

OSCE Regional Conference
“Preventive measures and enforcing the law: building resilience to corruption in South East Europe”
10-11 February 2020

Closing Remarks by
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- Dear Ambassador Koja, members of the OSCE Field Operations in the region, representatives of the OSCE Secretariat and of the Albanian Chairmanship, representatives of the institutions, of the judiciary, of law enforcement agencies, of civil society, distinguished guests,
- Before I begin my concluding remarks, I would like to thank the OSCE Mission to Skopje and Ambassador Koja for organizing this Regional Conference and for their generous hospitality.
- Over 70 participants from virtually the whole South East Europe gathered here for this two-days event. The event was full of rich presentations and good discussions and has brought together an impressive array of expertise and knowledge on anti-corruption, contributing to building bridges across OSCE Field Operations and their selected partners from the region.
- One would say that it is not an easy task to condense in a few minutes yesterday and today, but I will try to take up the challenge sharing with you my reflections.
- **Preventing corruption is a fundamental effort needed across the whole region.** We need to strengthen firewalls against corruption, in a way that fosters higher trust of citizens in their institutions and helps the very same institutions to attain an increased level of good reputation. Reputation is hard to gain and easy to lose, but it is an intangible asset if we want to nurture democratic institutions based on good governance principles. I took note of your discussion about inclusiveness of processes to draft and implement strategies, regulations and policies in the area of anti-corruption and conflict of interest to ensure full national ownership. I also share your conclusions about the overarching requirement for a strong political will to fully endorse, implement and enforce anti-corruption policies.
- **Effective and dynamic anti-corruption agencies play an essential role in preventing and combating corruption.** While they are diverse in their compositions, competences and structures, they all pursue the very same goal. In this regard, I am glad to note that participants recognised that support from regional and international organizations is still useful and needed to continue building capacity at both inter and intra institutional level.
- **An independent judiciary is a prerequisite to combat corruption in an effective way.** Strengthening of rule of law and of the anti-corruption chain requires a deeper and more sophisticated prosecution-police cooperation and coordination, including increasing technical skills and equipment, mutually reinforcing each other to effectively tackle this phenomenon. In your discussions you highlighted that digitalisation offers both challenges and opportunities to fight corruption due to new ways for money laundering, calling for a stronger use of digital forensics, as well as adequate information technology and digital tools.

- **Building more independent, stronger, and resilient judicial institutions represents a long-term endeavour across the region.** More must be done to show a track record of investigating, prosecuting, and trying high level corruption cases. We have heard about **establishing a track-record capacity reinforcing the administration of justice across the region through trial monitoring; I believe it is a commendable initiative.** The OSCE has been and will continue to be at the center of trial monitoring, providing recommendations to all involved institutions, and fostering effective and impartial justice systems. I cannot but encourage all actors to move forward with the final preparations for this regional project, to systematically improve the criminal justice system.
- In this room we all know that the costs that we pay in terms of collective security are high, as **corruption fuels instability.** Organised crime flourishes in that environment, discouraging society to believe in good governance. We have heard about the importance of regional cooperation in asset seizure, confiscation management and re-use and the importance to promote further cross-border co-operation in this regard. I took also note of your conclusions about the importance of international or sub-regional treaties and agreements as a driver to foster an increased level of information sharing and facilitate cross-border investigations.
- **To the civil society representatives in this room, thank you for the vital role you play in detecting and combating corruption.** We should continue to foster openness to scrutiny and have civil society acting as a multiplier to hold those in power accountable. There can be no real progress in increasing accountability and transparency without a reinforced collective joint effort between governments and civil society organizations. We have heard the importance of regional networking among CSOs and I am pleased to notice an increased attention to such joint endeavours. I took note that in your discussions you all agreed about the fact that civil society has a key role to monitor and advise on the development and implementation of anti-corruption policies, contributing to be a watchdog over and provide expertise to institutions.

Thank you.