

UNECE RPM for Rio+20, Geneva, 1–2 December 2011

Agenda item 5 (panellist)

KEY NOTE ADDRESS OF MR. TAULANT BINO, ALBANIAN DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND WATER ADMINISTRATION

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome the chance to address to you today and at the same time I would like to thank the organisers for this opportunity.

Albania has lately made visible progresses in developing necessary legislative and institutional frameworks, despite the deterioration of environment that was registered in the past decades as a result of a development policy unrelated with environmental concerns. These recent progresses form a solid foundation on which to build a prosperous and successful future. The Government is committed to a programme of environmental improvement as part of a wider political agenda to gain full EU membership for Albania. This involves the implementation of an integrated planning approach to environmental management at a national, regional and local level.

Rapid and sustainable development is the fundamental objective of the Albanian Government. In this respect a significant investment programme has been launched in terms of both human resources and infrastructure in order to support environmental protection and sustainable development initiatives. In achieving development we have to manage and protect Albania's environment and natural resources in an ecologically sustainable manner, consequently promoting environmental values and put them to the benefit of the Albanian society and the country's economic prosperity.

Albania's development recognizes the need for social and environmental sustainability to be embodied in national planning processes. The Government's goal is to continue addressing the population needs as well as the economic

development needs of the country supplying energy from renewable sources at reasonable and affordable price. The national energy sector in Albania provides reliable, environmentally safe, and sustainable energy supply almost exclusively from hydro power plants. In this respect, we have encouraged the exploration and development of all natural resources, which are socially and environmentally acceptable, and the efficient use of energy and energy conservation. The energy policy is not an end in itself, but an instrument that includes policies on climate change adaptation and mitigation, agriculture, industry, health, education, infrastructure, communications and pollution control.

Having a significant potential of renewable energy sources can serve as driver for investments that will reduce carbon emissions and pollution contributing to transformation into a green economy. Solar technology is one of the promising technologies in Albania which can reduce electricity and fuel wood consumption with a significant contribution towards greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Natural resources constitute the foundations of many economies and often constitute the primary source of people's livelihoods. Consequently, natural resources are vitally important for poverty reduction and development and efforts are underway to preserve and protect the nation's assets and to take strong account of environmental values in decision making.

Albania is rich in biological diversity and the Government is putting special attention to its protection. Protected land has increased significantly in recent years – from 3 % of the country's surface area in 2002 to 13.2% in 2010. However, overexploitation and poor management have had significant negative effects on the abundance of this biological wealth. Nevertheless the Government is committed to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity despite being faced with the difficulties of being a transition society.

As already said, lastly and most significantly the Government is committed to a legislative transposition programme to ensure that all of the EU Directives

relevant to the environment are transposed into Albanian law. After all, the main goal of the EU environmental policy is to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of the environment for present and future generations. And this is certainly in line with the concept of “sustainable development” that was launched at the Earth Summit in Rio 20 years ago. It is impressive how much progress has been registered since then, both in terms of legislation, international and regional agreements, practices and policies which promote environmental protection and sustainable development. Countries including Albania should be commended for their efforts and for the measures taken to implement the Rio principles to date.

As global citizens we know that we currently face many imbalances that will eventually correct themselves. However, rather than waiting for painful and imposed changes in the future, it is better to take action now to ensure that economies grow and jobs are created in a way that protect both human beings and the environment. Sustainable development requires a joint effort, cutting across Government Ministries. As Ministries we need to work jointly, and that applies for development partners too who need to support our efforts in a coordinated way. Efforts of joint programming are positive, and I welcome Delivering as One initiatives such as the “Delivering as One UN” that we have in Albania.

The upcoming Rio+20 global conference in June next year presents an excellent opportunity to advocate for and move towards a ‘green economy’, as an important way forward to ensure that human activities do not surpass the regeneration capacity of the planet Earth. The Rio+20 Conference provides a unique opportunity for forward-looking discussions contributing to better implementation and greater integration of sustainable development at all levels and in all countries.

Thank you.