Check against delivery

Your excellency, Minister …

Ambassadors…

Dear friends and colleagues…

Today marks one month since I took up my new assignment as Sweden’s Ambassador to Albania. I am very pleased to be here, and I would like to thank all of you for the warm welcome of me and my husband Kristoffer. Tirana and Albania already feels like home.

I am equally happy to see so many of you here tonight, at the first sustainable reception in Tirana. The time has passed when we would order food or material from the other side of the globe. The Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has once again reminded us all that we need to change habits and routines, if we want to see a sustainable future.

To me, sustainability is not about great speeches or gestures at big conferences. It is rather about each and every one taking responsibility for our common future. All of us can contribute in our daily life. For instance, as many of you have seen in the social media of the Embassy, I choose locally produced tomatoes over imported crops.

However, sustainability is not only about flying less or eating locally produced vegetables. It is also about fair and just conditions on the labour market, ensuring the fulfillment of the human rights. These are just a few examples and I, together with my staff at the Embassy, will continue raising the issue of sustainability – in all fields of society. This will be one priority during my tenure in Albania.

As you know, Sweden is a long-term supporter of Albania’s development and EU-integration process. Progress has been made and important reforms are ongoing. I grew up in the Soviet Union, so I understand where Albania comes from and I understand that some things might take time to change.

However, Sweden will remain a close partner to this country. As the third biggest bilateral donor to Albania, we have close cooperation in areas such as democracy and human rights, with a focus on supporting civil society organisations and enhancing gender equality.

Tonight, we are opening the doors of the new Swedish residence. This will be a place for meetings, discussions and exchange of ideas. There is an Albanian saying which captures this:

“You should make room for a friend and listen to what he has to say” (Mikut i lëshohet vendi dhe i dëgjohet kuvendi)

I will always do my best to make room for you, our partners, and to listen and discuss. I look forward to working with all of you and I look forward to continuing strengthening the excellent ties between Sweden and Albania, as we this year celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations and 20 years of development cooperation.

Please join me in a toast for the next 50 years of bilateral relations between Sweden and Albania!