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Environmental Performance Review Programme:

Second Environmental Performance Review of Albania

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Second Environmental Performance Review of Albania: Recommendations

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document provides recommendations of the second Environmental Performance Review of Albania agreed upon by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance at its meeting held in Geneva on 3-5 April 2012.

The Committee is invited to adopt these recommendations.

I. Environmental policy and management

Chapter 1: Policymaking framework for environmental protection and sustainable development

Recommendation 1.1

The Government should ensure that:

- (a) Relevant line ministries establish environmental units or designate environmental officers;
- (b) The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration establishes a unit specialized to the tasks of cooperation with sectoral ministries;
- (c) An Advisory Council on Sustainable Development is set up with broad stakeholder participation to advise the Government on the future development of its sustainable development policy.

Recommendation 1.2

The Government should instruct relevant Ministries and public authorities to establish expert groups providing direct support to inter-ministerial working groups, established by the Government, in the preparation of documents to be discussed, and in the transmission of instructions on further steps to be taken by the ministries and governmental institutions.

Recommendation 1.3

The Government should consider modifying regulations on the content of progress reports on the implementation of environmental related strategies and action plans in order to include analysis and evaluation.

Recommendation 1.4

The Government should continue to require for all draft environment-related legal documents a feasibility study that includes measures, capital and running costs, investments, technical and human resources available for the implementation and enforcement of these legal documents.

Recommendation 1.5

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should strengthen the capacity of its regional institutions, especially the regional agencies and regional inspectorates.

Chapter 2: Compliance and enforcement mechanisms

Recommendation 2.1

The Ministry of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration and other relevant competent authorities should:

- (a) Prepare and adopt checklists for inspection and unified reporting forms;
- (b) Develop an informal network on information exchange and coordination between environmental inspectors at central and local levels, and other control bodies;
- (c) Define criteria for public access to inspection reports;
- (d) Improve cooperation between the environmental inspection bodies and other control bodies.

Recommendation 2.2

(a) The Government should strengthen the administrative capacity of the Environmental Inspectorate and the regional environment agencies within the Ministry of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration, in relation to improving enforcement of the legislation.

- (b) The Ministry of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:
- (i) Implement the separation of the permitting and inspection functions;
 - (ii) Provide appropriate staff training courses for inspectors.

Recommendation 2.3

The Ministry of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Develop secondary legislation for each of the following instruments: Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) and environmental audit, and ensure public access to these procedures;
- (b) Prepare a list containing all existing industrial installations subject to IPPC and establish a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR)
- (c) Include threshold limit values for pollutants in environmental permits.

Recommendation 2.4

The Ministry of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration, together with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior, should amend the legislation in order to:

- (a) Apply appropriate measures for enforcement of sanctions and collection of fines to ensure compliance by operators;
- (b) Exclude the possibility of forgiving imposed fines which are not paid in due date or are simply not recovered.

Recommendation 2.5

- (a) The Government should adopt quality and emission standards for air, water, soil and noise, taking into account internationally agreed standards and guidelines.
- (b) The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should monitor implementation of and compliance with the standards.

Chapter 3: Monitoring, information, public participation and education

Recommendation 3.1

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should regularly review existing monitoring programmes and networks with a view of their modernization and optimization, and develop and implement an Integrated Environment Monitoring System.

Recommendation 3.2

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should streamline data and information collected through various monitoring activities and by various institutions and gradually formalize them in regular data flows by gradually developing a shared environment information system having the National Environment Agency as the central node of the system.

Recommendation 3.3

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should ensure sufficient financial and human capacities for the good functioning of the environment-related network, EIONET.

Recommendation 3.4

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Improve regular reporting on the state of the environment by assessing the entire Driving forces–Pressures–State–Impact–Responses chain in order to be more connected with policy needs;
- (b) Review current production of the state of the environment report on an annual basis in favour of annual indicator-based reporting, preferably web-based, followed by comprehensive assessments every three to four years;
- (c) Ensure the production of an executive summary of the state of the environment reports to increase accessibility of the information for the general public and for decision-making bodies.

Recommendation 3.5

The Government should improve the implementation of the legal framework for the establishment and operation of NGOs in order to enhance their participation in environmental decision-making, policy implementation and awareness-raising.

Recommendation 3.6

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration and the Ministry of Education and Science should:

- (a) Increase and expand adult education on environmental matters;
- (b) Implement a systematic long-term plan for implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development at various levels with the participation of relevant decision-making bodies;
- (c) Assist the education of professional environmental journalists by organizing training courses.

Chapter 4: Environmental international agreements and commitments and their implementation

Recommendation 4.1

The Government should:

- (a) Establish an advisory body to the Government representing all relevant stakeholders to strengthen coordination and provide more opportunities for mainstreaming global environmental concerns into national planning and development;
- (b) Reorganize the National Council for Nature and Biodiversity, and the National Coordination Board for Land Degradation.

Recommendation 4.2

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should regularly update its website by uploading:

- (a) The texts of various multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and most recent reports on their implementation;
- (b) Regular reports on the status of implementation of international commitments.

Recommendation 4.3

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should adopt a more comprehensive and systematic approach to its international cooperation efforts, requiring:

- (a) Strengthening contacts between MEAs' focal points, and conducting regular reviews of the status of implementation of Albania's obligations under various MEAs;
- (b) Identifying areas of synergy between related MEAs so that excessive institutional fragmentation is avoided; specifically, a "chemicals bureau" or similar should be established to manage chemicals-related agreements in a coordinated way;
- (c) Strengthening administrative capacity for MEAs implementation, essentially by organizational measures including raising human capacity, retaining qualified staff and preserving sufficient institutional memory, thus assuring the necessary continuity in work.

Recommendations 4.4

The Government should

- (a) Strengthen the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process leading to a more thorough assessment of the financial, economic, social and environmental impacts of new international commitments and related public policies and national laws;
- (b) Ensure that staff members dealing with RIA applications receive adequate training, especially staff from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration.

Recommendations 4.5

The Government should systematically consider how the country would fulfil its international obligations in the context of reduced international aid, and aim – within a longer-term perspective – to raise its capacity to act within a scenario in which most of the funds are provided from domestic sources.

Recommendation 4.6

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Continue passing laws concerning the ratification of the Protocol on Heavy Metals and Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution;
- (b) In cooperation with other relevant authorities, assess the costs and benefits of, and promote accession to, the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution.

II. Economic instruments and financial resources

Chapter 5: Economic instruments and expenditures for environmental protection

Recommendation 5.1

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration together with the Ministry of Finance should:

- (a) Draft the necessary legislation introducing effluent charges, especially wastewater and air emission charges, in accordance with the “polluter pays” principle;
- (b) Adjust the level of environmental charges to make them high enough to have an effect on the behaviour of economic agents;
- (c) Consider strengthening tax incentives for more environmentally friendly vehicles.

Recommendation 5.2

The Government should:

- (a) Ensure that tariffs for utilities are adjusted to allow full cost recovery and to help financing investments;
- (b) Improve collection rates and strengthen law enforcement and sanctions to discourage illegal behaviours;
- (c) Adopt a clear policy for providing affordable access to utilities services to the more vulnerable population groups.

Recommendation 5.3

The Government should establish an environmental fund with the main purpose of supporting environmental investments and ensure that:

- (a) Adequate transparency and auditing rules are applied;
- (b) Its sources of funding incorporate an increased share of revenue from environmental economic instruments;
- (c) Its operations are consistent with the country’s national accounting system and recommended international guidelines for environmental funds.

III. Integration of environmental concerns into economic sectors and promotion of sustainable development

Chapter 6: Sustainable management of water resources

Recommendation 6.1

The National Water Council should:

- (a) Upgrade the capacity of river basin councils and river basin agencies to enable them to enforce legal and regulatory procedures, and ensure a sustainable management of water resources;
- (b) Strengthen river basin agencies' responsibilities, especially in terms of coordination of local sectors, and establish them as recognised partners in water resources management at the local level.

Recommendation 6.2

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should develop secondary legislation to establish legal and institutional provisions for important procedures and approaches in integrated water resources management.

Recommendation 6.3

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Finalize and adopt the national strategy on integrated management of water resources;
- (b) Implement the following components of the Mati River Basin Pilot Management Plan: development of specific quality objectives for all water body types, economic analysis of water pollution and water management, stakeholders' involvement, public participation and awareness;
- (c) Adopt a special regulation which defines and describes the procedures for drafting, reviewing and approving river basin management plans;
- (d) Develop river basin management plans for all river basins.

Recommendation 6.4

The Government should ensure the implementation of the 2011 National Strategy of Water Supply and Sewerage Services Sector by:

- (a) Restructuring and reforming the existing water utilities, which are not able to cover costs, taking the water utilities in Elbasan and Kavaja as examples of best practice;
- (b) Investing in alternative low-cost facilities that are easy to maintain, extend and upgrade, and have low energy consumption;
- (c) Implementing integrated land-use planning which takes into account the water supply and sewerage infrastructure system; and connecting road construction activities with construction activities for new water supply and sewerage systems.

Chapter 7: Waste management

Recommendation 7.1

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should strengthen its capacity in waste management and work towards increasing waste management expertise.

Recommendation 7.2

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy, local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders should develop:

- (a) A long-term scenario to help planning how to meet the needs of future waste management capacities, and securing sufficient funding for their development;
- (b) Regional and local waste management plans and identify the facilities required for safe management of industrial and municipal waste.

Recommendation 7.3

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Start monitoring generated waste amounts, according to waste classification, from the key industries, including hazardous waste;
- (b) Expand the monitoring system to cover medium-size and small industries once satisfactory results are achieved.

Recommendation 7.4

The Ministry of Health, with the support of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, should:

- (a) Analyze the cost of medical waste management and secure sufficient financing to cover the full cost of medical waste management in hospitals and other health-care facilities;
- (b) Analyze options for safe disposal of medical waste and submit resulting proposals for action to the Government for adoption.

Chapter 8: Forestry, biodiversity and protected areas

Recommendation 8.1

The Government should ensure that:

- (a) In connection with the transfer of forest land ownership to local government units adequate capacity and technical expertise are provided at the local government units level in order to fulfill new responsibilities related to forest management;
- (b) Enhance cooperation with other European countries on management of forests and biodiversity.

Recommendation 8.2

For sustainable management of forests, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should provide for further increase in the capacities of both the district forest service directorates and the communal users of forests, by training and transfer of technical expertise, which could be largely facilitated by establishing joint support centres.

Recommendation 8.3

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should upgrade an electronic information system on forests, biodiversity and protected areas, and make it easily accessible.

Recommendation 8.4

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should assess the needs and potential for the further extension and appropriate designation of the national ecological network.

Chapter 9: Energy and environment

Recommendation 9.1

The Government should:

- (a) Assess changes to rivers' ecosystems (possible changes to fish and wildlife habitats) as environmental impacts possibly caused by hydropower plants (HPP);
- (b) Conduct water quality monitoring in HPP reservoirs;
- (c) Improve inter-administration cooperation between hydropower and environmental authorities, particularly on water release issues.

Recommendation 9.2

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Strengthen environmental impact assessment for energy-related projects;
- (b) Gradually introduce environmental audit of energy-related activities.

Recommendation 9.3

The Government should:

- (a) Continue to give priority to energy efficiency within energy policy;
- (b) Improve integration of energy efficiency into the reform of the energy sector and in other public policies, including using of economic instruments and tariff policy promoting energy efficiency;
- (c) Adopt policies to ensure high energy-efficiency standards for industry, construction and housing sectors as well as for efficient equipment, appliances and vehicles;
- (d) Continue to enhance diversification of energy sources.

Recommendation 9.4

Taking into account environmental sustainability, the Government should:

- (a) Conduct a comprehensive study of renewable energy sources (such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass waste and residues, and agricultural waste);
- (b) Develop sound policies to promote the application of renewable energy.

Recommendation 9.5

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders should ensure:

- (a) Implementing a programme to decrease transmission and distribution losses;
- (b) Arranging for strict control of consumers, including increased collection of payments, reduction of illegal connections and the installation of electricity meters.

Chapter 10: Health and environment

Recommendation 10.1

The Ministry of Health and relevant Government departments should:

- (a) Identify priority environmental health issues and health-driven indicators through intersectoral mechanisms involving stakeholders from the environment, transport and public works, food safety, statistical and other sectors;
- (b) Set mechanisms for regular policy-oriented monitoring and reporting on the health-and-environment situation, its determinants and trends, and the underlying information exchange among the different data-holding agencies;
- (c) Introduce computerised databases in regional and local public health and environmental structures, and implement quality control and quality assurance systems to ensure the validity of the information on exposure to priority environmental health risks;
- (d) Continue capacity-building and training in policy-relevant analysis and assessments, as well as in communication and information dissemination on public health and the environment to reach multiple user groups through international collaboration.

Recommendation 10.2

The Ministry of Health and the Institute of Statistics should:

- (a) Strengthen mortality-based statistics, implement harmonized methods of data collection and processing, and reinforce their systematic reporting to the relevant international agencies;
- (b) Enhance morbidity-based statistics to provide reliable data on single disease conditions;
- (c) Develop national registers on injuries and traumatism at the workplace and in road transport;
- (d) Expand and upgrade the Albanian Early Reporting Tool to include data on the causes and outbreaks of food- and waterborne diseases, and on health conditions related to heat waves.

Recommendation 10.3

The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration and the relevant government bodies, should prepare the secondary legislation and a methodology relating to health impact assessment and submit it for approval to the Council of Ministers:

Recommendation 10.4

The Ministry of Health, together with the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration and relevant government departments, should:

- (a) Implement WHO water safety plans progressively across the country;
- (b) Undertake a national review of sewage collection and sanitary disposal facilities, in particular in schools and hospitals, and continue designating pilot projects, including hygiene education, with the help of adequate investment;
- (c) Conduct a nationwide assessment of the resilience of the water supply and sanitation sector using the WHO methodology.

Recommendation 10.5

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, together with the Ministry of Health, should:

- (a) Strengthen air-quality monitoring, including indoor air quality, establish a database and online data availability, and disseminate air-quality information to the authorities and the public;
 - (b) Conduct research to quantify the health benefits of reducing air pollution exposure under different traffic change options in urban areas.
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