time of the summer parliamentary recess. The initial draft law had appeared to reduce the level of parliamentary oversight and expanded Government oversight over the Service. Another concern was that the draft would have given the National Information Service responsibilities in the field of policing. According to the Government, all these concerns have now been accommodated in the latest draft currently on the floor of the Assembly. The Presence is hoping to receive a copy of the draft in order to confirm the extent to which problematic areas have been addressed. This example illustrates the overall situation of the legislative drafting process in Albania. Albania has committed itself in its National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013 to conduct “more intensive consultation at the early phase of the legislative process” and to prepare “analyses of policy options prior to the proposal of new laws”. We see it as a positive sign that such a commitment has been made. However, as the aforementioned has shown, further work remains to be done.

On human rights, the year has seen a number of highly positive developments. In February 2010, the Assembly approved the *Law on Protection from Discrimination* and in May 2010 the

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, was formally sworn in. The Law offers protection to a wide range of persons who may be subject to discrimination. The institution, however, has not yet received sufficient government funds to operate at full capacity. Late 2009 saw the opening of the new pre-trial detention site in Durrës, which has markedly improved living standards, and the opening of the long-awaited special institution for juveniles in Kavaja. The previous overpopulation in prisons continues to decline, largely due to the establishment of the new probation system. The Council of Ministers approved amendments to General Regulation of Prisons that aim at giving further tools for prison officials to effectively manage. There is a need to revise these amendments in order to protect the human rights of people in detention. In February 2010, the mandate of the People's Advocate expired. In order to elect a new People's Advocate, a qualified parliamentary majority is needed. While the institution continues to broadly function well, the urgent need to elect a new People's Advocate remains. The past year appears to have seen a reduction in the level of complaints for unjustified dismissals in the public administration. However, allegations of dismissals for reasons of opposition activism by family members of administration staff persist. Of the large numbers of public administration officials who were found by courts and administrative bodies to have been unjustly dismissed, at most a small handful has been accommodated with suitable employment.

On minorities, the picture is positive but with some challenges that need to be addressed. While legal framework for the protection of minorities is fully in place, the level of implementation remains mixed. Although current anti-discrimination legislation makes all minorities equal, the state still considers minorities that are not associated with a particular existing state to be in a different category from 'national minorities', which affects primarily Roma, Aromanians and Balkan Egyptians. This has resulted in a degree of differential treatment, particularly with regard to schooling in the mother tongue. Representation of minorities in state institutions remains low. In November 2009, the government passed legislation to improve the registration process for new births and individuals in the Roma community. While the Government should be commended for approving a *National Strategy*, as part of its Roma Decade Initiative, it is important that such commitments as provided for in the Strategy are implemented.

In fighting the trafficking of human beings, major improvements have been seen in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking. The Government implemented its National Referral Mechanism and held meetings with relevant partners to improve its functioning. While human trafficking to western European countries has significantly decreased, internal trafficking, in the forms of exploitation of child labour and sexual exploitation of women, remain a concern. The Government has publicly recognised this trend and has shown a clear public resolve to investigate ways of increasing cross-border co-operation and improving return procedures. The Government has continued to show a commitment to strengthen co-operation with all partners in terms of prevention. The National Co-ordinator's office continued to manage regional anti-trafficking working groups comprised of relevant partners, although these groups reportedly do not always address trafficking cases brought to their attention. The Government continued to fund the national toll-free 24-hour hotline for victims and potential victims of trafficking, and to track and analyze trafficking trends through a nationwide database. In March 2010, a new law was adopted that allows state funding to the shelters for trafficking victims. This law is a progressive step in providing sustainable support to the shelters and their beneficiaries.

The fight against corruption remains a major national priority and improvements have been made to anti-corruption legislation. In March 2010, it was positive to see an updated Action Plan for the Cross Sector Strategy for Preventing and Combating Corruption and Transparent Government being approved. However, problems remain with the reporting mechanisms from line ministries, and a lack of compliance and harmonisation among them remains a challenge. Major progress was made by the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets (HIDAA) in exposing conflict of interest cases and enforcing asset declaration requirements. The last year has seen a rise in the successful prosecution of junior and middle ranking officials on corruption charges. Efforts to pursue senior officials, however, remain more modest with state anti corruption bodies such as HIDAA and the High State Audit criticising the lack of follow up by the Prosecution Office where files have been forwarded to them on senior figures suspected of corruption.

In fighting organized crime and illegal drug cultivation, the increase in co-operation with Interpol, Europol and many bi-lateral police missions in fighting transnational crime has resulted in many criminal operations being closed down. To prevent the cultivation of *cannabis sativa*, police established a permanent presence in the areas where it has historically grown. All cross-border agreements are in place and many joint, cross-border activities are taking place. The Inter-ministerial Maritime Operations Centre is working well in Durres. Boats with illicit materials escaping Albanian waters were effectively intercepted by Italian authorities due to improved communications with the Centre. Internal corruption is being fought and recent arrests indicate that progress is being made. The Internal Control Service has been successful in performing financial inspections, compliance engagements, performance inspections, reporting and non-inspection services provided by external inspection organizations.

On *property reform*, private and public investment and lending will continue to remain hindered until property ownership is guaranteed. The issue is further complicated by a legal framework that is complex, and fails to provide for a unified definition of property ownership. Another concern is the unresolved claims of the former owners for compensation or restitution of property confiscated during the old regime. Bodies representing former owners repeatedly point out that thus far, very few former owners have had their property restituted or received compensation. There is concern that these issues will not be resolved until the Government makes further progress in developing a property reform strategy and identifying obstacles that delay the restitution process. For example, the authority of the agency to review decisions is the subject to on-going debate that has slowed the process. This issue is still unsettled; the President recently rejected amendments to the law on this issue. In the absence of such a strategy, co-ordination between the relevant ministries and agencies remains modest, causing inefficiency and often duplication of effort. The lack of an apparent strategic framework has resulted in poor planning and the insufficient allocation of budget resources to ensure that property laws are implemented.

On *decentralization*, a less politicized dialogue is needed among central and local government in order to foster a clearer framework. The process itself often appears disjointed and lacking in transparency as the Government's approach currently lacks clarity regarding the desired structure of local and regional government. The provision of financial resources to local government has not kept pace with their expanded scope of responsibility and authorities for public service provision. The 2009 amendments to the Law on Local Taxes appear to conflict with the Law on the Organization and Functioning of Local Government that grants local government the right to establish fees in connection with the cost of service provision. New legislation in areas such as

territorial planning, construction inspection and water supplies further challenged the principles of local decision making. The role of local government associations as advocates for common local interests also needs to be strengthened in order for them to achieve their considerable potential. The distributions of funds to the local authorities is also often less objective, meaning municipalities ruled by majors of the opposition are less favoured especially with regard to the so-called competitive grants which are allocated in competition on top of the standard grants.

On *environmental* governance, the Government can count upon a solid body of successful work over the last year. A range of EU legislation was adopted aimed at strengthening environmental protection and facilitating the achievement of national targets for clean energy production and waste recycling. A Government Task Force was established on waste management together with the adoption of a National Waste Strategy and Action Plan to help preserve a clean environment and protect fragile eco-systems in areas designated for tourism. A National Environmental Agency is intended to develop capacities for monitoring standards together with a National Environmental Inspectorate to bolster regulation enforcement in areas including water and forestry. However, further efforts now need to be seen to further ensure compliance with international conventions, such as the Aarhus Convention and EU Directives, including Environmental Impact Assessments.

On *the media*, the financial resources and transparency in the media market continue to be a concern. It appears that the most influential media outlets are increasingly being concentrated among a small number of owners. There is no legal requirement limiting the market share of one media outlet or group in order to safeguard pluralism. There is, however, a clause limiting the ownership of one national TV station to 40%, but this clause has been repeatedly disregarded. Only a minority of broadcasters publicly declare their annual financial balances to the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT), despite a legal requirement to do so. The source of funding of most media remains unclear. The lack of solidarity among the media sector impacts media ability to hold their own against the business and political pressure and has also an impact on working conditions of journalists. Many journalists work without formal contracts, no social security and no legal status. This and the concentration of ownership hamper objective and impartial news reporting. For the latter there is room for the role of the public service broadcaster to be further strengthened. A reform of the libel law has never gone beyond its draft status since 2007. After verified cases of libel charges by state against journalists had been absent during the reporting period, the issue came back on the agenda. In a highly publicised case, the courts ruled that a TV station should pay 400,000 Euros in damages to a former minister. The media exposed via candid camera, the minister of asking sexual favours to a female job applicant, after which he resigned but went to court. Overall, the legal insecurity over the definition of libel and the scope of the law continues and there is no legal protection of journalists against unjustified libel claims.

A draft law *On audio and/or video services in Republic of Albania* is being worked on in a working group, but since April 2009 no publicly accessible consideration in the Assembly Media Committee has taken place. As the Assembly committed itself to a work plan back in 2007, current progress can be described as modest. The Government decided to introduce digital television and take analogue broadcasters off the air by December 2012 and a digitalization strategy was drafted by the NCRT in 2008. Accepting that the draft document was a positive beginning, the OSCE Office of the Representative for the Freedom of the Media has commented that the said document was still incomplete. Yet now it is understood that the document is now

being described as a 'final document' by the NCRT and the Government even though the latter has yet to establish the criteria for television outlets to meet in order to be considered as digital broadcasters. Following OSCE recommendations, a platform working group to supervise the implementation of digitalisation bringing together key ministries, NCRT, RTSH together was established in April and met once.

On gender, the issue of equality of opportunity between the sexes is an integral part of a sustainable democracy. The policy aim of any Country with modern integration aspirations must be to provide equal opportunities for women and men and to integrate gender equality in policies and practices. Although the 2008 Gender Equality Law paved the way to mainstream gender into all areas of public and social policy, the current mechanisms in place to implement the law remain more moderate, with the institutionalization of the gender focal points in line ministries and local government still needing to be categorized as 'work in progress'. The National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence and Action Plan provides at least a good opportunity for Government agencies to ensure a more holistic cross sectoral approach to advancing gender equality. This Strategy is set to end in December 2010, with the Government having already launched a participatory evaluation process of the Strategy. It would be a positive step if the Government can utilize such a process in order that the new strategy can be more successful in setting a policy framework. 2011 will again be an important year in terms of pushing the gender equality agenda given that local government elections are due in mid year.

On civil society, the Government should be commended for passing of the Charter of Civil Society, acknowledging the role of civil society. However, the Charter pre-dominantly describes civil society as a 'service partner' to the government. Such an approach needs careful handling in order to retain public confidence. This year saw the Assembly also approve the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Civil Society Support Agency. The Agency has established itself physically in a Government-provided building and started a round of consultation with civil society to specify its mode of operating. However, the Agency has held only one board meeting; a work plan has not yet been established. It would be a further positive sign if the State Budget contained a line for civil society, as it did the two years ago, provided that these funds are allocated in a transparent manner. Civil society actors have furthermore expressed concern over a another new law on financial inspection, which grants access to the premises and files of any NGO which receives any kind of donor money allegedly without any pre-condition or safeguards against abuse. This issue has our continued attention.

The reporting period saw the Albanian Foreign Minister I. Meta, make continuous and, indeed, major efforts to foster even stronger relations with all countries of the region in order to maintain and further strengthen regional co-operation and stability."

PRESENCE ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Rule of Law and Human Rights

Further support was provided to the legislative and judicial reform process in order to develop transparent legal structures and a sound legislative process. *On judicial reform*, in order to help develop fair trial standards in civil proceedings, and in preparation of the final report on how to improve accountability and transparency of civil proceedings, a survey was conducted on access

to five district courts as well as assessments of civil proceedings. The Presence has also continued its observation of trials in civil cases, expanding its assessment area to include courts outside the capital. The Presence also participated in discussions of draft amendments to the Law on Dispute Resolution through Mediation.

On legislative support, support was provided in drafting the Law on Protection from Discrimination, and secondary legislation governing the functioning of the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination. The Presence participated in an *ad hoc* Advisory Group established by the Ministry of Integration to work on the draft Strategy for Intellectual and Industrial Property Rights 2010-2015. Written comments were provided on proposed amendments to the Criminal Code dealing with protection of industrial property rights and corruption, on the draft laws on Administrative Courts, and on Inspection of Constructions. Upon request of the Government, support was provided assistance in drafting or amending legislation, including revisions in the Law on judicial police. A public report was produced analyzing the situation of children who commit crimes but are under the age of criminal responsibility.

On administrative reform, The Presence chaired a working group to discuss the training needs of professionals working with offenders in order to develop a Master's Degree programme. Seminars were organized for judges and prosecutors on the use of community sentencing and the role of probation services. A manual on the work of the Probation Service for judges and prosecutors was published. Training was organized for probation officers to develop an effective probation practice. A seminar was organized on substance misuse and the modalities of psychosocial interventions for the Probation Service. A manual was published and seminars held for police dealing with children as victims, witnesses or perpetrators. Training was provided for local government officials to prevent the improper application of civil service legislation, and to prison officials addressing prisoner's rights, and the legal requirements of documentation for prison officials. Police cells were also provided with boards containing the rights of detained and escorted persons in order for the police to better perform their role.

2. Democratization

Programmatic activity over the last year continued to focus on electoral reform, civil registry reform, Assembly capacity-building, gender equality, civil society and the media. *On electoral reform*, support continued to be provided in building institutional capacities. A study visit was organized to the UK for a delegation composed of political party and CEC representatives to follow parliamentary and local government elections held in May 2010. A CEC delegation was supported to the 6th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies held in The Hague. A study visit was organized to Croatia to observe presidential elections to assist the CEC to become further networked with its foreign counterparts. The CEC was assisted in convening the inaugural meeting of an election commissioner's forum in order to come up with suggestions on how to improve the technical aspects of election administration.

On civil registry reform, the focus was placed on the sustainability and data quality management aspects that will contribute to the quality of voter' lists for the next local government elections. Staff training on central level was provided as well as management tools implemented that will improve service delivery, control costs and mitigate risks regarding the functioning of the National Register of Civil Registration. Work also continued on the address system to create a

National Register of Address. A GIS Address Database was introduced containing digital maps of local government units, the base material for the NRA. The final NRA will be connected to the NRCS in order for there to be the proper residence registration of citizens.

On support to the Assembly, the Administrative Service was assisted in drafting a set of revised job descriptions. Management training courses were facilitated, seminars for IT staff on the latest IT applications continued to support the installation of an IT network, which resulted in a new database. In co-operation with OSCE missions in the region, a meeting was organised for Assembly Secretary Generals to discuss *E-parliament*. This was followed up by training for the management structures on planning and internal budgeting. In co-operation with ODIHR, a legislative assessment was prepared. Support was provided in the preparations for an Assembly communications strategy. Support was provided the Assembly National Security Committee in drafting of a bill on parliamentary oversight of the intelligence services.

On the media, in order to facilitate the transparent implementation of digitalization strategy in Albania, an OSCE/ODIHR expert provided support the NCRT in helping in developing the legal provisions required by the process of television digitalization. The Presence organized a national conference on media independence and media ethics. Support was provided in the development of the Albanian Media Club – the first media self-regulatory body in Albania. The Media Club has so far 12 media outlets as signatories. The founding members were sent to Romania, to meet the representatives of Romanian Press Council to discuss the process of implementing the digitalization strategy with Romanian National Council for Radio and Television, as well to meet the local media associations to explore how to defend their interests in collective manner.

On gender, in assisting the Government to implement the legal framework for gender equality and the National Strategy on Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence, and in lieu also of upcoming local government elections in mid 2011, a project focused on increasing women's participation in public life. Leadership and advocacy forums were delivered to increase the visibility of locally elected women officials, NGO leaders and public administration officials. A national conference on gender stereotypes provided exchange of experiences on gender stereotypes. The Equal Opportunities Policies Directorate was also assisted in implementing the Law on Gender Equality in Society and the National Strategy. A visit was organized for the Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to Vienna to meet with gender experts. The Presence continued to financially support the Kukës Women Counselling Centre.

On civil society, the Korça Civil Society Development Centre and Korça Municipality were supported in piloting a new instrument for supporting civil society: The Civil Society Development Fund in the framework of the project Municipal Civil Society Support Fund. In 2009, the Fund supported 14 activities. A national conference for civil society representatives was also organized, focusing on the future of civil society.

3. Governance in Economic and Environmental Issues

The focus this year was placed on anti corruption, municipal good governance and regional reform, property reform, and anti-trafficking. *In the fight against human trafficking*, the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator was supported in assessing anti-trafficking legislation in relation to the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention. Workshops with Regional Anti-Trafficking

Committees and Child Protection Units (CPU) continued. The ODIHR-supported project helped increase the access of trafficking victims and/or persons at risk of being trafficked to the justice system by providing free legal support. Training was held for practitioners on the rights of trafficking victims and the right to compensation to develop rights-based victim protection mechanisms. The creation of a CPU in Vlora helped contribute to the identification and referral of children and families vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. A project also focused on developing women's economic opportunities in Northern Albania.

On *property reform*, to assist in resolving the outstanding claims for restitution or compensation, the Property Restitution and Compensation Agency is being provided technical assistance to increase its ability to use IT support previously provided to manage its claims data. As concluding the registration process and the issuance of clear ownership titles are pre-requisites for sustainable economic development, the Immovable Property Registration Office will be assisted until the end of 2011 in completing the registration of coastal immovable property.

On *fighting corruption*, in co-operation with the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets, line ministry officials and other key state bodies received training regarding their obligations under Preventing Conflict of Interest legislation. The Presence worked with civil society to encourage more effective engagement with state anti corruption mechanisms and local government affairs, and to increase greater transparency and accountability.

On *decentralization* assistance was provided to local government units for the management of local public properties and assets in order to expand financial resources to fund and improve local services. Co-operation continued with the Council of Europe in the implementation of local government projects related to inter-Municipal Cooperation and Human Resources Development. Two local government units were assisted in building capacities for effective public property management and a practical guide reflecting best practices were developed and delivered to local governments to serve as a 'blueprint' in establishing public land management.

On *environmental security* support continued to the Government on compliance with public participation obligations in planning processes. Training was delivered to public officials, the private sector, civil society and local communities on the Aarhus Convention and EU Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment. The Aarhus Information Centres facilitated dialogue between state and non-state actors on issues of local concern including deforestation, illegal fishing, and waste management. Participation in the Aarhus Working Group was broadened to include ministries dealing with public works, the economy and tourism together with NGOs.

4. Security Co-operation

Since October 2008, technical assistance continued to be provided to the State Police, Border and Migration Police as well as to the Ministry of Defence. *On support to the police*, advanced police instructors training saw the training of additional police in advanced teaching methodologies. Second language training was completed for the Border and Migration Police. Defensive tactics training was conducted as a *train-the-trainer* course for national police instructors. To support the implementation of the Government's community policing strategy, roundtables were organized for the police, Prefects, educational institutions and civil society. To support the Criminal Investigation Department, equipment and training were provided on covert policing management. A programme was organized to develop shooting ranges in police directorates. To increase the

capacity of the Internal Control Service, investigators were trained in investigation techniques. To assist the State Police in crowd control operations, seven police officers received training in Germany. The police were also helped with increasing the number of women police.

On support to the demilitarisation process, the Ministry of Defence were supported to rid the country of surplus conventional ammunition by providing industrial, hydro-abrasive band saws. These band saws are now cutting in-half large calibre ammunition so that the explosives can be removed. The largest calibre is now finished, 160mm mortar, 3,400 tonnes are now disposed of. The Ministry has 400 tonnes of out-of-date or obsolete chemicals in its inventory and thus are being assisted to dispose of this chemical. All 110 tonnes of dichloroethane, the Ministry's main priority chemical to be disposed of, has now been incinerated and no longer exists.

E.o.T.
31 August 2010