

**Conference on “Building integrity in Albania’s security sector  
through strengthened financial oversight”**

**Tirana, 30 January 2017**

**Statement by Per Strand Sjaastad, Ambassador of Norway**

Members of Parliament, Chairman of State Supreme Audit,  
Director, EU-representative, Colleagues and Guests,

Let me first thank the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) for hosting this important conference on building integrity and fighting corruption in the security sector.

I will take a broad perspective, also going beyond the security sector. Any country that wants progress and to move forward must take rule of law and anti-corruption work very seriously. If not, it is impossible to achieve a true democracy, sound economic development, modernization and a fair society.

The presence of robust laws, rules and regulations against corruption is a good start. Many of these rules are in place in Albania – and the full implementation of the judicial reform will bring Albanian legislation up to European standards.

But strong legislation is not enough. Good and lasting results depend on strong implementation, oversight and enforcement.

The security sector is core in providing safety and basic services to citizens. To work effectively and enjoy trust among those it is set to protect, it must *not* be undermined by corruption and malpractice. Otherwise, it may itself pose a security risk.

There will sometimes be some special needs in the security sector, which implies that common procedures and transparency cannot always be applied. However, normality and international standards must be the objective.

The Nordic countries have been fairly successful in fighting corruption, which also has been reflected in the Transparency International Index for many years (all within top 6). But also we have challenges that need to be addressed – building integrity and fighting corruption is a continuous process that can never stop without risking a backlash.

There are many lessons learned when it comes to fighting corruption, based on experiences through many years of hard work. Let me briefly point to four of them here this morning – not only relevant for the security sector, but in general:

1. The presence of openness and transparency in public institutions and society, in the form of electronic public records, tax records, registry of economic interest, e-government, and so on. The risk of corruption increases if too much power is concentrated on few hands and decisions are made in arenas that are not transparent.
2. The presence of strong and independent “watch-dogs” and institutions, such as the ombudsman office and the state supreme audit institution. Since these institutions normally do not have executive powers, there must be a culture of compliance in public institutions and administration for these oversight institutions to be effective.

3. The presence of strong and responsible media. Several corruption cases in Norway have up through the years been disclosed by the press. At the same time, media must gain credibility by being fact-based and responsible – and not relay rumors and unfounded speculations.
4. The presence of strong interagency coordination. Efficient flow of information is essential. Anti-corruption institutions, law enforcement, and tax, customs and procurement authorities must work together – in order to identify and solve more cases.

Albania has made progress in fighting corruption. These efforts need, however, to be stepped up. All stakeholders must support this process. This is not the least important in the security sector.

The NATO Building Integrity Programme (2012-14) and its “toolkit” provides inspiration for this work, including education, training, capacity building, oversight and enforcement. Further, the IDM project has provided important analysis and policy recommendations. I believe that the recommendations in the report on security budgeting, auditing, procurement and on management of military assets, do provide a good basis for discussion.

Some of these issues are complex, such as within the field of procurement. But one must not let this complexity stand in the way for the obvious room for improvement. Many countries have already been through these changes and can provide valuable experience and lessons learned. I am confident that Albania will succeed in making the necessary transformations, when the necessary dedication is demonstrated on all levels. Norway is ready to assist in this process in any which way we can.