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Preface

The second EPR of Albania began in June 2011 with a preparatory mission. During this mission, the final structure of the report was discussed and established. A review mission took place on 4-10 October 2011. The team of international experts taking part included experts from Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia as well as from the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the ECE secretariat.

The draft EPR report was submitted to Albania for comments and to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for consideration in March 2012. During its meeting on 3-4 April 2012, the Expert Group discussed the report in detail with representatives of the Government of Albania, focusing, in particular, on the conclusions and recommendations made by the international experts.

The EPR recommendations, with amendments from the Expert Group, were then submitted for peer review to the eighteenth session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy on 18 April 2012. A delegation from Albania participated in the peer review. The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in this report.

The Committee on Environmental Policy and the UNECE review team would like to thank the Government of Albania and its experts who worked with the international experts and contributed their knowledge and assistance. UNECE wishes the Government of Albania further success in carrying out the tasks involved in meeting its environmental objectives, including the implementation of the recommendations in this second review.

UNECE would also like to express its appreciation to the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and to the German Federal Environment Agency for their support of the EPR Programme through the Advisory Assistance Programme for Environmental Protection in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; and Germany, UNEP and the EEA for having delegated their experts for the review; and UNDP for their support of the EPR Programme and this review.

Executive summary

The first Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Albania was carried out in 2002. This second review intends to measure the progress made by Albania in managing its environment since the first EPR and in addressing upcoming environmental challenges.

Introduction

Since 2000 the Albanian economy has improved substantially. Reforms in infrastructure development, tax collection, property law and business administration have worked well. The average growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2003 and 2010 was 4.8 per cent. Albania was in 2010 the only country in the region to see a net increase in foreign direct investment (FDI), with total foreign investment surpassing US\$ 1 billion.

The per capita income measured by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) has more than doubled from US\$ 4,545 in 2003 to US\$ 9,102 in 2010. This development has diminished poverty levels markedly. The proportion of people living below the poverty line dropped from 25.4 per cent in 2002 to 12.4 per cent in 2008. However, Albania still remains a poor country by Western European standards. Its GDP per capita (PPP) stood at 27.7 per cent of the European Union (EU) average in 2010.

Policy-making framework for environmental protection and sustainable development

In recent years, the process of drafting national environmental legislation and policies has been based on requirements defined by the approximation to the EU legislation and to EU environmental policies. Albania has considered this to be an important task, although the existing conditions and capacity within the country are not always adequate to adapt the new requirements. The present challenge is thus for the approximation to be feasible and rapid enough, taking into account the capacity of the country.

A number of initiatives have been taken in the area of strategic environmental policymaking. The 2006 National Environmental Strategy (NES) sets objectives in order to solve the existing environmental problems. The 2007 Environmental Cross-cutting Strategy (ECS) provides general guidance on solving problems arising from sectors having an influence on the environment.

Since the first EPR, the structure of the Government has changed, strengthening overall the national environmental authority, which is now the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration (MoEFWA), and reallocating responsibilities for environmental issues. Specifically, the 2002 Law on Environmental Protection defined the Institutional Network Serving the Environment, consisting of the following institutions and bodies: MoEFWA, the Environment and Forest Agency (EFA) with regional environment agencies (REAs), the Environmental Inspectorate (EI), environmental institutions at central and local levels, and inter-ministerial bodies.

Albania has received support from international organizations and donor countries for its legislative and planning activities. However, monitoring progress, evaluation of data and indicators, and assessment of policy efficiency need to be strengthened as these steps are required for decisions on new timing and allocation of financial resources. This challenge necessitates an improved institutional background and the improved operation of responsible institutions.

Compliance and enforcement mechanisms

Although environmental monitoring and inspection are stipulated in the environmental legislation, there are problems in their practical implementation. Implementation and enforcement levels are low due to inappropriate and weak legislation, fragmented responsibilities, a lack of human and financial resources, and lack of awareness in government, business and society in general.

Inter-institutional and vertical coordination for inspection is lacking or remains at a poor level. Albania lacks administrative capacity, in particular well-trained staff and appropriate technical equipment.

Even though the scope of inspected activities is increasing and the work of the enforcement authorities has improved, the environmental inspection system is only partly aligned with international good practices. Many installations still operate without environmental permits or do not exercise their activity in compliance with the requirements.

The environmental permitting legislation is complex. On the one hand, the technical aspects of the permit such as air protection, waste management, wastewater treatment and biodiversity protection are regulated in separate legislative acts. On the other hand, most permits need to integrate relevant legislative requirements and thresholds. These conditions make it necessary that competent and careful screening be conducted by adequately qualified and trained staff.

Actual environmental permitting is based on the country's only assessment system, the environmental impact assessment (EIA). However, the final EIA document does not contain all necessary conditions and is in practice not fulfilling its purpose, i.e. full environmental protection. A gap is also evident in the absence of public access to EIA documentation and public hearings for all EIA procedures. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) exist in the law, but flaws in the national legislation hinder their implementation. No environmental audits exist in the country, and neither does relevant legislation on the subject.

Environmental quality standards are not clearly defined and major pollutants are not identified. Air quality standards are under preparation but not yet operational, and emissions from vehicles and the quality of fuel are not a priority. The process of elaboration and adoption of water standards is ongoing, and there are draft decisions on urban wastewater treatment, on priority substances in water and for water quality standards.

Monitoring, information, public participation and education

The engagement of Albania in many EU and international activities implies a substantial increase in reporting obligations, including those related to monitoring. However, environmental monitoring activities have not demonstrated great improvement in recent years in spite of a number of dedicated assistance projects, supply of modern equipment and specialized capacity-building for national experts.

The development of environmental indicators is progressing, especially within various international frameworks such as cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and under the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators. However, the regular updating and use of such indicators for national needs, or further development of indicators to serve national policy needs, are still in the early stages.

The current monitoring process is fragmented and the related data flows are unstable because monitoring activities are carried out by governmental bodies and institutions on the basis of annual contracts. The situation is even more critical at the local level where monitoring capacities are scarce and where there are signs of institutional tensions. Nevertheless, an integrated environmental monitoring system (IEMS) is gradually being developed.

Some progress has been made in establishing a shared environmental information system (SEIS). This is due to long-lasting cooperation with EEA, the standardization of data reporting procedures, capacity-building and involvement in the development of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET) encompassing several national reference centres.

Although annually prepared, the national State of Environment Report (SER) presents a rather traditional structure and approach. The SER is mainly a description of the current situation rather than an analysis of the entire Driving force–Pressure–State–Impact–Response (DPSIR) chain. Consequently, the SER has limited relevance and input to the policymaking process.

Progress was registered in engaging the public in environmental issues at both national and local levels, in particular through consultations on draft legislation. However, the involvement of NGOs and of the public at large during the practical implementation of legislation remains weak. That is why improving public participation in the decision-making process will continue to be a key challenge and priority in the coming period.

The entire education system is subject to massive reform. Manuals and teaching materials for both students and teachers have been produced covering topics such as water, air and soil. As first steps toward transposing the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into the national context, Albania designated a National Focal Point for implementation of ESD and adopted the National Strategy and Action Plan for ESD. An inter-agency coordination mechanism for ESD was established. In contrast, adult environmental education remains practically non-existent.

Implementation of international agreements and commitments

Since the first EPR in 2002, the Government has integrated several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) into the national legal framework. Lately, the process of international environmental integration has strongly resonated with the political objective of European integration and, ultimately, EU membership. Furthermore, the Government put efforts into improving domestic institutions and extending its interaction with bilateral and multilateral partners. All this has resulted in a policy and legal framework that is broadly based on MEA requirements and international practice.

The process of international cooperation on the environment and implementation of MEAs is nuanced. It is characterized by institutional fragmentation. Mechanisms to oversee the implementation of international commitments are often limited. An Inter-ministerial Environment Committee was recently established by MoEFWA, at the level of deputy ministers, in an attempt to introduce a coordination platform to address environmental concerns in other sectors. However, several such platforms previously created under the auspices of the environmental authority did not last. To achieve better cooperation, authorities thus require substantial training, and guidance.

There is a tendency to concentrate efforts on adopting new MEAs while implementation is still falling behind. No compliance assessment has ever been done for an MEA. Consequently, MoEFWA has only a very general understanding of where it stands with the implementation of international commitments. It remains questionable whether the intensive process of joining new

MEAs and transposing them into the national legislation corresponds to the national capacity to implement them, the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) of new legal requirements being limited to an assessment of the budgetary burden on the Government.

Since the first EPR, the national environmental authority has undergone several reorganizations that have generally increased its capacity. However, during this process, several MEAs' focal points were changed and their tasks reallocated to new people. Sometimes this resulted in a decrease in the capacity to manage the country's international obligations on the environment.

Economic instruments and expenditures for environmental protection

Economic instruments have been strengthened in some areas since 2002, although environmental management is mainly based on command-and-control regulatory instruments.

Permitting and inspections are used largely as income generators, although there are cases where their structure supports environmental objectives. Therefore, it is important to strengthen existing instruments, establish new ones or re-establish abolished ones.

The "polluter pays" principle is recognized in legal terms; however, in practice there are notable problems in the collection of economic instruments, and tariffs for some utilities are still below cost recovery levels. As a result, the "polluter pays" principle is compromised and it is very difficult to achieve resource conservation and rational use of natural resources.

The environmental sector is very much dependent on international financing and a very high proportion of public environmental expenditure is coming from external sources. Several development partners – bilateral donors in particular – are considering scaling down or phasing out their assistance in coming years due to the financial crisis. This will likely reduce the availability of donor aid, thus affecting the implementation of environmental programmes.

Despite a rather difficult macroeconomic environment, environmental expenditures and investments in key areas have increased. However, resources for implementation of the country's strategic goals on the environment, defined in the ECS, are still limited. To increase resources for the environment, the establishment of an environmental fund has been foreseen. The fund, if and when established, will finance environmental investment projects in a cross-sectoral approach, i.e. within the competence of several ministries, including activities like solid waste management, wastewater collection and treatment, and energy efficiency.

Sustainable management of water resources

Albania is endowed with surface water and groundwater resources which far exceed its use. On the other hand, much of Albania's economic activity is dependent on the utilization of water resources. Over 90 per cent of energy production comes from hydropower plants (HPPs), while agriculture is fully dependent on irrigation. Moreover, the mining and industrial sector, as well as the tourism sector, are strongly dependent on clean and sufficient fresh water.

The monitoring of water resources is inadequate and suffers from a fragmented institutional framework. Monitoring activities have been very rudimentary for many years, and there is little recent, factual information on the status of both the quality and quantity of water resources. Furthermore, data are not adequately handled and analysis of data and comprehensive regular reporting are lacking. Thus, the implementation of both the EU Water Framework Directive and inventory and assessment mechanisms of the status of water resources require improvement.

The relevant governmental authorities have recently prepared various strategic documents to set out an appropriate legal framework for the protection and management of water resources. However, an updated water resources management strategy, including mid-term and long-term financial planning and corresponding prioritization for investments in the different sectors, is lacking. As a result, investment decisions are made on the basis of single-sector consideration and priority, leading at best to suboptimal investments and lost opportunities for capturing multipurpose benefits, and at worst to a waste of limited resources.

Despite being naturally rich in water, Albania suffers from a lack of fresh water in the required quantity and quality, and most of the existing water utilities are not able to cover operating costs. This is linked with a series of causes: an inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure in each of the water-using sectors with exorbitant water losses in the supply network, water abuses due to illegal connections to the main pipelines, the lack of individual water metering and operational control, low collection rates, inappropriate pricing of water and the absence of institutional coordination.

Taking into account the high sensitivity of the Mediterranean region toward impacts of climate change, the continuous growth in population and the necessary future economic growth, the scale of the high dependence on clean fresh water for sustainable economic and social development is obvious. It is indispensable for Albania to develop and implement efficient methods and technologies for the rational use of water resources, taking both the quality and quantity into account, and to control the impacts of resource use on the environment.

Waste management

Waste management is at a low level. Systems for the collection of municipal solid waste (MSW) are provided in most cities and towns, but not in rural areas. Urban waste is mostly disposed of at designated landfill sites, but large quantities are also dumped at unauthorised locations at the edges of settlements and along roads. Furthermore, little recycling of waste is undertaken.

The management of industrial and mining waste is focused on clean-up and remediation of hot spots and mining sites waste, and improvements have been achieved in the main polluted areas. However, data are limited only to this context, constraining the country's ability to comply with all requirements of related MEAs, especially with the Basel Convention. The current level of industrial waste generation is considered low, but data to assess the current situation do not exist. The same problem applies to the country's hazardous waste management.

The National Waste Management Strategy for the period 2010-2025 aims at the full implementation of the EU Framework Directive on Waste Management. However, most of work on formulation of this document was done by international consultants, resulting in a lack of ownership and implementation problems on the part of the authorities. Although investments in waste management facilities are one of the preconditions for upgrading waste management, equally important is to build up national expertise and involve country's experts in the preparation and implementation of waste management plans.

In general, the institutional framework for waste management is not strong enough to support efficient implementation due to distributed responsibilities among several authorities and a weak central authority. The conditions for improvement of future waste management include the introduction of at-source waste separation, increased producer responsibility and improvement of the waste data system.

Forestry, biodiversity and protected areas

Since 2002, the national legislation related to forestry, biological diversity and protected areas has been improved. Albania has recently adopted new national legislation related to the EU *Acquis Communautaire* regarding biodiversity and nature protection (Habitats and Birds Directives), which also had a direct imprint on the new Albanian regulations concerning forests.

Currently, the most important national policy related to forestry is the transfer of ownership, rights to use, and responsibilities for the management of a major part of previously State-owned forests to the local communes. This process has changed the land ownership structure, as well as the division of forestry land management rights between the State authorities and the local government units (LGUs). However, long-term, effective implementation will require continuous support and capacity-building for the new communal forest owners.

The accessible forest stands have been significantly degraded through overharvesting and overgrazing, which changed the forest age structure and species composition, and reduced the forest underwood. For several years tree felling has exceeded the net annual increment, resulting in a decrease in the growing stock, and forest fires, often human induced, still pose a threat to the forest ecosystems.

Albania currently does not have a national programme for forestry. However, the National Plan for the Implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) provides for the elaboration and approval of such a programme in 2011, which would also have to result in adopting a new national strategy on forests.

The 2000 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is the main strategic document focusing on biological diversity; however, the current status of biodiversity monitoring can be characterized as rather incomplete and fragmented. Biodiversity inventory and monitoring has recently (in 2009) been enhanced by a Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM). Several biodiversity monitoring and research programmes are being implemented, and some progress has been achieved with the inventory and mapping of natural and semi-natural habitats. At the same time, however, management of biodiversity is not based on the use of an adequate information system. Instead, information is dispersed among many agencies, institutions and stakeholders, which hinders the homogeneity, compatibility, quality, reliability and comprehensiveness of available data.

The growth of the protected area network surface partly results from the legal designation of spacious protected landscape areas, which have more than tripled since 1996. However, these are much less effective for habitat and species conservation than strictly protected areas, the current size and proportion of which is almost negligible. This development may be hampered by the limited capacities of protected area administrations, taking into account the available level of funding, and inadequate staffing and equipment of the field services.

Energy and environment

In the recent past, the Albanian electric power system has experienced serious problems due to unfavourable weather conditions (drought). The underlying reason for this is that hydropower represents more than 95 per cent of Albania's domestic generation and there are plans to extend the capacities of HPPs. A development reliant on this energy source may cause a significant decrease in power generation in the future in the event of reduced water flow. Furthermore, HPPs have environmental impacts due to the construction of dams and the creation of artificial water

reservoirs behind them, which affect a river's ecosystems and habitats. Affected plants, fish and wildlife should therefore be identified for every project implementation.

Albania possesses many mineral resources, including fossil fuels such as coal and petroleum. The latter can become an essential component of the energy sector if or when one of the largest onshore oil fields in Europe, the Patos–Marinza, renews its operations. However, the recent limited production of domestic fossil fuels, together with an ageing existing energy infrastructure and incomplete market structures, are barriers to the successful functioning of the sector.

The Government intends to increase installed capacity of electricity generation plants as well as electricity production in order to reduce dependence on imports and adverse hydrological conditions. However, an additional way to meet national electricity demand is the implementation of energy efficiency measures. Currently, there is potential for these measures, including reductions in energy consumption and losses in power production and distribution, and energy conservation in housing and communal services, industry, agriculture and transport.

Albania has the potential to develop other renewable energies within the country. Biomass energy will possibly play a noticeable role, and could involve the four main resources: urban wastes, agricultural residues, forest residues and animal wastes. There is also a potential increase in energy generation capacity for solar water heating, wind energy and small hydro power.

Human health and environment

Despite an overall improvement in acknowledging the impacts of degraded environment on health, progress in implementing and enforcing the legislation and policy programmes which benefit health and the environment has been limited. Reporting obligations under the existing environmental regulations have been restricted to compliance with environmental quality standards without including any information about policies' effects and effectiveness. The lack of policy-oriented monitoring and information support tools hinders intersectoral collaboration throughout the entire policy process. Integrated assessments on the population's health involving the environmental and other economic sectors are lacking.

The quality and reliability of the existing health statistics present several challenges. Morbidity and mortality statistics are not available on single disease conditions, there is discontinuity in reporting key mortality-based data to the World Health Organization (WHO), and there is no reliable data on injuries and traumatism in transport and occupational settings. Moreover, the Albanian Early Reporting Tool (ALERT) system is limited in its ability to support preventive measures on the sources of food- and waterborne disease and outbreaks, and to address emerging environmental health issues related to climate change.

Sanitation is a long-standing problem in the country. The poor state of existing sewage collection and treatment systems is a risk for secondary contamination of drinking water and soil. The huge investment necessary for the development and extension of sewerage systems requires prioritization. In particular, public buildings such as schools and hospitals should be given priority.

Climate change can impede progress in ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation if policy actions on adaptation to climate change do not include measures on the resilience of the water sector. These should be based on the differential resilience of various water and sanitation technologies. Albania has prepared tools to advance the relevant policymaking. A national climate change health adaptation plan has just been released as an overarching platform for the health system's preparedness and response within wider sector efforts.

Ambient air pollution is now recognized as a serious health problem in main cities. The rapid urbanisation and associated major increase in residential and commercial building construction contribute significantly to air pollution, together with the current bad condition of streets and roads within the urban areas. The action plan of reducing air pollution in Tirana is a good example of introducing health-based environmental quality management with intersectoral involvement.

Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 1: Policymaking framework for environmental protection and sustainable development

Albania made some progress in including environmental aspects in policies, strategies, action plans and sector development programmes at national, regional or local levels.

Some line ministries do not have a responsible unit, or at least a focal point for integration of environmental aspects into sector strategies, programmes and for consultation with MoEFWA. There is no unit in the MoEFWA responsible for the cooperation and communication with other ministries.

The Albania 2011 Progress Report underlined that strengthening administrative capacity and inter-institutional cooperation require further efforts. Since progress towards sustainable development requires participation of all parties concerned, it is very important to establish a high-level coordinating and decision-making body. An advisory council could be established with participation of representatives of all responsible parties in order to promote good cooperation of sectors and stakeholders, control of implementation and regularly assess progress made.

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.*

Inter-ministerial working groups are relevant high-level fora for cooperation among different sectors. As working groups meet infrequently, appropriate meeting preparation and the early transmission of the results of consultation into instructions for the further work of ministries and other governmental institutions are very important. In order to make the work of these high-level groups more efficient, expert groups should be established to provide these functions.

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.

In recent years, Albania has prepared several comprehensive documents, related to the environment and the preparation of new documents is on-going. Strategies and action plans usually determine targets and indicators for the purpose of monitoring progress. The relevance of progress monitoring, the regular collection of data and the calculation of indicators, and analysis and evaluation of data and indicators is increasing as these steps are required for decision-making on timing and allocation of limited financial resources. This is extremely important for progress reports prepared on the implementation of different cross-cutting strategies and the NSDI.

Recommendation 1.3:

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

In coming years, approximation of Albanian laws to the EU environmental *acquis*, and the transposition and adaptation of directives and limit values will continue. In the course of future activities, selecting the optimal speed for the adaptation of directives and limit values will be a big challenge. The speed of law-making has to be rapid enough to result in definite progress; however, it must be feasible to be able to fulfil the goals in time, taking into account the capacity of the country.

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.

The tasks of the regional institutions of MoEFWA are very complex and current conditions are not always adequate to requirements. As monitoring activity is based on the work of regional agencies, their human and technical capacity is indispensable for systematic data collection and processing, and must always be of high quality. Enforcement of legislative requirements and control of the operation of entities and individuals are key to the work of regional inspectorates.

The implementation of environmental policy, compliance with environmental legislation and environmental permitting depend on their work. Capacity of regional institutions of MoEFWA satisfies neither the current nor the expectedly higher requirements in the future. Improving measures cannot be limited to increasing the number of staff, as specialized gradual and post-gradual education, provision of modern tools and equipments and general use of IT tools and methods in data collection and processing are other important points for improvement.

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

Although the inspectors follow the description of the different types of inspections in the *Environmental Inspectors' Manual*, the preparation of checklists would make site inspections more efficient.

Despite bilateral agreements and joint instructions were signed between EI and other control bodies (the State Police, the Construction Inspectorate, the Plant Protection Inspectorate, the General Directorate of Taxation, the State Sanitary Inspectorate and the State Labor Inspectorate), inter-institutional coordination is lacking or remains at a very poor level.

The annual reports or data on the undertaken inspections are not uploaded to Internet and are not easily available to the public.

Recommendation 2.1:

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

- (a) *Prepare and adopt checklists for inspection and unified reporting forms;*

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

New legislation is either under preparation or in force but practical implementation is still very weak and inconsequential. There are insufficient financial and technical resources to meet the legal requirements. Administrative capacity is insufficient.

The conflict of interest remains in the mandate of the inspectors – on the one hand, they issue permits and on the other, they control their practical application.

MoEFWA provides training to its staff mainly through foreign institutions and organizations operating both within and outside Albania. Budget funds allocated for training purposes are quite limited.

Recommendation 2.2:

- (a) *The Government should strengthen the administrative capacity of the Environmental Inspectorate and the regional environment agencies within the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, in relation to improving enforcement of the legislation.*
- (b) *The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:*
 - (i) *Implement the separation of the permitting and inspection functions;*
 - (ii) *Provide appropriate staff training courses for inspectors.*

The 2011 Law on Environmental Permitting transposed the requirements of Directive 96/61/EC on Integrated Pollution Prevention Control. The draft law on SEA transposed EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. However, the effective implementation of these two laws is not feasible without developing secondary legislation. The legislation on environmental audit does not exist in Albania and there is no list of industrial installations and polluters in the country.

There are no permit conditions with threshold limit values for pollutants. Permits do not regulate emissions to air, water and soil.

Recommendation 2.3:

The Ministry of 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 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.*

Despite an increase in the number of fines imposed, in the majority of cases fines are not collected. Many imposed fines are not paid by the due date or simply not recovered. There is no efficient collection mechanism. Moreover, according to articles 83 and 84 of the 2002 Law on Environmental Protection the Minister of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration has the right to forgive imposed fines.

Recommendation 2.4:

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, together with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior, should draft amendments to the legislation for submission to the Government for approval 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.*

Air emission norms were approved in 2002 and wastewater effluent norms were approved in 2005. The elaboration of air and water quality standards is still on-going.

There are draft decisions on urban wastewater treatment, on priority substances in water and for standards of water quality. As environmental quality standards are not clearly determined, major pollutants are not detected.

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: Information, public participation and education

An IEMS is gradually being developed within the framework of evolving and increasingly enabling legal provisions. Currently, monitoring activities are carried out by governmental bodies and institutions on the basis of annual contracts with MoEFWA. This short-term contracting mechanism makes the monitoring process fragmented and the related data flows unstable. Data quality control is usually not performed, data quality being constrained by limited human and financial resources as well as by the unavailability of modern equipment for monitoring and analysis.

Additionally, there is no information system for sharing, exchange and storage of information and data. However, some progress has been made in the establishment of an SEIS, especially through long-term cooperation with EEA which has led to, among other things, increased standardization of data reporting procedures, capacity-building and the development of an EIONET network encompassing several NRCs.

There are no cooperation mechanisms between MOEFWA and sectoral ministries involved in monitoring, and no units dedicated to environment exist within such ministries. This negatively affects coordination and the regular feeding of reporting requirements and policy needs. The situation is even more critical at the local level where monitoring capacities are scarce. In addition, the regional offices dealing with health, environment and agriculture may tend to become competitive rather than cooperative, leading to institutional tensions. The accreditation of NRLs has started but the process is very slow, with a single NRL – for water – being currently accredited.

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 Environment and Forestry 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 good functioning of the environment-related network, EIONET.

The development of environmental indicators is progressing well, especially under various international frameworks such as cooperation with EEA and under the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators. However, the regular updating and use of such indicators for national needs, or further development of indicators to serve national policy needs, are still in the early stages.

The national SER has to be prepared every year according to the provisions of Albanian law. The structure and approach are rather traditional, the report being mainly a description of the current situation rather than an analysis of the entire DPSIR chain.

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.*

The technological development recorded in recent years facilitated good progress in the field of access to environmental information, in spite of limited budgets and human resources available for this purpose. Environmental information is currently provided by the State structures charged with environmental responsibilities, the AICs and other organizations.

Progress was registered in engaging the public in environmental issues at both national and local levels, in particular, through consultation on draft legislation. However, the involvement of NGOs (and the public at large) during the practical implementation of legislation remains weak.

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.

The entire education system in Albania is subject to massive reform. In this context, a number of projects have been implemented to improve the school curriculum at all levels. In contrast, adult education on the environment is practically non-existent in Albania. The level of awareness of the general public is relatively low and in rural areas the situation is even more critical.

Adult education on environmental matters is a top priority in the context of privatization and the restitution of natural resources to communities and citizens. Increased responsibility in the protection and sustainable use of natural resources can be achieved only through a systematic long-term education plan elaborated by MoEFWA and implemented at various levels with the participation of all stakeholders. The development of environmental journalism could be an additional instrument in supporting this objective.

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: Implementation of international agreements and commitments

The Government has worked intensively and after the first EPR in 2002 with the aim of integrating a large number of MEAs into the national legal framework. Mechanisms to oversee the implementation of international commitments are limited and often reduced to fiscal monitoring and accountability. An inter-ministerial environment committee was recently established by MoEFWA, at the level of deputy ministers, in an attempt to introduce a coordination platform to address environmental concerns in other sectors. However, several such platforms previously created under the auspices of the environmental authority did not last.

One possible root of weak cooperation is limited information on, and knowledge of, the scope of and obligations deriving from most MEAs, at national, regional and local levels. Domestic transparency of and accountability for international cooperation in the environmental sector remain insufficient. The culture of information-sharing and communication in relation to the activities of international cooperation on the environment leaves a great deal to be desired. Interested stakeholders are not always engaged in MEA implementation processes.

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.*

There is a tendency to concentrate efforts on adopting new legislation while implementation is still falling behind. No compliance assessment has ever been done for an MEA. Consequently, MoEFWA has only a very general understanding of where it stands with the implementation of

international commitments. Not all MEAs have designated focal points in Albania, and there is no mechanism of communication among focal points.

Several MEAs' national focal points were changed and their tasks re-allocated to new persons who did not have the necessary experience to carry out the job. Sometimes this resulted in a decrease in capacity to manage Albania's international obligations on the environment.

On the other hand, there are cases in which several focal point functions are attributed to a single person, which results in an excessive workload which, in turn, affects MEA implementation, and is also reflected in the failure to meet important obligations under multilateral agreements, such as reporting.

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.*

The question can be raised whether the intensive process of joining new MEAs and transposing them into national legislation corresponds to national capacity to implement them, the RIA of new legal requirements being limited to an assessment of the budgetary burden on the Government. The capacity of MoEFWA to prepare technical, financial and economic analyses in this context is insufficient.

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.*

Albania has set ambitious objectives to achieve its MDG-related targets, which were recently tightened, and progress with European integration. This will certainly require boosting efforts to raise new and larger-scale financial resources.

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.

Albania has made progress in adhering to MEAs. However, there are still a number of MEAs that the country did not join. The internal process of preparation for adhering to CLRTAP protocols on Heavy Metals, on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and

Ground-level Ozone. is close to its end and the ratification is expected soon. The future is not that straightforward for the Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention, which Albania has not joined yet.

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 the 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.*

Chapter 5: Economic instruments and expenditures for environmental protection

Albania already has a range of environment laws that contain “user and polluter pays” principles but it is not possible to adequately use these laws for protection of the environment until secondary legislation is adopted, incorporating the necessary tax rates, fees and charges. It is characteristic of the country that there are still no effluent charges in force. However, evidence shows that taxes that are levied closer to the source of pollution provide greater opportunities for innovation than, say, product charges. To achieve the desired goals, secondary legislation needs to have enforceable and meaningful non-compliance penalties and enforcement of the law requires there to be clearly defined competencies within the administration.

At the same time, the “user pays” principle is very weak, considering the problems in the collection of utility charges. This situation applies to water, electricity and waste. As a result, the principle is compromised and it is very difficult to achieve resource conservation and rational use of natural resources.

Furthermore, influential taxes such as vehicle and fuel taxes have been very volatile in recent years. At the time of the EPR review there were fewer and weaker incentives encouraging the purchase and use of more environmentally friendly vehicles.

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.*

Tariffs for municipal waste collection and disposal and for utilities (water supply and sewerage, electricity) are still below cost-recovery levels. The causes are many: non-payment, lack of enforcement, lack of sanctions, illegal connections and lack of metering are among the most common. As a result, service providers have sustained persistent financial losses and are in constant need of State support. Another consequence of the inability to achieve cost recovery is the general lack of adequate funds for investments in infrastructure (repair, maintenance and modernization), in particular for water use but also for wastewater treatment. Higher tariffs and their collection have the potential to contribute to a more rational use of water and electricity and to a reduction in waste generation.

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.*

Significant parts of environmental investment in the country have been supported since the first EPR by strong donor assistance. However, at the time of this review, due to the economic crisis, the expectation is that external development assistance to the country will decline considerably. The Environmental Fund, which at the time of the review was not yet operational, could potentially provide a way to strengthen the ability of the country to increase funding for investments in priority sectors of environmental importance.

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.*

Chapter 6: Sustainable management of water resources

Albania is rich in surface water and groundwater resources. Much of Albania's economic activity is dependent on the utilization of water resources. Over 90 per cent of energy production comes from HPPs, while agriculture is critically dependent on irrigation. Moreover, the mining, industrial and tourism sectors are strongly dependent on clean and sufficient fresh water, especially in the dry summer. Water resources management in Albania does not meet requirements due to, mainly, inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure in each of the water-using sectors and the absence of institutional coordination.

The institutional capacity of MoEFWA has been reinforced by introducing the GDWA in summer 2011, and six river basin agencies have also been implemented. However, the institutional structures for river basin management, at both national and local levels, are still weak, understaffed and unstable. The RBAs have little authority to enforce legal and regulatory procedures, which results in poor coordination of local sectors in water resources management. Local sectors dealing with water resources management are not coordinated.

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.*

Concerning the legal framework, the 1996 Law on Water Resources was a first attempt to integrate the main principles of the EU-WFD. Notwithstanding its good points, this Law is outdated and is currently being revised.

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.

There is a lack of an updated and comprehensive water resources management strategy, including mid-term and long-term financial planning and corresponding prioritization for investments in the different sectors in Albania. As a result, investment decisions are made on the basis of a single-sector consideration and priority, leading to suboptimal investments and lost opportunities for capturing multi-purpose benefits. In spite of the recently completed Mati River Basin Pilot Management Plan, there is a lack of action plans, especially RBMPs to act as a framework, guideline and schedule for all action to take place in a river basin. Despite the fact that the Law on Water Resources requests the preparation of RBMPs, the procedures for drafting, reviewing and approving these plans, have not yet been adopted.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration should:

- (a) Finalize and adopt the national strategy for 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.*

Most of the existing water utilities in Albania are not able to cover operating costs. This is linked to a series of causes: an inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure in each of the water-using sectors, with exorbitant water losses in the supply network, water abuses due to illegal connections to the main pipelines, the lack of individual water metering and operational control, low revenue collection rates, inappropriate pricing of water and the absence of institutional coordination.

However, there are water utilities with a positive financial balance. Concerning the adaptation and rebuilding of the infrastructure in water supply and sewerage systems, an essential barrier is the lack of integrated land-use planning which results in poorly planned and regulated construction activity.

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

Hot spots, mining sites clean-ups and municipal waste management, in particular, attracted the attention of international donors and significant improvements have been achieved. Strategic documents on waste management have also been prepared by foreign consultants. However, the local expertise and capacity of government institutions does not seem adequate to further develop information and implement proposals prepared by international donors. The currently adopted waste legislation is setting high management standards and it is not clear how Albanian authorities plan to achieve them.

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.

The development of waste management infrastructure focuses on landfills, but these will require additional funding in the future for expansion of their capacities.

According to experience from other countries, it is not expected that this funding will be provided by foreign donors. Moreover, the current financial arrangements in waste management cover only collection, but do not allow new investments in equipment and infrastructure. Thus, the situation in waste management in the long term is not considered financially sustainable.

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.*

Although the waste legislation created conditions for collection of data on waste generation and disposal, no reliable data on waste management are available in the country. The MSW data are based on estimation by municipalities and industrial waste data are limited to hot spots and mining waste sites waste only. The lack of data on waste management limits the possibility of complying with the requirements of the Basel Convention.

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.*

The management of medical waste has developed an infrastructure for collection and sterilization of this waste, but further improvement and expansion is limited due to insufficient funding of hospitals and lack of a central medical waste incinerator.

Recommendation 7.4:

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

- (a) *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) *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

The ongoing transfer of the ownership, rights to use, and responsibilities for the management of the planned 60 per cent of Albania's forests and pastures to local communes would require continuous support and capacity-building for the communal forest owners.

This change has already had an impact on the institutional structures and staff of the forestry services directorates, while other potential effects of the above change, if improperly managed, on the state of forests (both State and communally owned) can hardly be predicted.

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 fulfil new responsibilities related to forest management;*
- (b) *Enhance cooperation with other European countries on management of forests and biodiversity.*

In addition to the continuous lack of basic infrastructure, forestry field staff are currently not properly equipped to perform their extensive functions in a much more effective manner, having limited access to a broad range of contemporary technical support means and techniques. This seriously impairs the operational capacity of the MoEFWA field services, which are currently expected to provide extension support to the new communal users of forests. Much broader use is required of geo-information techniques and spatial information by public and communal sector authorities, organizations and institutions at almost all organizational levels. The availability of spatial information for planning and decision-making is currently becoming an indispensable prerequisite for modern, effective local and regional development that is in line with the idea of sustainable development.

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.

Assessment of the current state of biological diversity is complicated by the lack of a reliable single database on species and their status. The current status of biodiversity monitoring can be best characterized as rather incomplete and fragmented, as data are still dispersed among many agencies and institutions subordinated to different ministries, as well as a broad variety of research institutes and non-governmental organizations.

The vast majority of data from biodiversity monitoring is still collected, stored and retrieved solely by use of paper archives and reports, which are slowly being replaced, but still to a limited extent, by electronic archiving systems and databases.

Recommendation 8.3:

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

The effective protection of natural habitats and species of priority importance for the conservation of biological diversity in Albania would require the designation of numerous smaller, strictly protected nature reserves, as well as of strict (passive) protection zones of adequate size within the boundaries of, e.g. national parks or protected landscapes and seascapes. The identification and delineation of such areas, based on sound scientific field research and nature inventories, is most probably one of the most urgent priorities for work during the preparation of protected area management plans in Albania, in particular for its national parks.

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

The significant available potential of hydropower offers good prospects but requires careful planning, particularly regarding the environmental impacts of new as well as existing HPPs. There are several technical and natural factors which have caused impact on the environment. They can vary greatly from project to project. The impact of each particular HPP should be carefully examined and should identify which plants, fish and wildlife are affected. Some species may end up doing quite well, others may sharply decline or completely disappear and some will be minimally affected. Currently, there is not cooperation between hydropower and environmental authorities on environmental matters

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.*

There is growth in energy companies' activities, especially in the oil sector. Analysis of the structure and scale of the environmental impact of the fossil fuels sector's activities is critical. Volumes of pollutant inputs into the environment should be examined by the energy operators and environmental authorities. A detailed analysis of the sources and composition of pollution components, and the degree of hazard they represent, is a necessary part of environmental control. A database of pollution levels in different regions, as well as ranges of typical pollutant levels in surface waters and air, should be prepared and provided for public consideration.

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.*

While the power sector has the greatest prospect of operating with less energy loss, there are several critical sectors for the implementation of energy efficiency measures. For example, buildings and water heating together represent the second largest energy use in Albania, after road

transport. More than half of the energy consumption in building heating is of electricity, as is 86 per cent of water heating. A major challenge facing Albania's electricity system is the need to encourage consumers to switch to alternative sources for heating as well as for cooking. Enhanced energy efficiency will reduce electricity consumption and hence will mitigate environmental impacts.

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.*

Total proven reserves of fuel wood in Albania are considered to be approximately 6 Mtoe. There are uncertainties related to the real rate of cutting fuel woods but apparently it is around 250,000-350,000 toe/year. Growth of firewood consumption will be constrained due to forestry environmental management issues. Uncontrolled harvesting of fuel wood for domestic use and export is leading to deforestation in parts of the country. The use of inefficient stoves creates indoor and outdoor pollution and leads to health problems. Biomass energy will possibly play a noticeable role in Albania's sustainable energy development. It could involve the four main resources: urban wastes, agricultural residues, forest residues and animal wastes. There is also potential for other renewable energies such as solar water heating, wind energy and small-scale hydropower.

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.*

Electricity losses through transmission and distribution, both technical and non-technical (illegal connections), is a serious problem. For example, in 2008 the total losses were 35 per cent of the electricity supply (generation and importation). KESH estimates technical losses caused by obsolete transmission lines and electricity distribution networks to be 20-25 per cent and commercial losses 10-15 per cent. Reduction of electricity technical and commercial losses could reduce import and/or generation volumes and would also improve KESH's financial indicators.

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: Human health and environment

IPH gathers data on key environmental health exposures, such as air pollution and contaminated drinking water, and on the health effects of degraded environment such as food- and waterborne infectious diseases, but lacks a system which can provide reliable, targeted and timely information.

The Law on Public Health, which sets provisions for monitoring public health and its determinants and establishment of an information system, and the DCM on Data Reporting Obligations to the IPH make it possible to provide comparable indicators on environmental health risks in support of policy-making. Information-sharing with the environmental and other economic sectors (e.g. transport) enables the addressing of upstream determinants which drive hazardous environmental exposure, and counteracting of adverse health effects at the source of the problem.

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.*

The quality and reliability of existing health statistics present several challenges. Morbidity and mortality statistics are not available on single disease conditions and hence not useful for epidemiological analyses. Albania discontinued reporting key mortality-based data to WHO in 2004, most likely because of their low quality. There is no reliable data on injuries and traumatism in transport and occupational settings – a highly significant environmental public health problem. The ALERT system is limited in its ability to support preventive measures on the sources and outbreaks of food- and waterborne diseases, and to address emerging environmental health issues related to climate change.

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.*

EIA is a major accountability mechanism of the national environmental protection policy, but health aspects of poor environmental conditions are only vaguely mentioned. They are well defined in law, but the strategic environmental assessment law is still pending. The Law on Public Health introduces the process of health impact assessment and assigns the responsibilities to the State Health Inspectorate. Further specification through by-laws and other regulatory mechanisms is needed to advance its practical implementation, and ensure coherence and integration into EIA. Beyond the authorisation of new projects, the assessment of environmental impacts on health

should be progressively implemented as a policy accountability, enabling evaluation of policy effectiveness regarding population exposures to environmental health risks.

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.

Population coverage of safe drinking water services must continue to increase, particularly in rural and informal settlement areas. The new draft Law on Integrated Management of Water Resources, which aims to achieve convergence with the EU Water Directives on river basin planning and management, marks the starting point for the introduction of modern approaches to water quality management. While such a legal and policy approach should ensure compliance with standards for end-of-pipe water quality, there should be an emphasis on management of health risks in drinking water. Water quality management should be complemented with a system of water safety plans – integrated risk assessment and incremental risk management from catchment to consumer – and independent monitoring and surveillance. WHO recommends such plans as the most effective and sustainable means to ensure safety of the drinking-water supply.

Sanitation is a long-standing problem in Albania. Many cities and most villages do not have sewage collection systems. The poor state of existing sewage collection and treatment systems is a risk for secondary contamination of drinking water and soil. The huge investment necessary for the development and extension of sewerage systems requires prioritization, and public buildings such as schools and hospitals should be given top priority.

Climate change can impede progress in ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation if policy actions on adaptation to climate change do not include measures ensuring the resilience of the water sector. Such measures should be based on the differential resilience of various water and sanitation technologies.

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.*

The action plan of reducing air pollution in Tirana, to be launched upon Government's approval of the strategic plan for the development of transport in Tirana, is a good-practice example of introducing health-based environmental quality management with intersectoral involvement. Its implementation will not only bring significant benefits in clean air and reducing adverse impact, but can mark a turning point towards integrated environmental public health management.

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.*

Implementation of the recommendations in the 1st review

PART I: THE FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Chapter 1: POLICY FRAMEWORK, LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Recommendation 1.1:

The relevant authorities, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Environment, should review and update all environmental policy documents. In undertaking these reviews, they should organize preparatory meetings with interested institutions to facilitate the adoption of these policies. An information campaign about their purpose and benefits should be considered.

In 2006, the Albanian Government started a new planning process taking into account the progress made and experience collected following the former policies. This process included preparation of new sector strategies, cross-sector strategies and the NSDI for the period 2007-2013 which provided a framework for these strategies. Based on the new priorities and in order to achieve the new goals, new action plans were elaborated with the contributions of line ministries and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 1.2:

Efforts should be made to consolidate discrete legislation into coherent and comprehensive laws. For example, there should be a single water act instead of four separate laws (Law on Water Resources, Law on Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Regulation, draft law on water protection and draft law on rules on water intended for human consumption) and a single waste management act, including the management of all kind of waste (except radioactive waste). (see also recommendation 7.1)

The recommendation was partly adopted. There is the intention in Albania to elaborate a comprehensive Water Law to take the place of existing separate ones. Referring to waste management, the new Law on Integrated Waste Management was adopted by the Albanian Parliament in 2011. This new Law provides full transposition of the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC.

Recommendation 1.3:

- (a) The draft environmental impact assessment law should distinguish clearly between EIA for projects and environmental assessment for plans and programmes (strategic environmental assessment);*
- (b) A legally binding environmental audit should be the precondition for issuing environmental permits (licence) for operating facilities;*
- (c) Public participation in both EIA and environmental auditing should be developed, reflected in law and implemented; (see also recommendation 4.3)*
- (d) The respective competencies of the Ministry and the Regional Environmental Agencies should be clearly defined by the law.*

The recommendation is partly implemented. The new approved laws distinguish the EIA and permitting procedures. The 2011 Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, No. 10440, which fully transposes the Council Directive of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 97/11/EC, Directive

2003/35/EC and Directive 2009/31/EC, will further improve the quality of EIA in Albania. This Law will enter into force at the beginning of 2013.

The 2011 Law on Environmental Permitting, No. 10448, establishes a new and special procedure for environmental permitting in Albania. This Law transposes Directive 2008/1/EC concerning integrated pollution prevention and control, as amended by Directive 2009/31/EC, and Directive 2001/80/EC on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants, as amended by Directive 2009/31/EC and many other permitting principles for a vast number of EC Directives. The implementation of this Law begins in January 2013.

In practice, the procedures are not clear and transparent in spite of the legal requirements. There are no permit conditions with threshold limit values for pollutants. The permits are not regulating emissions to air, water and soil.

Recommendation 1.4:

(a) *The structure of the Ministry of Environment, which is function- and management-oriented, needs to be expanded. Specifically, the following new sectors under the directorates should be created:*

- *A section for hazardous waste management and a section for emergency situations within the Directorate for Pollution Control and Prevention;*
- *A section for environmental impact assessment and a separate section for environmental permitting within the Directorate for EIA and Information;*
- *A national centre for environmental monitoring as a matter of high priority; (see recommendation 4.1)*

A section of the Forests Extension Service has been created to assist with and strengthen the communal forestry.

(b) *The Ministry of Environment should consider establishing a new department for coastal areas; (see recommendation 11.3)*

(c) *In addition, the following should be strengthened:*

- *Directorate for Environmental Policy and Project Implementation;*
- *Directorate for Natural Resources Management and Biodiversity Management;*
- *The Information and Public Relations Unit.*

(d) *The staff of both the Ministry and the Regional Environmental Agencies should have access to ongoing training in all of the areas that fall within their competence.*

The number of personnel and internal structure of the ministry responsible for environmental issues (currently MoEFWA) has changed considerably in comparison with those of the former Ministry of Environment (MoE) in 2002. The basic intention was to gradually reach the most appropriate conditions for completing the Ministry's existing and new tasks. A new sector was established dealing with waste and industrial accidents. Separate units were established within MoEFWA for performing the EIA-related tasks and permission tasks. The total number of staff of MoEFWA is about three times greater than that of MoE. Training courses are organized occasionally for the employees of MoEFWA and EFA.

Chapter 2: ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONRecommendation 2.1:

- (a) *The Ministry of Environment should improve the current permit system by preparing clear procedures and guidelines, and when necessary adjusting the existing legislation. A first step should be to introduce appropriate permit conditions with threshold limit values for pollutants, in line with European Union legislation. A further step would be to introduce an integrated environmental permit regulating emissions to air, water and soil; (see also recommendation 9.1)*
- (b) *The Ministry of Environment should update its environmental quality standards in line with European Union standards. As a first step, the system of environmental standards should concentrate on the major pollutants.*

The new 2011 Law on Environmental Permitting, No. 10440, establishes a new and special procedure for environmental permitting in Albania. It establishes measures for permitting the operation of certain groups of polluting activities, measures designed to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions to the air, water and land from such activities, including measures concerning waste. In practice, the environmental quality standards are not clearly determined and the major pollutants are not detected. The air and water quality standards are under preparation. Standards for vehicle emissions and the quality of fuels have been prepared but a lot of effort is needed for their implementation.

The 2004 Guidelines of MoPWTT and MoEFWA, on Permitted Values of Atmospheric Polluting Elements in the Environment Resulting from Gas Emissions and Noises Caused by Vehicles and the Ways for Controlling Them, No. 6527, in effect since 08.06.2005 (*Official Journal*, 2005/Mars, No. 9, p. 388), were amended by 2010 Guidelines on Amendments and Addenda to 2004 Guidelines on Permitted Values of Atmospheric Polluting Elements in the Environment Resulting from Gas Emissions and Noises Caused by Vehicles and the Ways for Controlling Them, No. 6527, No. 12, accompanied by the Manual of Vehicles Control. Monitoring of atmospheric pollution from the release of gases resulting from motor vehicles, is undertaken by entities which control the roads (General Road Directorate, municipalities, regions, etc.).

The 2007 DCM on the Quality of Petrol and Diesel Fuels, No. 147, determines standards and technical specifications relating to health and environmental conditions for fuels to be used by vehicles. It partially transposes Directive 98/70/EC on the quality of petrol and diesel fuels, and 2007 Common Order on Gathering and Maintaining Data Related to Fuels' Quality, in compliance with the requirements of Directive 98/70/EC, No. 6.

According to DCM No. 147, the content of sulphur in fuels is expected to be decreased by grades, mainly for economic, financial and social reasons, as follows:

- As of 1 January 2009, the content of sulphur in gasoil has been decreased fivefold (from 50 mg/kg to 10mg/kg);
- From 1 January 2009 until 31 December 2010, the content of sulphur in diesel fuels will have decreased almost sixfold (from 2000 mg/kg to 350 mg/kg);
- From 1 January 2011, the content of sulphur in diesel fuels will decrease 35-fold (from 350 mg/kg to 10 mg/kg).

The quality of fuel is controlled by the Central Technical Inspectorate (CTI), in accordance with the 1999 Law On Processing, Shipping and Commercialising Oil, Natural Gas, and their By-products, No. 8450, amended with 2004 Law No. 9218, (*Official Journal*, No. 30, 19.05.2004, p.

2509), and the 2004 Order of the Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy, On Quality Control, Sampling, Quantity of Sample, Respective Payments and Documentation, as well as Controls in Respect of Technical Norms and Conditions at Oil, Gas, and Their By-products' Installations, No. 166. The CTI extracts samples from each shipment of fuel products entering Albania by sea or land, to conduct quality analysis.

Test results are documented. The same procedure is followed for domestically produced gasoil. The ICT conducts periodic controls and year-round surveys at all retail dispensers of gasoil, diesel and liquid propane gas, and at all wholesale storage sites for oil and gas products. A Draft DCM On the Quality of Certain Liquid Fuels for Thermal Use as well as the Use on Water Transport Means (Sea, River, Lake) transposes Council Directive 1999/32/EC of 26 April 1999 relating to a reduction in the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels, and amending Directive 93/12/EEC as amended by Regulations (EC) 1882/2003 and (EC) 219/2009 and Directives 2005/33/EC and 2009/30/EC. The responsible institution for the drafting of this Decision is MoETE, in cooperation with MoEFWA, based on the 2011 Common Order on Establishing the Working Group for Preparation of the Relevant Juridical Acts, No. 592. It is foreseen that it will be approved in 2012.

Recommendation 2.2:

Enforcement of environmental legislation needs to be improved by strengthening the Regional Environmental Agencies and establishing an independent inspectorate at national level to coordinate the regional inspectors and improve collaboration with other inspectorates. The Regional Environmental Agencies should be strengthened with training, equipment and operational means.

The recommendation is partially implemented. EI has been established covering the national and regional levels. Some work has been done around strengthening the capacity of its structures. MoEFWA provides training to its staff mainly through foreign institutions and organizations operating in Albania and abroad. Budget funds allocated for training purposes are quite limited.

Recommendation 2.3:

The Ministry of Environment, together with the Ministry of Finance, should begin to develop a comprehensive system of economic instruments for environmental protection, in cooperation and negotiation with other ministries and stakeholders. A first attempt could be made by adopting the draft law on carbon tax (earmarked for environmental purposes), and by adopting the proposals to introduce a packaging tax and to increase the cleaning tax.

The recommendation is partially implemented. A carbon tax has been adopted at 0.5 lek per litre of diesel and 1 lek per litre of gasoline. A tax has been applied on plastic packaging.

Recommendation 2.4:

The Government should take the necessary steps to establish and manage an environmental fund to channel financing for environmental purposes. This environmental fund could be established within the State budget under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance. To make the environmental investments more effective, priority projects need to be identified by the Ministry of Environment fully in line with the National Environmental Action Plan.

The recommendation has not been implemented. A DCM on the environmental fund is under development with the assistance of UNDP.

Chapter 3: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***Recommendation 3.1:***

The Government of Albania should put more emphasis on fulfilling its international obligations in practical terms. The role of the Ministry of Environment in these tasks should be strengthened. To begin with, the Ministry of Environment should prepare national implementation plans for each convention ratified, in cooperation with the other ministries and institutions involved.

The recommendation was only partly implemented. The Government was quite proficient with the adoption of policies and legislation, but much less convincing on fulfilling its international obligations in practical terms. Although MoEFWA has increased its resource base, its capacity for implementing international commitments remains insufficient. Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination still needs improvement.

Regarding action plans for the implementation of international conventions, there are some MEAs for which action plans have been elaborated and implemented, for instance, in relation to the CBD. An action plan is in place as an integral part of the NBSAP and has been implemented since 2000, while the PoWPA for the CBD is going to be revised in 2012.

Regarding the UNCCD, MoEFWA has been setting up the objectives for implementation of the requirements on combating land degradation. The main documents which take this issue into consideration are the National Strategy on Environmental Protection, NSDI, the 2007 Sector Strategy of Agriculture and Food, and the 2007 Intersectoral Rural Development Strategy.

The National Action Plan on the Ratification and Implementation of Heavy Metal Protocol, Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Gothenburg Protocol of the CLRTAP Convention has been compiled.

Albania ratified the Stockholm Convention in 2004. MoEFWA prepared the National Implementation Plan for Reduction and Disposal of POPs. In the framework of the Montreal Protocol, the National Action Plan designed to phase out HCFCs has been approved.

Recommendation 3.2:

Albania needs to sign up to other international environmental instruments, in particular the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its protocols and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. (see also recommendation 5.3)

The recommendation was to a large extent implemented. Albania joined CITES in 2003. In addition, the country ratified CLRTAP in 2005 and has ratified four of its eight protocols since 2009, namely the first sulphur protocol, the NOx protocol, the second sulphur protocol and the EMEP protocol. The ratification of three other protocols (the protocol concerning heavy metals, the protocol concerning POPs, and the Gothenburg Protocol to abate acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone) is under way. The country has yet to accede to the 1991 protocol to CLRTAP concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes.

Recommendation 3.3:

The Ministry of Environment should develop a strategic paper, including a list of environmental priorities and projects, for international cooperation. This paper should be disseminated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Ministry of Economy.

The 2007 ECS outlined, *inter alia*, the environmental priorities for international cooperation. The country's international obligations are occasionally mentioned in different parts of the document, relating to matters considered to be of both national and global importance. In addition, a Strategic Action Plan on Cross-cutting Capacity Issues for Global Environmental Management (2006) was produced as a result of a national capacity self-assessment exercise, supported by UNDP/GEF. The Action Plan was accompanied by a pertinent analysis of capacity constraints, needs and priorities for the implementation of the three Rio conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. Thus, despite the absence of a formal strategy on international environmental cooperation, this theme is integrated in existing policy papers. This is judged sufficient for conveying the priorities of international environmental cooperation to governmental partners and other relevant parties. Since January 2012 Albania has started the work for updating the ESC for the other seven years (2013-2020), expected to be finalized by March 2013.

Recommendation 3.4:

The Government needs to adopt regulations and establish mechanisms for the administration of funds that it receives from international donors, so as to ensure a transparent and well-controlled system for managing international financial assistance. Such regulations may be in the form of instructions for the ministries responsible for the projects on how to manage the projects, distribute the funds and report back.

Over the review period, international partners' and donors' support for the environmental sector became the predominant source of environmental expenditure channelled through MoEFWA. The Government established sectoral mechanisms for managing external assistance, including in the environmental sector. To this end, DSDC, under the Council of Ministers of Albania, in cooperation with donors and MoEFWA, created the Sector Working Group on Environment. Its aim is to ensure that external assistance is effectively coordinated and supports sector strategy aims.

A donor database comprising data about all active donors since 1994 was established by DSDC, in cooperation with the Donor Technical Secretariat. Government-donor roundtables were regularly organized during recent years. As a result of improved coordination between the Government and the donor community, and national ownership of the development agenda, donor aid reflects well national development priorities.

Recommendation 3.5:

The Ministry of Environment should intensify its efforts to strengthen its cooperation with the European Environmental Agency and fulfil all obligations accordingly.

Albania has maintained a mixed record of cooperation with EEA. The country cooperates with EEA in the framework of EIONET. From a very low base, the environmental data flows from Albania have gradually improved over recent years; however, the timeliness and quality of supplied data still leave much to be desired. The country provided a contribution to several flagship reports of the EEA, including Europe's Environment: The Fourth Assessment (2007) and The European Environment: State and Outlook (2010).

Chapter 4: ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND INFORMATION

Recommendation 4.1:

(a) A national centre for environmental monitoring, subordinate to the Ministry of Environment, should be set up as a management unit to fulfil the goals and objectives of monitoring activities and information flow for environmental management purposes. The centre should:

- *Draw up a monitoring programme that prioritizes the measurements needed (goal-oriented approach) for environmental management nationally and internationally, following requirements of the European Environmental Agency; monitoring institutes should be involved in this process;*
- *Make the environmental monitoring network more reliable;*
- *Assess and interpret monitoring and other data;*
- *Draft reports on the state of the environment;*
- *Establish a pollutant release and transfer register with reference to the current negotiations on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers under the Aarhus Convention.*

EFA was established in 2006 as a legal entity under MoEFWA. The main purpose of this was to streamline the institutional set-up supporting monitoring activities, as well as the use of monitoring information in the policy-making process.¹ According to the provisions of the new 2011 Law on Environmental Protection (yet to come into force), EFA will become the competent authority for the management of the National Monitoring Network for the Environment which includes all institutions performing environment-related monitoring tasks. Progress made in specific areas is as follows:

- The overall structure and main components of a monitoring system were outlined through the EU-funded StEMA project². Environmental Monitoring System (IEMS) covering all environmental topics was designed. Concerning implementation, priority was given to air and water, for which partial developments have been achieved. The IEMS structure was based on EU requirements and EEA recommendations for monitoring and reporting to ensure harmonization and comparability of data as the basis for future integration of the system at various levels. The implementation of IEMS as designed by the StEMA project has proved to be slow and weak after the project completion due to the complexity of the monitoring system in relation to the existing environmental status, institutional set-up for monitoring and economic constraints. To accelerate the implementation of the proposed IEMS in 2010, a new EU/IPA-funded project (CEMSA) was put in place building on StEMA project recommendations.
 - Annual contracts based on tendering are still used for providing monitoring services to MoEFWA.
 - The presentation of the data collected remains factual, without any real ex-post or ex-ante analysis.
 - Annual SERs are being prepared by EFA but they are limited to a description of the situation, lacking integration and cross-cutting sectoral analysis.
 - No progress was recorded in the practical implementation of the PRTR Protocol.
- (b) *To set clear-cut objectives and ensure coherency in the information programme, the national centre for environmental monitoring should prepare a conceptual framework on the flow of environmental statistical data from collection to the target audiences, in cooperation with the national statistical institutes.*

The StEMA and the current CEMSA project, both funded by the EU, have assisted in the development and gradual implementation of an IEMS in Albania. Environmental statistics are still in their infancy.

¹ The 2006 DCM on the establishment of the Environment and Forest Agency, No. 579

² StEMA ran from 2006 to 2008; see: <http://www.seda.org.al/Documents/StEMA%20English.pdf>

- (c) *The environmental monitoring centre should benefit from the equipment obtained under the Lake Ohrid Programme. To fulfil monitoring tasks, the budget of the Ministry of Environment for monitoring should be increased.*

EFA has been gradually equipped with monitoring equipment under various projects. The costs of operation and maintenance are not yet secured from the MoEFWA budget. There is a severe shortage of monitoring equipment at the regional level and in the newly created river basin authorities. Substantial financial and human shortages are faced by the environmental sector at both national and regional levels.

Recommendation 4.2:

The Ministry of Environment should strengthen the information and public relations unit within the Ministry, inter alia, to assume the functions currently undertaken by ECAT-Tirana. The tasks of the information unit should include: dissemination of information to decision makers and the public, and promotion of awareness about the environment.

The recommendation was implemented successfully with a need for continuation and ensuring sustainability in the provision of environmental information.

As the main information provider, MoEFWA has established a Division for Public Information and Information Technology which has the following tasks:

- Passive dissemination of environmental information – by providing environmental information, answering questions from interested members of the public and receiving visitors requesting environmental information
- Active dissemination of information – mainly via the Ministry website but also through a monthly electronic newsletter. The website is quite comprehensive and systematically updated.

Recommendation 4.3:

The Ministry should ensure that the relevant provisions of the Aarhus Convention are fully implemented, taking into account the Convention's implementation guidelines. The new Law on Environmental Impact Assessment should incorporate public participation mechanisms at both the national and local levels. Even though the country has knowledgeable experts, general training for governmental and municipal officials (inspectors, clerks) on public participation and awareness raising should be developed in the near future.

The provisions of the Aarhus Convention are gradually being implemented, with the most successful outcome related to the first pillar on access to information. Public participation in the decision-making process has also shown some progress, especially in terms of public consultation in the drafting of new legislation. There is still a low level of public access to justice on environmental matters; in practice, very few cases have been taken – NGOs have initiated administrative proceedings, or have addressed the People's Advocate³ or a court of law on an environment-related issue.

Recommendation 4.4:

- (a) *A strategy on awareness raising on environmental issues should be developed by the Ministry of Environment and thoroughly implemented by the Environmental Information Centre*

³ The People's Advocate Institution safeguards the rights, freedoms and lawful interests of individuals from unlawful or improper actions or failures to act of public administration bodies and the third parties acting on their behalf. His or her duty is to prevent conflicts between the public administration and the individual. See: <http://avokatipollit.gov.al/English/index.htm>

aiming at all user categories and using all kinds of media. A training programme for journalists, particularly on environmental issues, should be instituted;

In 2005, Albania, alongside the other UNECE countries, adopted the ESD Strategy as a practical instrument to incorporate key themes of sustainable development into the region's education systems. As first steps towards transposing the Strategy into the national context, Albania designated a National Focal Point for implementation and adopted a National Strategy and Action Plan for ESD.

(b) The public's right to access information should be ensured by the Ministry of Environment by establishing binding procedures. In the meantime, governmental and local authorities responding to requests from the public should take immediate action;

The 2005 Prime Minister's Order on Improving Transparency through an Increased Use of the Internet and Improvement of Existing Websites, No. 202,⁴ was issued to improve the transparency of the work carried out by public institutions through increased use of the internet and improvement of existing websites. Furthermore, according to the 2008 revision of the Law on Environmental Protection, the 12 REAs must compile and submit to their regional LGUs bi-annual reports on the state of the environment in the region and also make the report available to the public.

(c) To increase awareness, media briefings, public events, information materials, linkages with other government entities, schools and universities, and other environmental initiatives should be organized by the Ministry of Environment and its subordinated entities. Where possible, communication should be established through broadcasts on TV and radio and debates in newspapers.

The websites of MoEFWA and EFA remain the main sources of environmental information at the national level. An electronic newsletter with a limited distribution is produced by MoEFWA on a monthly basis in order to facilitate the dissemination of environmental information. Articles on environmental topics in the local media are sporadic and there is not yet a professional environmental journalism in the country. In 2005, the basis was created for the introduction of environmental education into the national curriculum. This process was facilitated through the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between UNICEF, the Netherlands, MoES and MoEFWA.

Recommendation 4.5:

Through the "access to environmental information and public participation" mechanism, the Ministry of Environment could encourage a more independent and active NGO network, which could help to consolidate democracy. The NGOs should actively lobby for environmental issues. The environment-related NGO community should also strengthen environmental education by organizing campaigns, exhibitions and other educational activities.

Cooperation between major environmental NGOs and MoEFWA has been gradually developing on the basis of memoranda of cooperation. A new Memorandum of Understanding was prepared by MoEFWA to be concluded with the NGO Ecolëvizja and is currently in the process of signature. Ecolëvizja is a network of 37 environmental NGOs with different profiles, covering the whole territory of Albania. The Ministry is currently drafting memoranda of cooperation to be concluded with other relevant environmental organizations.

⁴ Letter "i"; see: www.pad.gov.al

The new Division for Public Information and Information Technology created in MoEFWA has good contacts with main environmental NGOs, without having a regular calendar of meetings. A more formal dialogue with NGOs takes place within the context of the monthly steering meetings of the three Aarhus Information Centres.

The NGOs are playing an increasing role in facilitating public access to environmental information. An example of this is provided by Ecolëvizja, which publishes a weekly newspaper accessible online.

On several occasions, policy papers were prepared by NGOs, discussed and agreed by a number of interested organizations and submitted to MoEFWA for consideration. There is also progress in including NGOs in the decision-making process. One good example is the NGO's involvement in the development of new environmental legislation such as the 2011 Law on Environmental Protection.

There is, however, weak involvement of NGOs during the practical implementation of legislation.

PART II: MANAGEMENT OF POLLUTION AND OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Chapter 5: AIR MANAGEMENT

Recommendation 5.1:

Albania should accede to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its protocols. (see also Recommendation 3.2)

The recommendation was partly implemented. See also recommendation 3.2.

Recommendation 5.2:

The Ministry of Environment should start submitting air emission inventories as soon as possible, following the methodology of CORINAIR and the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP).

The recommendation was only partly implemented. To date, MoEFWA has not succeeded in establishing a regular framework for compiling and reporting on emissions inventories. A partial inventory of gas emissions for 2004 was prepared within the StEMA project, according to the CORINAIR methodology. Thanks to foreign support, in 2011 an emissions inventory was compiled for the year 2008 and available air emissions data were submitted to EMEP, as well as to EEA. Funds for another inventory are also secured. However, no sufficient in-country capacity was built to follow up on the inventories prepared so far and on regular reporting on emissions according to the international requirements.

Recommendation 5.3:

The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health should cooperate in planning and establishing a unified network to monitor ambient air quality and deposited matter that will comply with ambient air quality European Union standards and the standards set by the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

Monitoring of air quality in Albania is performed according to the 2009 DCM on the Rules and Procedures for Compilation and Implementation of National Environmental Monitoring, No. 1189, by scientific institutions contracted to and funded by MoEFWA. These institutions are EFA, IPH and CANP. The monitoring of air quality complies with international practices to a certain extent.

Recommendation 5.4:

The Ministry of Health should study further the occurrence of high radon concentrations in indoor air. Mapping areas with a high concentration of radon in soil, water and air would greatly help land use and construction planning.

The recommendation has not been implemented in the way it has been proposed, i.e. no new surveys of indoor air radon have been carried out by the Institute of Geosciences. Instead, the following activities have been implemented:

- Regulations for radiation protection, safety and security of ionizing radiation sources were prepared by the RPC⁵ and approved by the Council of Ministers;
- The RPC issued two decisions relating to the Code of Practice for Users in Nuclear Medicine and to dosimetry levels for medical exposure, which were approved by the Council of Ministers;
- Regulation on the limit of radon concentration in buildings, radionuclides and construction was prepared in 2011 and is awaiting approval.

The regulation sets the radon level limit of 400 Bq/m³ as the level for considering remedial action in old dwellings and 200 Bq/m³ as the reference level for new dwellings. The values follow the EC recommendation 90/143/Euratom on the protection of the public against indoor exposure to radon. There is no legislation on mitigation activities or the way they will be implemented, or specification of the levels above which financial support for mitigation can be provided. The recently released WHO guidelines on selected indoor air pollutants include radon outline countermeasures and their effectiveness in health terms.

Overall, legal measures have been updated and the standards harmonized with the European ones, but no mitigation actions have been attached to them.

Recommendation 5.5:

- (a) The Ministry of Environment, together with the Ministry of Health, should adopt and implement new air quality standards and emission standards for stationary sources. Air quality standards should be in line with World Health Organization's guidelines on ambient air;*
- (b) The Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, should develop, adopt and implement new emission standards for new mobile sources according to relevant European Union standards. Adequate vehicle emission control schemes should be set up as soon as possible. Relevant European Union control schemes could serve as examples;*
- (c) The Ministry of Industry and Energy, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, should adopt and implement new fuel quality standards. Adequate fuel quality control schemes should be set up as soon as possible. It is vital to establish appropriate schemes to control the content of sulphur in diesel fuel and the content of lead in petrol.*

Parts (a) and (b) of the recommendation are partly implemented. In practice, the environmental quality standards are not clearly determined and the major pollutants are not detected. Maximum acceptable values of air quality for the most important atmospheric pollutants are determined in the

⁵ The Radiation Protection Commission was established by MoH as the national regulatory authority (under the Radiation Protection Law, No. 8025, of 1995, amended in 2008), to oversee and ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Law and other regulations in the field of radiation protection. Its Committee is chaired by the Minister of Health. The Radiation Protection Office is the executive arm performing inspection of physical and legal entities working with ionizing radiation.

Law On Protection of Air from Pollution, No. 8897, of 16.05.2002 (*Official Journal*, No. 26, June 2002, p. 825), and in the DCM On the Approval of Air Quality Norms, No. 803, of 04.12.2003 (*Official Journal*, No. 101, December 2003, p. 4337). The air quality standards are under preparation.

In Albania, the norms of discharge into the air from vehicles are provided in the 2004 Guideline on Permitted Values of Atmospheric Polluting Elements in the Environment Resulting from Gas Emissions and Noises Caused by Vehicles and the Ways for Controlling Them, No. 6527, as amended by the 2010 Guideline No. 12, on Some Amendments in 2004 Guideline No. 6527, on Permitted Values of Atmospheric Polluting Elements in the Environment Resulting from Gas Emissions and Noises Caused by Vehicles and the Ways for Controlling Them, as well as in the Vehicle Control Manual. The main purpose of this Guideline is to define the permissible limits of air pollutants in the ambient air discharged from gases by the use of vehicles and other road traffic.

Evaluation of the technical condition of vehicles, with regard to atmospheric pollution due to gaseous emissions and noises, is a component of the vehicle technical control system, defined by the Instruction of MoPWTT on the Technical Control of Road Vehicles, No. 3413. However, the effectiveness of controls is unsatisfactory and the Government has transferred vehicle inspections to the private sector. Compulsory technical control of vehicles, including controls on gas emission, are undertaken on the basis of the 2009 Concession Agreement between MoPWTT and the Swiss Societe Generale de Surveillance S.A., with exclusive rights to conducting such controls for 10 years.

Recommendation 5.6:

Immediate action should be taken and policy instruments should be examined to curb the import of the most polluting vehicles. One possibility could be to further differentiate the import tax on cars, e.g. according to the European Union standards they were required to meet when they were first registered. In order to reduce the sulphur content in diesel fuel, as well as in fuel oils, the introduction of a sulphur tax levied on the content of sulphur in fuel could be considered. Regarding petrol, the tax policy should be modified in order to stimulate the changeover to unleaded-petrol-fuelled cars.

Implementation is partially achieved. Until 2011 an import tax on used cars was levied, differentiated according to the age of the vehicle with older ones paying higher taxes. However, the tax has been abolished in 2011 and it is not clear whether a new environmental tax will be applied. A tax on fuel is applied. The tax is higher for gasoline than diesel.

Recommendation 5.7:

- (a) *To avoid uncontrolled growth in emissions and other environmental problems from the transport sector, the Government should give more priority to the development of urban public transport and better traffic management;*
- (b) *The Government should consider allocating more resources to the development of rail transport through the most important international and national transport corridors, for passenger as well as for freight transport.*

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation.

Chapter 6: WATER MANAGEMENT

Recommendation 6.1:

(a) *The Government of Albania, through the National Water Council and with the support of all its members, should urgently enforce the 1996 Law on Water Resources and the related regulations. The Technical Secretariat of the National Water Council should set in motion the following expeditiously:*

- *Management by river basin should be put into practice as provided by the Law; river basin authorities should be set up and should manage their water resources;*
- *Water abstraction permits for groundwater and surface water should be properly registered; this should apply to all entities defined by the Law, i.e. hydropower plants, irrigation enterprises and drinking-water enterprises (be they private or State-owned);*
- *Proper implementation of sanitary protection perimeters is required around the water uptakes intended for drinking water;*
- *Enforcement of the water abstraction charges; the enterprises abstracting water should report on the quantity they abstract; the related data should be registered, compiled and used as a management tool, in particular at the basin level;*
- *The money collected from the water abstraction charges should help pay for the functioning of the river basin authorities and their projects.*

The 1996 Law on Water Resources is seen as outdated and is currently being revised. The new Law on Integrated Management of Water Resources is expected to be approved in 2012. Progress made in specific areas is as follows:

- Water resources management in Albania is organized within six administrative river basins (Drin–Bunë, Mati, Ishëm–Erzen, Shkumbin, Seman and Vjosë). Based on this allocation, six river basin councils (RBCs), each headed by the prefect of the region, act as the administrative body. Each is responsible for the protection, development, fair distribution and operation of water resources within its own basin boundaries. Beside them, six river basin agencies (RBAs), which act as executive and technical bodies of the RBCs, are responsible for on-site inspection regarding all activities in terms of water resource usage. However, they have little authority to enforce legal and regulatory procedures and are still weak, understaffed and unstable, suffering especially from fragile financing.
- In practice, registration of water abstraction permits for groundwater and surface water in general is very weak and covers only a small part of the actual water abstraction. Even if there are water abstraction permits, the extracted discharges are not subject to any control. Given the lack of adequate monitoring systems for abstracted waters, the rapid changes in the agricultural, mining and industrial sectors and the continuous movements in population, the current situation in terms of water supply and water demand in general is very difficult to assess. Especially in the agricultural sector, the non-existence of a working permission system, together with the lack of monitoring systems, endangers the aquifers and may lead to over-abstraction and resulting saltwater intrusion in coastal areas.
- It was not possible to obtain any information concerning the implementation of sanitary protection perimeters for water uptakes for centralised water supply systems. Some questions concerning related aspects were not answered. In general, however, the quality of groundwater suffers from pollution through discharge of untreated wastewater from urban settlements, as well as from industries with obsolete technology and by the extensive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture.

Concerning the water uptakes of decentralized (and therefore non-controlled) systems – which affect 85 per cent of the population – sanitary protection does not, in principle, exist.

- Monitoring and reporting of the quantity of abstracted water more or less exists, with some exceptions. However, the management of these data is insufficient. The data are neither organized in a working database nor used as a management tool.
- It was not possible able to obtain any information on water abstraction charges. Some questions concerning related aspects were not answered.

(b) *The coordination role of Technical Secretariat of National Water Council should be strengthened and it should implement its tasks and obligations deriving from the 1996 Law on Water Resources.*

This recommendation was implemented. As one important reform in the water sector, the former Technical Secretariat was reorganised into the GDWA in the summer of 2011 and provided with more staff and responsibilities. The GDWA is subordinated to MoEFWA and supports the NWC through its three directorates (Directorate of Fishery, Directorate of Water Policies and Technical Directorate).

Recommendation 6.2:

The National Water Council, with the help of its river basin agencies, of the regional environmental agencies and of the construction police and State police, as appropriate, should combat the illegal uptaking of gravel and sand. Places where this practice can take place under control without endangering the environment should be defined under EIA procedures.

Illegal gravel abstraction decreased from an estimated 20 per cent in 2000 to an estimate of less than 5 per cent in 2011 and controlled places now exist. However, the impacts of illegal uptaking of gravel and sand in the past still affect river beds at present, with corresponding impacts on irrigation and flood protection infrastructure, especially in the low-lying reaches of watercourses.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization should encourage all relevant administrative authorities, and chiefly the municipal authorities of the biggest cities, to develop urban plans and especially master plans for water supply and sewerage networks. Municipalities should strengthen their competences regarding water infrastructure planning and management, taking advantage of the numerous possibilities for assistance offered by the international community.

The absence of urban planning based on integrated planning (which takes into account supply and disposal, among other aspects), and illegal new constructions, are still fundamental problems, and steps forward have been small over the last 10 years. Together with the continuing boom in building construction and continuous movements in population, this is an obstacle to sustainable and adequate urban planning.

Recommendation 6.4:

The Ministry of Environment should identify and draw up a list of industrial hotspots that have a significant adverse impact on the environment, and rank them. Environmental objectives, and in particular water emissions objectives, for these plants or for particular industrial sectors (firstly the oil industry, private and State-owned), should be set or negotiated and introduced into the environmental permits. Environmental permits for these facilities should be compulsory and handled at the Ministry, and environmental, economic and other incentives worked out in parallel. (see also recommendations 2.1, 7.3(b), and 9.1)

There is a list of industrial hotspots with the focus on big industrial plants. Concerning environmental permits, water emissions objectives are not comprehensive and do not sufficiently comply with EU standards. There are significant problems in terms of implementation and enforcement.

Recommendation 6.5:

The Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with the National Water Council and other entities (ministries and institutions) involved in water management, should draw up water quality standards and set water emission limits, taking as reference the corresponding standards of the European Union.

Wastewater effluent norms were approved by the 2005 DCM on Allowed Norms for Wastewater Effluent before Discharge into Environment, No 177 and the 2005 DCM on Allowed Norms of Liquid Releases and the Zoning Criteria of Receiving Water Environments. The elaboration of water standards are currently ongoing, as well as draft decisions on urban wastewater treatment, priority substances in water and on standards of water quality.

Recommendation 6.6:

Under the joint auspices of the National Water Council, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Territory Adjustment and Tourism, should revise, adopt and implement the draft national water strategy of 1997 without further delay. It should define a clear policy towards a sustainable use, management and protection of Albania's water bodies. The strategy's revision should involve all the ministries that are members of the National Water Council and institutes that carry out water management tasks. (see also recommendation 1.1)

There is no updated water resources management strategy including mid-term and long-term financial planning and corresponding prioritization for investment in the different sectors. However, relevant ministries have prepared various strategic documents in the corresponding sectors which should act as a legal framework for water resources management. An Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Position Paper was completed in February 2011. Based on an analysis of the general situation of water resources management and experiences from other countries, this paper clearly points out problems and barriers to progress in the water sector, outlines priorities and identifies areas where water resources management in Albania should be supported.

Chapter 7: WASTE MANAGEMENT

Recommendation 7.1:

The Ministry of Environment in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Energy should speed up the development and implementation of a law and regulations on hazardous waste and chemicals management. This law should be consistent with European Union legislation.

The recommendation was partially implemented. The Law on Hazardous Waste Administration, No. 9537, was adopted on 18.05.2006. The new 2011 Law on Integrated Waste Management, No. 10463, regulates hazardous waste management in line with EU requirements. The implementation of this legislation is not completed yet.

Recommendation 7.2:

The Government, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization and the municipalities, should take the necessary steps to find financial and human resources to:

- *Assess the environmental impact of existing municipal landfills and take measures to reduce that impact;*
- *Monitor groundwater and surface water in the vicinity of landfills;*
- *Introduce municipal waste management systems in rural areas; and*
- *Launch public information campaigns on municipal waste management, focusing on waste prevention, through the educational system and the mass media. In this context the Ministry of Environment should prepare special guidelines on the prevention, reduction and handling of municipal waste for municipalities and the public.*
- The first point was not completed. Only the disposal site in Sharra, Tirana was investigated in detail as one of the key hotspots. Only general information was collected on other disposal sites in the country.
- The second point was not completed. No data on local water pollution from disposal activities is available.
- The third point of the recommendation is not feasible. Albania has to upgrade collection services in the urban areas first and then expand services to rural areas.
- The fourth point was partially completed. International projects usually include a component on public education and awareness. MoEFWA has introduced new standards for MSW management but these are not sufficiently enforced.

Recommendation 7.3:

- (a) *The Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industry and Energy and the municipalities should focus on providing financial and human resources to mitigate the risks caused by abandoned dangerous industrial sites, in particular, they should:*
- *Relocate people and farm animals away from contaminated sites, because homes are also contaminated by those hazardous substances which are at the sites;*
 - *Decontaminate sites and prevent any further contamination;*
 - *Introduce a groundwater and surface water monitoring system around the sites, especially for drinking water, and ensure that contaminated groundwater is not used for drinking or irrigation;*
 - *Assess the environmental impact, and especially the human health impact, of all contaminated sites;*
 - *Local authorities should, as the first urgent step, put up fences and special warning signs around contaminated sites in their jurisdiction, indicating that they are contaminated, and forbid access to them.*

The implementation of this recommendation is in progress. A list of hotspots was established. The Mining Division of MoETE is monitoring these sites and has developed a plan for their remediation. Progress in specific areas is as follows:

- The perception of threats from contaminated sites is still low in Albania. People were relocated from the Porto Romano area.
 - Five hotspots were cleaned completely and clean-up of several others continues. The majority of hotspots were investigated and new sites were added to the list.
 - There is no new information available on water contamination from polluted sites.
 - Investigation of hotspots included identification of populations in danger and characterization of risks.
 - Remediated sites include fencing of areas of highest risk.
- (b) *The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Industry and Energy should apply appropriate legislation to improve waste-water treatment for all industrial facilities in*

operation in order to prevent further contamination of the environment and, in particular, oil losses during oil exploration, transport and refinery. (see also recommendation 6.4)

See implementation of Recommendation 6.4.

Recommendation 7.4:

The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should collect and find ways to contain, store, and destroy obsolete pesticides and other toxic chemicals in order to reduce risk. Cooperation with neighbouring countries and the international community could help solve this problem.

The recommendation has been implemented. All obsolete pesticides were exported for proper destruction.

Recommendation 7.5:

The Ministry of Environment, in close cooperation with the private sector and line ministries, should promote the establishment of a cleaner production centre, which would: conduct environmental audits, provide training and disseminate information on cleaner production; and promote the introduction of ISO 14000 standards.

Implementation of the recommendation is not completed. However, privatization of industries leads to the introduction of cleaner technologies.

The National Cleaner Production Programme for Albania (NCP-ALBANIA) is part of the One UN Programme implemented in Albania and is aimed at building the capacities of Albanian industries to be more resource efficient and to reduce their environmental impacts by promoting Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP). The project is being jointly implemented by MoEFWA and MoETE with technical support from UNEP and UNIDO.

NCP-ALBANIA consists of two components which are being implemented in parallel: a) an industrial support component, which is aimed at building capacities for RECP demonstration and application in Albanian industries (supported by UNIDO), and b) a policy component, which is aimed at developing the necessary institutional framework for the effective promotion of RECP (supported by UNEP).

NCP-ALBANIA was officially launched on 30 March 2010 and will be implemented over a period of three years in three phases. The primary aim is to foster the widespread application of RECP methods, practices, technologies and policies among businesses and other organizations to contribute to sustainable industrial development and sustainable consumption and production in Albania. The Programme includes capacity development, promotion and professional training, industry demonstrations and support for the creation of supportive policy mechanisms. It targets the hotel/tourism accommodation, agro- and food-processing, and mining and metallurgical sectors.

ISO certification is being conducted by several companies, mostly with assistance from foreign companies. Information concerning the current number of certified companies in accordance with international standard ISO 14001 is not available. There are some private companies in Albania that have been certified by international consulting and authorised companies (mostly Italian). However, at least four Albanian consulting companies (Qplan-ine Sh.p.k., QM Consulting Sh.p.k., ZIG Consulting Sh.p.k. and TBI Consulting Sh.p.k.) claim to be providing consultation on management system implementation in accordance with ISO standards. Qplan-ine Sh.p.k. has

provided consulting for more than 20 Albanian enterprises on the implementation of quality and environmental management systems in accordance with ISO standards.

Recommendation 7.6:

The municipalities should undertake the necessary measures to collect and store separately the construction debris at the existing dump sites, so that it can be treated and possibly reused.

The recommendation has been implemented. Separate monitoring of construction and demolition waste was introduced. Construction waste is disposed of separately from MSW.

Recommendation 7.7

The Ministry of Health, in conformity with the Ministry of Environment, should improve the management of health care waste by standardizing record-keeping, monitoring and good waste-management practices. The Ministry of Health should also identify and encourage local independent suppliers of waste containers and equipment to provide appropriate equipment for health care waste. (see also recommendation 12.6)

The recommendation has been partially implemented. Management of medical waste has improved through several international projects and the activities of two private companies providing collection and sterilization of medical waste. Several hospitals use hydroclaves for sterilization of medical waste. Disposal of sterilized medical waste in municipal disposal sites continues.

Chapter 8: BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOREST PROTECTION

Recommendation 8.1:

The Ministry of Environment should support the responsible authorities to establish management plans for protected areas under the new Law on Protected Areas, for example by financing studies and developing methodologies and procedures.

The recommendation has partly been met. Management plans have been elaborated for four of the 15 national parks designated in the country (plans are available for Dajti and Butrinti National Parks, and the Llogora–Karaburun Peninsula area encompassing Llogora and Karaburun–Sazani National Parks), one protected landscape area (Vjosë–Nartë) and one managed nature reserve (Kune–Vain–Tale). Currently two more management plans are in preparation – for the Ramsar site encompassing two protected areas (Liçeni i Shkodrës Managed Nature Reserve and Lumi Buna–Velipojë Protected Landscape Area) supported by the World Bank, and for Prespa National Park supported by the KfW project. Due to budgetary constraints, progress in elaboration of management plans for all other protected areas in Albania is slow and, to a large extent, dependent on the availability of external financial support while their effective implementation remains the future task of the majority of protected area administrations.

Recommendation 8.2:

To achieve the goals of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and fulfil the obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ministry of Environment should develop a legal act on biodiversity conservation.

The recommendation has been fully met. The 2006 Law on Biodiversity Protection, No. 9587, was successfully adopted and published (*Official Journal* No. 84, 09.08.2006, p. 2847).

Recommendation 8.3:

The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should develop, as soon as possible, a proper institutional and legal framework for the medicinal and aromatic plant market

to promote the cultivation of such plants. Their collection should be based on biodiversity conservation criteria and methods, and on a licensing system.

The recommendation has partly been met. Little information is available on the progress achieved so far. Control over unauthorized collection of such plants has improved in recent years, and the pressure on them has slightly decreased, which is also due to the educational campaigns, training and technical assistance provided under the Albania Private Forestry Development Program (APDFP).

Recommendation 8.4:

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food should establish a permanent national reforestation scheme and undertake actions to protect forests from legal cutting and fires, based on secured financial contributions.

The recommendation has partly been met, although not by the originally addressed authority, as since 2005 forestry management (including reforestation, forestry law enforcement by preventing illegal cuts, and forest fire prevention) has remained solely within the scope of competencies of MoEFWA. The national reforestation scheme has been launched, but progress is still slow and based on external donors' support rather than secured financial contributions. A dedicated fund for reforestation is planned within the framework of the Regional Development Fund. The effectiveness of forestry law enforcement regarding the prevention and prosecution of illegal forest harvesting and of forest fire prevention is still limited. This is due to both the topography and relief of the country and the underdevelopment of the technical forestry road network which results in the inaccessibility of larger forest complexes, and the limited staff and operational capacities of the forestry field services, which lack basic facilities and equipment.

Recommendation 8.5:

The Ministry of Environment should take steps to include those sites that fulfil criteria of wetlands of international importance, to be included as RAMSAR sites and in the national network of protected areas.

The recommendation has been fully met. Three wetland areas in Albania (Karavasta lagoon, Butrinti wetland complex, and Shkodra Lake and Buna river wetland complex) are currently listed as Ramsar sites of international importance, especially as waterfowl habitats. Their total area accounts for over 83,000 hectares, or some 2.9 per cent of the country's territory. All three wetland areas have been included in the national network of protected areas by their proclamation on the basis of relevant DCMs, although under different IUCN categories (Divjakë-Karavasta and Butrinti National Parks, Liqeni i Shkodrës Managed Nature Reserve and Lumi Buna-Velipojë Protected Landscape Area). Albania cooperates with Montenegro on the integrated management of Shkodra Lake Managed Nature Reserve and Ramsar site under the project supported by the World Bank and GEF. A similar success story is Albanian cooperation with Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the joint management of the Prespa lake basin, which has been identified as the potential fourth Ramsar site of Albania, while the area already has the legal protective status of a national park (Prespa National Park).

PART III: SECTORAL INTEGRATION

Chapter 9: ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRATION

Recommendation 9.1:

As a basis for environmental integration, the environmental permit system should be improved by developing clear procedures for conducting environmental impact assessment and linking the

environmental impact assessment to environmental permits. In addition, existing environmental regulations should be better enforced (see recommendation 2.1).

The recommendation has not been implemented.

Recommendations 9.2:

The line ministries, with the support of the Ministry of Environment, are encouraged to establish environmental targets in the preparation of their sector strategies and plans. An implementation plan – clearly defining actions, responsibilities, time frame and financing – should support the achievement of the environmental targets.

The recommendation was only partly implemented. In 2007, sector strategies and some action plans were prepared; however, the integration of environmental aspects into sector strategies is generally weak. Sometimes it is limited only to the level of priorities and can not be recognized as having been given due emphasis in actions and budget allocations.

Recommendation 9.3:

The Government, in conformity with the report on 'Immediate Measures for Implementation of the NEAP', should establish environmental units within ministries. These units should be allocated sufficient resources.

In line ministries, the units responsible for environment issues do not function adequately and this situation sometimes makes inter-ministerial consultation at the expert level difficult.

Recommendation 9.4:

To improve environmental integration and the decision-making process, the Council of Ministers should establish cross-sector or inter-ministerial working groups at the expert level for the development of laws and policies.

Inter-ministerial consultation at the expert level can be initiated by MoEFWA in the course of preparation of a new legal document, programme or action plan. It is the responsibility of MoEFWA to decide whether line ministries should be invited for personal consultation with an expert working group or can provide written comments on prepared drafts. A letter of invitation is usually signed by the General Secretary of MoEFWA and, in special cases, by the Minister. The process is the same where a sector ministry plays the role of initiator and MoEFWA is one of the invited parties. Horizontal cooperation among ministries cannot always work perfectly without mandatory regulations and assigned units on all sides.

Since 2004, donor coordination at the sector level is supported by the sector working groups (SWGs) working under DSDC. SWGs are composed of Government and donor representatives. They concentrate on information exchange regarding ongoing projects but they are gradually focusing also on forward-looking policy coordination issues, prioritization of assistance and monitoring of implementation. One of them is dedicated to environmental issues. These working groups, whose aim is to ensure that external assistance is effectively coordinated and supports sector strategy targets, have meetings once or twice annually.

Recommendation 9.5:

The Ministry of Environment should ensure that environmental impact assessments and environmental audits are part of the privatization process and that environmental investments and environmental clauses are included in the sales agreement.

The recommendation has not been implemented.

Chapter 10: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN AGRICULTURE AND SOIL PROTECTION

Recommendation 10.1:

As a basis for environmental integration, the environmental permit system should be improved by developing clear procedures for conducting environmental impact assessment and linking the environmental impact assessment to environmental permits. In addition, existing environmental regulations should be better enforced (see Recommendation 2.1).

Environmental impact assessments are carried out for all irrigation schemes. This provision is included in the Law On Environmental Impact Assessment, No. 8990, of 23.01.2003 (Annex II) as well as in the new Law On Environmental Impact Assessment, No. 10440 of 07.07.2011, approved in June 2011, that will enter into force in January 2013. The new Law is fully transposing the EU Directive on EIA. EIA for irrigation schemes is conducted also for pollution of drainage water by agrochemicals.

Recommendation 10.2:

- (a) *The National Council for Territorial Planning should draw up a master plan for land use for all Albania. A national land administration responsible for managing publicly owned land (State land) should be created with the authority to carry out transactions and oversee private transactions (control of property rights and leasing prices) for agricultural land;*
- (b) *All municipalities, under the supervision of the National Council for Territorial Development, should urgently draw up spatial plans for land use, beginning with the rural municipalities located around large cities (Durrës, Tirana) which are subject to intense pressure from urbanization, in order to save the good agricultural land in these regions. After public hearings, those plans must be implemented very quickly.*

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation. Territorial adjustment is the responsibility of the National Council of Territorial Adjustment which analyses and approves plans for territorial development. There are such development plans for Tirana and Durrës.

- (a) The National Territorial Council (NTC), established by the provisions of the 2009 Law On Territory Planning, No. 10119, is the decision-making body responsible for the approval of national instruments of territorial planning, according to the this Law.

According to the provisions of the Law On Territory Planning, the Council of Ministers should start the preparation a National Master Plan, no later than six months after the entry into force of the Law and should approve it no later than two years after the commencement of the full effects of the Law.

Other structures established by other laws also contribute in this field. One is the State Committee on Soil Protection, established with the implementation of the 2004 Law On the Protection of Agriculture Land, No. 9244. Under the chairmanship of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection (MAFCP), this inter-ministerial body has the following duties and responsibilities: to coordinate the work of the MAFCP, the MoEFWA and other institutions, as well as of LGUs in charge of the implementation of this Law regarding soil protection, for all activities that are carried out on agriculture land, are related to it and impact on agriculture land protection.

- (b) Under the provisions of the Law On Territory Planning, NTC promotes the elaboration of national and local territorial plans by relevant planning authorities and ensures that they fulfil technical and procedural standards established in the Law. In terms of

implementation of the law, local authorities should start the preparation of local master plans and also start the elaboration of land use plans that will enter into force after their approval by NTC.

Recommendation 10.3:

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food should promote sustainable management measures for wildlife protection and for pastures, including a moratorium on the use of systematic fertilization and weed-control chemicals.

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation. This is the responsibility of MoEFWA. In recent years restrictions on some services, including the use of fertilizers and of weed chemicals, have indirectly contributed to pastures preservation.

MoEFWA aims to allow pastures to be rented on a multi-annual basis in order to create pasture growth for livestock farming. The Law On Pasture Management determines measures and rules for the well-being of pastures in such cases.

Recommendation 10.4:

- (a) *The Ministry of Agriculture and Food, through the Soil Science Institute, should collect and aggregate in a manner useful for decision makers all existing information about soil erosion and past soil pollution by mining and other industries so as to determine sound land use on the national level. Particular attention should be given to areas at high risk;*
- (b) *The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should jointly finalize the draft law on soil protection and submit it to Parliament for adoption;*
- (c) *The Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with line ministries and National Council for Territorial Planning, should develop a strategy and action plan to combat soil erosion.*

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation. Prevention of soil erosion is an objective of the Intersectoral Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) 2007-2013. Soil erosion measurements are taken. In addition, NES2, under MoEFWA's competency, encompasses prevention of soil erosion and the appropriate measures that need to be taken, including reforestation.

- (a) The Centre of Agriculture Technology Transfer of Fushe-Kruje (that plays the role of Soil Science Institute) has the institutional framework, administrative capacities and the database to carry out the job.
- (b) This recommendation is fully met. The Law On the Protection of Agriculture Land, No. 9244, of 17.06.2004, has been prepared and approved jointly by MAFCP and MoEFWA.
- (c) The need for a strategy and action plan to combat soil erosion is included in the national legal framework as well as in several programmes. A Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Soil Erosion has been an integral part of National Reports of Albania to the UNCCD. However, the enforcement of such programmes and plans is still weak.

Recommendation 10.5:

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food needs to strengthen its extension services, particularly for small farmers. The extension information centres should promote organic farming and low-input farming and provide information on a range of critical issues, including, for example, agricultural waste management, sanitary measures and protection of waters.

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation. Agricultural extension services are established within MoAFCP. However, there is only one such extension service that is a public body. MAFCP has a unit named Counselling Service. Part of its job is to provide support for organic farming as well as assistance on a number of issues.

Recommendation 10.6:

The Government should take the necessary steps to establish certification procedures for organic farming meeting international eco-standards.

There is no information on the implementation of this recommendation. The 2011 Law on Environmental Protection, that will enter into force in January 2013, includes some measures for the implementation of eco-labelling. The Counselling Service assists farmers in the process of conversion from traditional to organic farming. Over 100 farms and vineyards are certified organic (for produce including olives, vegetables, wine, etc.). These certified farms are included in the subsidy schemes that are part of the policies promoted by MAFCP.

Chapter 11: COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (INCLUDING TOURISM)

Recommendation 11.1:

- (a) *The Government, together with the Ministry of Territorial Adjustment and Tourism, should stimulate implementation of the integrated coastal zone management plan for the entire coastal region. All necessary regulatory instruments to implement the plan should be adopted as soon as possible;*
- (b) *To facilitate implementation, the Government should establish a special inter-ministerial coastal zone management committee, which consists of relevant ministries and local authorities.*

The Government, specifically MoPWTT as the lead agency, is implementing the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-up Project (ICZMCP) in the southern coastal zone of Albania, with the objective of contributing to sustainable tourism development in this area. Under the ICZMCP and institutional capacity-building, the Southern Coastal Development Plan (SCDP) has been prepared, which aims at promoting sustainable natural resource management and cultural heritage preservation while minimizing the negative environmental impacts of local development and infrastructure. The SCDP was approved by the National Council of Territorial Adjustment on 17 July 2008. The SCDP is an instrument to promote sustainable tourism as a principal catalyst for economic growth in the regional economy. Subordinate to the regional SCDP, local development plans (including land use plans) for the six municipalities and communes in the southern coastal area would allow municipalities and communes to improve their land use planning regulations and issue building permits based on transparent building regulations and clear land use zoning.

The Inter-ministerial Working Group on Planning (IWGP) has been composed of high-level decision-makers (at the level of Deputy Ministers) from MoPWTT (chair), MoETE, MoEFWA and the Ministry of Tourism, Cultural Affairs, Youth and Sports (MoTCYS). The IWGP continued operating during project implementation. Later, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) was appointed, which is responsible for providing overall project oversight, reviewing project progress and assisting in resolving obstacles to project implementation. The PSC is also composed of high-level decision-makers (at the level of Deputy Ministers) from MoPWTT, Ministry of Finance (MoF), MoTCYS, MoI, MoAFCP and MoEFWA (represented by the Advisor to the Minister), along with the Mayor of Himara Municipality and the Deputy Mayors of Durrës Municipality and Saranda Municipality. The Deputy Minister of MoPWTT is the Head of the PSC.

Recommendation 11.2:

The Government should address the problem of illegal building along the coast, giving special attention to measures to eradicate existing illegal buildings along the coast.

The problem of illegal building along the coast has been addressed by the Albanian Government over the years. Especially in the frame of the South Coast Development Project of the World Bank, a number of campaigns were undertaken for the demolition of illegal buildings, in cooperation with the National Urbanistic Construction Inspectorate.

Recommendation 11.3:

The Ministry of Environment should develop and implement appropriate instruments to achieve the sustainable management of coastal resources. Special importance should be given to the improvement of the monitoring systems, particularly regular monitoring of beach water quality.

Some projects were carried out in the major resorts. Responsibilities have changed since the first EPR. The ICZMCP will serve as a pilot project and will be extended to other parts of the coastal zone.

Regular monitoring of beach water quality is achieved through the annual monitoring programme supervised by the Agency of Environment and Forests (AEF). IPH carries out beach water monitoring, according to the provisions of the DCM On the Monitoring in the Republic of Albania, No. 1189, of November 2009.

Recommendation 11.4:

The National Water Council, the Ministry of Territorial Adjustment and Tourism and the Ministry of Environment should work to improve waste-water treatment and solid waste management in large coastal cities, and prevent hazardous materials pollution, in order to reduce pollution from land-based sources.

Under the ICZMCP, a wastewater treatment plant will be constructed in Himara Municipality. A feasibility study is currently being carried out. The ICZMCP will support the development of modern waste management facilities and services in the southern coastal zone of Albania. Specifically, it will support the construction of a regional sanitary landfill (i.e. a disposal facility for non-hazardous solid waste) in Bajkaj (near Saranda) in accordance with EU standards and directives, to fully comply with approved national strategies and plans for the construction of regional landfills in Albania. The proposed landfill construction aims at improving environmental conditions and will allow to close the existing operational dumpsite in Saranda. In addition, the project will include the construction of a transfer station close to Himara Municipality.

Recommendation 11.5:

The Ministry of Territorial Adjustment and Tourism, assisted by the Ministry of Environment, should implement the sustainable tourism development plan, including the preparation of carrying-capacity assessments for the most attractive tourist locations.

Some assessments were carried out, the results of which were taken into consideration in the ICZMCP.

Chapter 12: HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT**Recommendation 12.1:**

(a) The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health should tighten their intersectoral cooperation in the implementation of environmental health policy and work jointly at a more

concrete definition of the tasks to be undertaken and the measures needed to accomplish those tasks;

- (b) *The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health, within the context of health care reform, should review the roles and organization of their inspectorates and ensure the coordination and efficient use of scarce resources. Working conditions should be improved and more attention given to institutional memory and appropriate training for all inspectors.*
- (a) Cooperation between MoEFWA and MoH exists, but not to a satisfactory level. National committees and working groups for the development of policies and regulations usually consist of representatives of both ministries. However, there is no mechanism in place for intersectoral collaboration between the two ministries in the implementation of joint activities.

There is no integrated environmental and health policy programme to enable the establishment of a sustainable mechanism of intersectoral collaboration with governmental support. The European Environment and Health policy process has not been sufficiently used, and a national intersectoral group to organize follow-up on the Parma Declaration commitments has not been set up.

Overall, progress has been very limited.

- (b) Organization of the environmental and health inspectorates has been reviewed in the context of the Law on Public Health and the Law on Environmental Protection, and their tasks and responsibilities clarified based on complementary sectoral activities as in the case of monitoring ambient air and bathing water quality. In the tourist high season, local collaboration on environmental and health activities on a daily basis is strengthened through task force mechanisms, but clear agreement on coordination of routine work is lacking.

The qualifications of inspectors vary across the country as do laboratories and the technological basis of inspections. The use of standardized protocols (e.g. checklists), quality control and quality assurance of laboratory analyses, and the creation of databases and computerised information reporting have yet to be implemented throughout the country.

The 36 public health inspectorates may not represent an optimal number vis-à-vis available resources. MoH is currently undertaking a consolidation of the health inspectorates as a part of the Government initiative to pool together sectoral inspection bodies into one inspectorate, thus disentangling control and enforcement from the policy process. This reform was launched in mid-2011 and it is yet to be fully implemented.

Overall, there is progress on this recommendation but coordinated implementation of joint activities on a daily basis is still lacking. Considerable effort is also needed to ensure uniform control of environmental health status, comparability of results and the ability to trace issues back to their source and implement interventions to counteract identified problems.

Recommendation 12.2:

The Ministry of Health should clarify and assess the respective roles of the institutions within the Ministry and subordinated institutions involved in environmental and health activities, and they should be given adequate consideration within the health care reform framework.

The central and subordinated institutions in charge of environmental health activities within MoH have been assessed and adequately positioned in the public health infrastructure of the health

system. Since the first EPR, the public health infrastructure has been progressively built to become the most consolidated health service in the country. The integration of nationwide programmes on disease prevention, including vaccination, reproductive and child health, epidemiological surveillance, etc., with vertical interventions in terms of local hygiene–sanitary and epidemiological networks, has started producing positive results in population health. Furthermore, the Law on Public Health adopted in 2009 lays down the institutional setting, tasks and responsibilities for environmental health.

The integration of primary health care into the public health infrastructure offers further advantages to environmental health concerning infectious disease surveillance and control. The surveillance system has been upgraded with an early detection module, and laboratory-confirmed surveillance has focused on the food- and waterborne infectious diseases, shigellosis, brucellosis and salmonellosis.

Overall, substantial progress has been made and a modern public health service integrating environmental health created. Care should be taken to ensure that these positive developments are being sustained and further enhanced.

Recommendation 12.3:

The Ministry of Health should develop a methodology for health aspects within Environmental Impact Assessment.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented. The 2009 Law on Public Health introduces the process of health impact assessment and assigns the responsibilities to the State Health Inspectorate. Further specification through by-laws and other regulatory mechanisms is needed to advance practical implementation of the Law, ensuring coherence and integration into EIA.

Though the importance of health impact assessment of the environment as a policy tool is recognized, a plan of activities, timeframes, responsibilities and associated costs has not yet been outlined within MoH.

Recommendation 12.4:

The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, should develop an environmental health information system and good spatial and temporal coverage.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented. Since the first EPR, several developments which favour the establishment of an integrated environmental and health information system have taken place, such as:

- Legal provisions: the 2009 Law on Public Health for monitoring public health and its determinants, and for establishment of an information system; the DCM on Data Reporting Obligations to the Institute of Public Health
- International policy requirements: follow-up on the commitments made at the Fifth (Parma) Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health and related enhancement of the Environment and Health Information System (ENHIS)
- Advances in monitoring ambient air pollution and surveillance of food- and waterborne diseases
- Involvement of public health professionals in international activities on development of policy-relevant indicators such as those related to the WHO/ENHIS system; implementation of national projects on the establishment of health-relevant indicators for some environmental issues such as climate change

- The existence of a dedicated department of health monitoring and evaluation within MoH as one of the policy-making users of the information system
- Discussion of the tasks and activities required for indicator-based monitoring and information support for policy-making in Albania (at the training seminar on environmental health for public health professionals, involving stakeholders from the environmental and health sectors and WHO, held in Tirana, early 2011).

The establishment of intersectoral mechanisms to drive the process on the environment and health information system (e.g. in the form of a steering group or task force, and an institutional network of key data holders) remains a priority.

The two ministries need to work together to agree on a tangible product of the system and to prepare a road map of the process. So far, no actions have been undertaken in this direction.

Recommendation 12.5:

- (a) *The Ministry of Health should promote studies to clarify the health impacts of pollution, with a special focus on urban centres and hotspot areas;*
- (b) *The Ministries of Transport, Health and Environment should undertake actions to implement the World Health Organization's Charter on Transport, Environment and Health. The Ministries should also give consideration to the WHO-UNECE Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).*
- (a) Studies of health impacts of pollution have been conducted, such as of: air pollution on the respiratory health of school children; traffic-related outdoor air pollution on the health of traffic police in Tirana; oil fields on the health of local residents, etc. The study on air pollution and the respiratory health of schoolchildren further benefits from the participation of country experts engaged in multinational projects such as assessment of indoor air quality and health in schools, and the recently launched European large-scale comprehensive study of health risks of indoor air pollution in schools.
- (b) A number of actions along the main axes of THE PEP have been implemented at the national, regional and local levels. They were very often isolated activities with limited collaboration. The existing policy programmes, such as the 2008 Sector Strategy of Transport for the period 2008-2013 and the National Transport Plan (2006), do not enable the systematic integration of health and environment aspects into transport policy, monitoring of its implementation or assessment of its impacts to serve policy updating or formulation. The inter-ministerial committee on road safety is still not functioning; there is no funding attached to it.

In November 2011, the international Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 was launched with Albania's National Road Safety Strategy for 2011-2015, which has been approved by Parliament and endorsed by the Prime Minister. The activities envisaged in the Strategy match the main pillars of the Decade's Global Plan of actions. A multisectoral working group would take forward the debate on the implementation of the National Strategy and its actions would be presented to the Parliament for further endorsement.

Recommendation 12.6:

- (a) *The Ministry of Health should improve the management of health care waste by:*
- *Drawing up a national policy on health care waste management;*
 - *Deciding on a set of minimum standards for health care waste management to be applied in each hospital;*

- *Giving the medical staff clear responsibilities for health care waste management in their department;*
- (b) *The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment should improve and stimulate the separate collection of medical waste at all hospitals and treat it or incinerate it. To this end hospitals must receive additional funds from the regular budget. (see recommendation 7.7)*

The recommendation is partly implemented. A strategic plan for health-care waste management for Tirana and the surrounding region was prepared in 2001. Staff from key hospitals in Tirana and other larger towns were trained in medical waste management. Responsibilities are defined in a new regulation, but implementation has still not been undertaken nationwide