

Reflections following the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform

TIME FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

Tiranë, 15.03.2016. The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy (CFFE) continues to actively monitor the latest developments on the initiation of the electoral reform in Albania.

Although it was not invited in the audience, CFFE welcomed the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform and the start of its work for a comprehensive reform. The principle of comprehensiveness has been continuously highlighted from domestic civil society actors and international partners, who expect commitment from members of the Committee and political parties alike to respect this principle throughout the process of electoral reform.

CFFE calls for the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform to engage as early as possible in consultation processes with civil society and other interested stakeholders and to take into consideration their recommendations for the necessary changes of the Electoral Code. The short period of three months available for the completion of the work of the Committee and the drafting of the electoral reform calls for the organization of these sessions in due time.

CFFE invites the Committee to take into account the fact that a comprehensive reform considers as actors in the process all interested stakeholders in the conduct of elections in Albania and not only the narrow consensus among political parties, in order for the process to be inclusive not only in paper but also in the final product that will be submitted for approval to the Assembly. CFFE considers the broad consultation with civil society actors, international partners, media and citizens as a democratic necessity.

Furthermore, regarding this very important process, CFFE would like to emphasize the need to reflect in the electoral reform the recommendations that came from OSCE/ODIHR, CFFE, the Electoral Chamber, the Helsinki Committee, CDO and other civil society organizations following the 2013 general elections and the 2015 local elections regarding the well-conduct of elections and of processes related to them.

CFFE would like to ask the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform to specifically, but not exhaustively, take into consideration: 1) The completion of the process at least one year prior to the next general elections, as required by international standards; 2) Guaranteeing sustainability and professionalism of the electoral administration in every level, while considering the possibility of a depoliticized electoral administration; 3) Increasing the participation of women in the electoral administration bodies; 4) Regulating the financing of electoral campaigns; 5) Guaranteeing the cleanness of candidates' profiles in elections;



6) Guaranteeing the substantial right to elect and be elected for disadvantaged categories of society such as persons with disabilities, the Roma and Egyptian community, Albanian emigrants living abroad as well as other categories that have been excluded so far; 7) Increasing the participation of women as voters and elected persons by improving gender quotas or by guaranteeing other participatory mechanisms depending on the potential changes of the electoral system; 8) Guaranteeing a fair vote counting process and considering the possibility of counting votes in the voting centers, instead of a centralized process which lacks transparency and credibility.

In addition to the specific recommendations on changes to the Electoral Code, CFFE invites parties to also refer to international standards while designing the electoral reform, in order to ensure inclusiveness and long-term sustainability of electoral rules.

At the end of this statement, CFFE would like to emphasize its readiness to participate in the consultation process and public hearings and to provide its assistance and expertise in reviewing the Electoral Code in regard to elections' administration in general and gender participation in particular, during such an important process for a sustainable democracy in Albania.

The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy (CFFE) is an independent, non-partisan organization established to promote civic participation for sustainable democracy and monitoring of the electoral process. CFFE focuses on issues that influence the upholding of human rights, gender equality and the rights of people with disability. CFFE consists of 30 partner organizations and hundreds of Albanian citizens who volunteer their time to CFFE's efforts and actions since 2013.

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