

**Statement by Ambassador Fatos Tarifa  
To the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
United States Helsinki Commission  
Hearing  
Advancing Democracy in Albania  
July 20, 2004**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress and your staff, colleagues and friends;

I am honored by my country to be here as Ambassador of Albania to the United States, and to have this chance to thank you and America for your abiding interest in us and in the growth of our modern democracy.

We experience, again and again, that America's support for modern Albania is constant and sincere. We find it in our every encounter with the people of the United States, all the way through to our repeated encounters with the President of the United States – most recently three weeks ago in Istanbul.

We find it every day in our working relationships throughout your government and this Congress.

And we find it every day in the places where democracy needs her champions: in Iraq, in Afghanistan and in Bosnia, where Albanian troops proudly serve – at this moment in each of those places – alongside American troops; a free and democratic Albania finally able to be the ally to you that you are to us.

Mr. Chairman: You know that we are barely 12 years out of a dictatorship so severe and so punitive that it is nearly impossible to describe to an outsider. It was communism and worse, if there is such a thing. It froze us in time. Walled out information. There was no freedom of the press. There was no freedom. There was no press.

Communism is now long gone. The Albanian people hunger for democracy and freedom. Our people are strong, and smart and clearly willing to sacrifice. They are approachable, friendly and outspoken. They are anything but silent. And now we are also this: We are free.

Mr. Chairman: Is democracy in Albania succeeding? The answer is: YES. Does it need improvement? The answer is: YES

Democracy in Albania is irreversible and irrepressible. And we in Albania know this better than

anyone could ever say it for us.

We have also come to know one other fundamental principle of every democracy:

Every day we must renew it.

Every day we must defend it.

Every day, we must improve it.

We have heard many different views about Albania today, Mr. Chairman. But the most important thing that we've heard today is this: These voices we heard speaking to you, they are the very sound of democracy in Albania.

Mr. Chairman, it took us so long to get democracy in Albania and at such incredible cost. But, I can promise you this on behalf of Albania: We will keep our democracy and we will work to improve it.

Albania has grown remarkably, even exponentially in the last few years. There are a number of accomplishments that most of the world doesn't yet know that Albania has achieved. They show how hard we are working and how much we have done and they are significant indicators of our democratic development and how serious we are about success.

After some of the observations that we have heard today, mine might sound too sunny and rosy. But what I am going to tell you is all true and well documented.

I offer these as balance and context for a full picture of 21st century Albania, of a democracy serious about its transition and consolidation, so that, after this, when you next think about Albania, you will remember these things as well.

Mr. Chairman, the progress of Albania in recent years is extensive and there is a wide array of truly interesting details in almost any category you could pursue. Therefore I ask if I may submit for the record two documents that the Government of Albania has compiled within the last year. These reports were written specifically to better inform our bilateral relationships with the United States.

One is "The Government of Albania Accomplishments and Reforms, 2003". The other is the 2003-2004 "Submission by the Government of Albania to the Millennium Challenge Account."

These are fact-driven reports. The data originates from the Albanian government and also from the numerous international entities that are involved with the development of Albania.

And today we proudly offer it also to you and your colleagues. We offer both reports and hope that you would find the time to see what a young democracy can actually do, with a little help from its friends.

And how far we have come, shows how far we can go.

The Albanian reality is this: In barely twelve years, starting with absolutely nothing but determination, Albania has built by hand a democracy, stone by stone, brick by brick.

- Every single activity of modern society that requires freedom of speech and freedom of thought and freedom of press, from the classroom to the newsroom to the boardroom, had to be learned by Albanians from the ground up. All of the old rules were thrown out, because every old rule was about repression;
- We had to write the laws of freedom: We had to write hundreds of brand new laws and then we had to send back and revise hundreds more once we found that the originals needed to be toughened up;
- Most importantly, after generations of that punitive police state, our citizens have had to learn that the courts are now their “friends” and that the police are now their “friends” when for a century, the exact opposite was true.
- And this as, at the same time, the police and the courts have had to learn what it takes so that they truly do become the protectors of the people, and the protectors of the law.
- We had to learn – and are still learning – to live with a free press.

We wrote a new constitution, and then had to learn to trust it. And then had to learn to live it, as did, long ago, a very young United States.

## **ECONOMY**

For democracy to flourish, it must root in a stable society with a stable economy. Albania is building both, and both show signs that they will thrive. The facts prove this.

There are the subtle signals our economy sends in every day life now in Albania. And Albania is pushing forward on every front:

- We see the new office towers rising in Tirana;

- Where a few years ago it was “hundreds”, today one sees hundreds-of-thousands of cell phones attached endlessly to Albanian ears;
- There are also days now when, even to our surprise, one cannot find an available seat on any flight into Tirana from Europe’s commercial capitals.
- We are constructing highways, improving railroads and installing a nationwide air traffic control system that is state-of-the-art;
- We are reassigning budgetary priorities in the schools to invest more in the students’ heads than in overhead;
- Albanian children continue to be vaccinated and immunized at a rate closing in on 100%;
- We are computerizing government records;

And there are the more quantifiable indicators. In the Albanian economy, every measurable category is UP, and staying UP:

Allow me please to repeat: Every trend line is up, and they do not reverse:

We are meeting or exceeding our goals in critical areas, year after year:

- Albanian productivity is consistently rising;
- For years, we have held the rate of inflation at, or below, its target;
- For years, per capita income has risen;
- For years, GDP has risen at, or above, target growth rates;
- And steadily over years, government spending meets its targets matched with a steady increase in collection of customs duty and tax revenue.

Also for years, investment in Albania is rising and development by Albanians is rising:

- The ancient rusting industries that failed when they were state-owned, now are being modernized, streamlined and privatized;
- In multiple business areas, there are now multiple competitors especially in construction, financial services and wireless communications;
- ATM machines are appearing along with private banks behind them, as Albanians begin, in increasing numbers, to do something else that is completely against their experience: Trust their money again, to a bank.

And Albania is proud that the World Bank, year after year now at Board of Directors level, has renewed its poverty reduction loans to Albania, based on Albania’s good performance.

## **PROPERTY LAW**

All countries that suffered political repression, including Albania, are faced now with untangling decades of complications over property rights, when property was seized for political reasons and records disappeared. It holds up the economy when there is no clarity in property ownership nor credibility of titles. We are now very close to completing, with years of work and OSCE assistance, enactment of a new and correct Property Law to untangle decades of conflict that lets smart growth flourish.

And Albania is now signatory to every major international convention protecting intellectual property rights. Albania is neither in the Priority Foreign Country List, nor the Priority Watch List or the Watch List of the 2004 Special 301 Report on Intellectual Property of the U.S. Trade Representative Office.

## **REVERSE MIGRATION**

And so importantly to us, we are beginning to see this: Albanians coming home. After the totalitarian years when people dreamed of getting out, and the first fragile years of freedom when they flooded out, we are beginning to see that wound staunch. The evidence is anecdotal but beginning to reflect statistically. We are beginning to see Albanian émigrés come HOME ... to an Albania that is already vastly improved.

A decade ago, Albania was at the bottom of every category on everyone's list, but that is changing and it is all about genuine and marked improvement.

By our own hard work and the extraordinary help of our extraordinary friends, we are rising – on nearly every “list” of consequence. Albania can now be found rising firmly to the midway points in the rankings of the nearly two hundred nations in the world.

Within this last week, the United Nations released its 2004 Human Development Report. It ranks the countries of the world on quality of life of their people,

If they expect to live a long and healthy life;

If they are educated;

If they have a decent standard of living.

On this year's UNDP Report released last Thursday, we found that:

On the overall index, when all categories are taken into account:

Albania is nearly at the top third of all countries.

On the conditions that allow development of women's lives:

Albania is clearly in the top third of all nations,

And, on per capita income, the per capita income of an Albanian is now higher than that in nearly half the countries in the rest of the world.

The report shows clearly, for every year from the late-90s on, all of Albania's data, year after year, spike sharply upwards, for the better;

Albania's data, in each year, exceed the comparative median for the world;

And the data show that now, Albania is quickly closing in on the median for all the countries of eastern and central Europe combined.

The data prove that hard work pays off: Over years, there has been only steady movement up and improvement for Albania. This is irreversible.

I would ask, Mr. Chairman, if you would enter into the record, the Country Fact Sheet on Albania from the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report 2004.

## **RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND MINORITY RIGHTS**

There is also another important facet of Albania's modern life that I would present to you proudly: Albania is incontestably a home of Religious freedom and religious tolerance

We are not unmindful that we live in a part of the world where this has been the exception and needs to become the norm, and Albania is proof that it can be the norm.

Albania has always been like this: During World War II, every member of the Jewish faith in Albania was saved from Nazi persecution because Albanians cared and protected them.

Because Albanians believe in the dignity of people and in true religious tolerance. And because we believe it, we live it.

Albania is now a modern secular state and we specifically protect religious freedom in our modern Constitution.

Most of the three and a half million Albanians are Muslim; the rest are primarily Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic. The religion to which an Albanian is born is important of course in the narrative of societal life and this tolerance we practice and enjoy, so little known outside Albania, is a fundamental assumption for all Albanian life.

I would point out to you these phrases in the United States Department of State's most recent International Report on Religious Freedom about Albania's religious pluralism: [In Albania], "There is no official religion and all religions are equal." "Government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion." "Various religious groups are generally amicable"; "Intermarriage is extremely common"; "Tolerance is widespread."

I also ask, Mr. Chairman, if you would insert into the record The Albania Country Report in the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2003".

In our new democracy, we are also legislating to guarantee the rights of minority populations. Albania is home to a number of minorities that are ethno-centric rather than religiously centered. We are passing legislation to protect their rights and creating oversight at senior levels to ensure compliance.

## **ELECTORAL ISSUES**

This is the society we are building, in a nation that now democratically elects its leaders.

Mr. Chairman, one of your topics of focus today is the constant improvement of our process for Albania's elections. That, of course, is a primary mission for the OSCE in general and therefore, a principal focus for my colleague, Ambassador Lipponen, and the OSCE Presence in Albania.

Ambassador Lipponen has relayed to the Committee many of the latest developments.

He has explained that the major political parties in Parliament have agreed to implement recommendations for improvement of elections. The major parties have just signed a protocol stipulating both their agreement and a set timetable that requires improvements to be in place for the elections next year. They have all also reached out beyond their agreement with each other and they have invited all the parliamentary parties to participate in the improvement process.

When that protocol was signed in Tirana, Ambassador Lipponen publicly stated that he saw QUOTE "a strong political commitment" by the two largest political parties "to change the Electoral Code for the next election." He also said, QUOTE, "Things are better than they look."

The Ambassador and your distinguished speakers have covered many of these procedural points thoroughly and eloquently, but, as the official representative today of Albania, I would like to add a bit more, to support that point, that “things are better than they look”.

Since the overthrow of our dictatorship in the early 1990s and with absolutely no prior experience at elections, Albania has held national elections for Parliament five times., we held national elections five times and also held local elections on a nationwide scale five times. We have known some success each time and we have improved the process, every time.

But the most important trend line over all those years is this: No matter what, Albanian democracy has HELD. Because we learned every time.

There have been hot disputes every time and powerful political disagreement every time. And Albanian elections have been held, Albanian governments have held and Albanian democracy has HELD.

We are barely seven years distant from the near fatal financial collapse the world came to call the “Pyramid Schemes”. Our people had their savings stolen by criminals and could not reclaim them. There was panic and rioting, but our young democracy HELD. It was shaken violently, but it HELD.

We are barely five years out of an actual war, the war on our border, the “Kosovo Crisis”. As little as Albania had itself in those lean years, we threw open our borders and the three million of us took in a half-million refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing. We opened our borders to them. And we opened our ports and bases and skies to NATO. And despite the turbulence and violence with a shooting war within earshot, Peace in Albania held, our government held, our democracy HELD.

We have had and we will continue to have times of hot political disagreements. That’s what democracies do.

We have already known times in our young years when parliament was boycotted, preventing any legislative movement, and we have known times when parties have internal leadership fights that are as rough as it gets.

But, each time, resolution was achieved by democratic means. Each time, resolution was achieved within parliamentary rules, or within the constitution and within the law. Each time, governments stayed in place correctly, or transitions were legal and peaceful. EACH TIME, democracy HELD.



We are stronger and more sure every day. What happened in the Albanian streets seven years ago, is not only unacceptable now, it is unthinkable now.

In Albania, peaceful protests are now legal, of course, and they do occur peacefully. But one instance last winter, a legitimate protest briefly turned violent. Even when those who would cause harm tried violence, our new democracy showed itself: The Albanian police stepped in quickly with their new training, new supervision, and new rules. The police shut down the violence in a professional way that was a success: The police received public praise, within a matter of hours, from the European Union and, from the United States.

The local elections that were held all across Albania last October showed us where we need improvement, but they also showed where we have already improved:

These elections were conducted for the first time, within an efficient and more transparent one day cycle, rather than drifting over two-to-three days of previous cycles.

These elections saw, for the first time in Albanian history, face to face public debate between the leaders of the major parties. Televised, broadcast on radio, conducted in public and unprecedented.

The campaign was conducted over weeks with large public participation. There were scores of public rallies, speeches and parades, all over Albania: They were colorful, lively, partisan and peaceful. To Americans, they would look like normal and routine campaign events, and “no big deal”. For us: “No big deal” is the “big deal”.

## **FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND ORGANIZED CRIME**

Clearly, Democracy has a home in Albania. Let me make this just as clear: Corruption does NOT.

To talk about democracy in Albania, it is imperative to talk openly about the battle we are fighting fiercely against corruption in all of its forms.

“CORRUPTION”. I too will say the word and look it straight in the face, as does every Albanian determined to fight it and DEFEAT it.

Albania didn't invent corruption, and we don't hold a copyright on it. But we do share a historic

twist that has been visited onto every country that rushed into their democratic transition in the last decade. When the tyrants were toppled so rapidly, for a terrible moment an ungoverned space arced between dictatorship and democracy. Before laws could be rewritten or the police could be reformed, the criminals rushed in.

And we do not accept that. Corruption is not “fate”; it is an enemy. We fight to prevent corruption, prosecute corruption and punish corruption.

Fighting corruption is as central to our survival as a democratic society and to our success as a nation, that it is the highest priority of this government.

I refer you please, Mr. Chairman, to the two large reports by the Government of Albania that I have brought with me today. They include enormous detail of the progress we have made in our anti-corruption fight as well as the steps in which we are currently engaged. There are solid achievements in our fight against corruption and anti-corruption activity has accelerated exponentially in recent years:

Allow me to highlight just a few elements:

- The fight against corruption is now coordinated directly out of the office of the Prime Minister at minister-level itself;
- New offices combine inter-departmental disciplines for the first time in Albanian government with, for example, special detectives working alongside prosecutors who are dedicated to the anti corruption fight;
- Until recently, our intelligence and police services were forbidden by law from having any contact whatsoever with any foreign national; but now, we have changed all those laws, and now our newly trained police and intelligence professionals work closely with their international counterparts:

Now they can work constantly with our neighboring countries to tighten our lengthy borders;

They work constantly with our NATO partner countries on international crime fighting operations and intelligence sharing;

Now Albania is a contributor in the international fight against trafficking and terrorism and corruption.

- Within the last year, for the first time ever, the Albanian police mounted an undercover sting operation within their own department and arrested their own;

- We have doubled the number of corruption convictions of public officials;
- We have enacted a program for long term witness protection;
- We have created a new code of conduct for judges and enforcement behind it;
- We have created tougher enforcement for the full financial disclosure already required of every Albanian public official;
- And we have, by enacting new laws, toughened Albania's criminal penalties to bring them up to European standards;
- We have outlawed all forms of money laundering, improved confiscation of criminal assets up to European standards and established a Financial Intelligence Unit aiming to prevent and combat money laundering.

All this, within the last few years, in Albania.

## **FREEDOM OF PRESS**

Mr. Chairman: You also ask about the current status of media and journalism in Albania. There is great concern, shared by this government and the people of Albania, about media now, particularly about the mysteries of how and by whom, many new start-up media in Albania are funded.

The concern has been expressed by a number of international organizations. But it is being acted on forcefully by the Government of Albania.

This government is undertaking initiatives to enact appropriate mechanisms to make sure that media in Albania are completely free while the business dealings behind them are completely transparent. Albania now needs the legal mechanisms that other democracies already have to ensure that journalists have freedom from all pressures, including the pressures of who is paying them, and why. And that the public can be completely aware of who it is actually that brings them the news.

A decade ago, the few media in the newly free Albania were merely remnants of Communist party mouthpieces. We had no tradition or models on which to build; we certainly had no

independent mountain of money with which to construct our new free media. Some new media appeared, but in those first years after the totalitarians were ejected, before democracy began to be institutionalized, there was a vacuum within which private media created themselves.

By the mid-90s, anyone with the money could start a newspaper or radio or TV outlet in Albania. We seemed to travel from one extreme of suppression of speech to the other extreme of no regulation at all. Like in the early years of the formation of the United States, we too have a press that rejoices in its new found freedom of expression – sometimes in the extreme. Like your country back then, our press is partisan and oriented in party politics. It relishes gossip and personal character assassination. It hides its ownership. We hope that eventually in time our press will mature and grow and become more like the media in the United States – responsible, objective, disinterested and constantly in search of the truth. Democracy needs a free press. Democracy needs a responsible press. We are determined that our press will be responsible – and free.

Currently there are no guarantees of freedom, no protections from slander, no transparency on media ownership. In the last seven or eight years we have gone from one state-funded TV & Radio outlet to see, now, more than 125 stations, TV and radio, national and local, around Albania.

- Nearly all of them are completely privately funded;
- They are licensed by a national council whose members are appointed by both major political parties;
- The media are required to file annual financial statements for transparency on their funding sources but only a fraction of them do;
- Even on some of those filings, 50% of the sources are listed as “other”.

There is major concern and national debate within the government, the Albanian public, and our international community of friends, about the evils that such an unaccountable system creates: Illegal business deals and tax evasion taking place by those who use a small media outlet as their business “front” for existence.

We all know this must change. And as the Prime Minister himself said recently in Parliament in a speech that was nationally televised, resolving the issue by the highest modern standards is critical to Albania’s goals of European integration.

In our new democracy, no one wanted to be the first in Albania to put a single restriction on free speech. But, as the Prime Minister says, there is a societal and governmental responsibility to guarantee all the freedoms associated with the media in a democracy, whether putting a firewall around freedom of speech, or creating legal redress after wild accusations and defamation, and

also protecting the freedom for truth itself, when the funding behind it involves political strings or illegal activity. No one has the right to cry “fire” in a crowded theater when there is no fire.

After a lifetime of totalitarianism, it takes courage to start acting on laws about freedom of speech. But Albania can see, now that we have full access to other democratic societies, that there is a way to legislate these matters correctly within democratic principles. There is a way to separate freedom of speech from the rules for operating the business side of the media business.

Pressures from the market place and public opinion will render their own verdicts on the quality of media in Albania, of course, but the government is embracing its institutional responsibility to guarantee protections for speech and transparency of business.

To this end, a Parliamentary committee is drafting a new Law on the Freedom of the Press to guarantee freedom and enforce transparency of funding. Its work is described as broad and serious and fully transparent to the public. The public has the right to know who owns the various media outlets that bring them the news.

The draft laws are being designed to raise standards in Albania of transparency and guarantees to the highest European standards.

And the Prime Minister very recently announced another new initiative: He is bringing together, he has announced, the best advice available as Albania writes new guarantees for the media. He has invited international experts to join Albania’s experts to draft a new package of laws to protect the public, and the media itself, from what happens when the protections afforded free speech are abused.

## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Let me finally address the issue of human trafficking, one of the worst scourges throughout the world. It has also been an issue throughout our region.

But, in recent years Albania has taken very strong action against trafficking in humans and there have been clear results.

A report for OSCE and several United Nations agencies issued last November said that the Albanian fight against trafficking “changed dramatically” as of 2002 because of QUOTE “serious initiatives” taken by Albania at that time.

The most serious initiative to which the report referred was strong action by the government of Albania. It had put in place a three-year National Action Plan coordinated at minister level across the country and across the government. It coordinated the police, the courts, our intelligence service and military unit support among multiple Albanian departments. It created effective interaction with international organizations including the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the U.S. Embassy with, as that same report stated, three years of clear goals and priorities.

The first priority in the first year was suppressing traffic and it showed results nearly immediately. As that same report for the OSCE and UN agencies states: QUOTE: “The number of women trafficked out of Albania in the year 2002 is estimated to be very low.”

We trained special anti-trafficking police and deployed them in each regional jurisdiction of Albania. We assigned special resources and personnel to our gateways, our seaports and the airport. As a result, and confirmed by every possible measure and under international scrutiny, since 2002 we and our partners stopped, disrupted and shut down the traffickers’ favorite route by speedboat across the Adriatic.

As the U.S. State Department pointed out this year in its Annual Trafficking in Persons report, Albania achieved more than a momentary halt to speedboat smuggling: QUOTE: “The government continued its prevention of human trafficking by speedboat across the Adriatic”. The State Department report also said this year that in Albania, QUOTE: “Arrests and prosecutions for trafficking-related offenses increased significantly.”

And forceful police activity is having the wider effect that we intended. As the report for the OSCE and UN Agencies details, Albanian police pressure at source points and on smuggling routes has forced criminal traffickers to either abandon trafficking in humans or change to tactics that are more expensive, complicated and less productive for them.

Because of these and other strong actions taken by the Albanian Government over the last several years and continuing as we speak, the United States was able to move Albania up in classification in 2002 and this year in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report. Albania had been in the lowest of groupings but now Albania has moved up into the group of nations that are QUOTE “making significant efforts to comply” with the standards to eliminate trafficking.

We still strive for higher standards and there is more progress: Albania was once clearly a point of easy transit for traffickers who would smuggle their victims from other countries through Albania en route third country destinations.

But that also is now STOPPING: As the State Department said in this year’s Trafficking in Persons Report: “Regional and international experts consider Albania to have significantly

decreased as a transit country to Western Europe”. Albania has worked hard to achieve that progress and earn that sentence. If you should have the opportunity to look in detail at the State Department’s Trafficking in Human Report, you will see listed a number of European countries and other highly developed democracies that are still listed as major transit points for human smuggling, while Albania is getting rid of it.

And, just as unacceptably, we are fighting human traffickers internally. We will never tolerate the theft of our own people. We have started wide reaching public awareness campaigns to a wide range of communities. We are working especially through the schools, the media and through the police, to make our own people understand how dangerous this is, how low these criminals will go, how our people can avoid being kidnapped or fooled, to protect themselves and each other.

There has been a strong commitment in the last two years to take responsibility for the victims of trafficking. The government has established special programs at the police districts, opened special shelters in the most populous districts, and new levels of cooperation between the police and victims’ assistance organizations. And by every account it’s working. We take care of the victims while we hunt down their captors.

For more full and detailed information, I would refer you, please, to two reports from the United States Department of State: “The 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report” and the “International Narcotic Controls Strategy Report, issued in March of 2004”.

And I would also refer you to the “2003 Update” to the report on “ Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe” done for UNICEF, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and for the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE.

And I would refer you also to the websites of the Albanian Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Public Order.

#### CLOSING REMARKS

This is Albania of the early 21st-century. A land of cell phones, boarding passes, start-up business, and a passionate debate over writing the laws that will put our democracy into cement. Every possible measure is positive; every possible trend line is UP.

This is true for the areas about which I have spoken in detail: our national war against corruption and trafficking, our march toward ever better elections, the upward projections that we have earned on all economic trend lines.

We yearned for democracy for so long that, as I said: We are going to get it RIGHT.

It is also true in our international relationships. We grew up on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain but we have found, in these dozen years of our young freedom that the nations of the world were waiting to welcome the modern Albania. On every continent, in so many capitals, we are encouraged, we find friends and we find partners.

Albania today is a country at peace. It is a country already in mature and productive working relationships around the world. We are full members now of multiple international organizations. We are steady on the track of becoming a full member of NATO, with a downsized and upgraded modern military. We are doing all that is needed to eventually become member of the European Union.

We work closely with our neighbors. All borders have two sides. Last March, at a summit of the leaders of the Vilnius-10 Group of modern young democracies, Prime Minister Nano of Albania spoke on a panel alongside the leaders of Serbia-Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. They were the new leaders, of new democracies, in a new century, but this is the reality now, in the place you call “The Balkans”. It is a place of progress, a modern place of only forward-motion and progress.

When I said “Albania has friends among the nations”, I close with this, and we will have America know this: We are more than proud of our friendship and partnership with the United States.

There is a truth that America’s friends know, that made us rush to your side after September 11th: Sometimes now in these worrying tiring days, maybe even America needs to hear it again, from their friends in Albania:

The American story is the inspiration for all of us, who have bled to get democracy into our own countries. With America as our moral compass, Albania says it again: When it comes to democracy – and we are showing you that we can – for our own sake, Albania is going to get this RIGHT.



## APPENDICES TO PUT INTO RECORD

1. "The Government of Albania Accomplishments and Reforms, 2003"
2. "Millennium Challenge Account Submission by the Government of Albania; Policies, Regulations, Legislation and other Actions Affecting MCA Indicators, 2003-2004."
3. The Country Fact Sheet on Albania. From UNDP's Human Development Report 2004 (15 July 2004)  
[http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_ALB.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_ALB.html)
4. The Albania Country Report in the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2003 (most recent)  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24328.htm>
5. The U.S. State Department's 2003 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (issued March 2004)  
<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2003/vol1/html/29838.htm>
6. Country Narrative for Albania in Part IV of the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report of June 2004  
<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33192.htm>