

**Helsinki Commission Hearing on:  
Democracy in Albania: the Pace of Progress  
Monday, May 6, 2013**

**Opening Statement of Representative Robert B. Aderholt, Commissioner**

I welcome this opportunity to focus on Albania as it prepares to hold parliamentary elections.

Having visited Albania many times, I know the country has tremendous potential. The progress they have made leading to membership in NATO is an indication of that potential.

At various levels both in the government and in the opposition, there are talented minds in Albania who do want the country to continue to move forward as it has in the past. They often share our frustration that there is not greater progress today, particularly as it relates to EU membership. They want to see Albania stable, integrated and prosperous.

I also want to mention that I currently serve as a Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and my friend and colleague from Slovenia, Mr. Roberto Battelli, will lead the OSCE Election Observation effort in Albania. The OSCE, both the Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, take this election very seriously, and I truly hope they can say, when the process is over, that these elections were conducted in a free and fair manner.

Our job today is to encourage that outcome, and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

Thank you.

