

Session 4: Highlights on some regional “hot topics”

Climate, land, energy, water (CLEW) nexus

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The priorities of the new Albanian Government for the environment protection

- Achievement of required (EU, WHO) standards on air quality, **water** supply and treatment, noise, urban waste, protected areas with the purpose of improving the life quality;
- Enforcement of the laws on environment protection, in particular, the polluter pays principle will be strictly enforced. To this end, the new government will reform environmental agencies and institutions and will increase the punitive measures against polluters and damagers of environment assets.
- Government will discipline as a priority economic activities that cause air and **water** pollution, compromise tourism potential, damage forests and cause erosion.
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emission and ozone depleting substances with the aim of contributing to prevention of **climate changes**;
- In particular will be reduced in half the air pollution level in the large urban areas of the country. Government will adopt and enforce European-approximation environmental standards on emissions and ambient concentration, following an ambitious agenda. Within its four-year term, the Government shall enable elimination of surfaces polluted **waters** in the coastal area.
- Priority has been given to all the “environmental hot spots”, caused by old and abandoned industries, aiming to fully neutralize and rehabilitate them. In specific cases families exposed to risk from these sites will be relocated.

- Protection and maintenance of all ground and underground **water** resources for present and future use;
- Protection and improvement of **land** with the purpose of maximizing its fertility, minimize erosion, and prevent pollution;
- Special importance is given to the prevention of soil erosion which is one of the main causes of the plain areas flooding. Government will stop all the exploitive economic activities in the area which have a high risk of erosion. Specific rehabilitation of protective dams, forests and pastures will be supported.
- An effective **spatial** and development integrated **planning**, which takes into consideration the economic, social and environmental objectives in a balanced manner;
- Environmentally friendly incentives for economic operators and individuals will be adopted with the principles of the free market. Fiscal incentives will be applied in order to promote reduction of pollution by businesses and individuals, investments in clean technology, conservation of energy, efficient use of natural resources and investment in environment.
- Protection and improvement of biodiversity, protected zones and species with the purpose of preserving the natural and cultural heritage of our environment in line with our European and international commitments;

Climate Change and Energy

The main focus for these issues is the improvement in energy efficiency in all sectors in order to reduce the need for load shedding (power cuts) and the level of emissions.

A concerted program of public awareness and of enforcement of relevant standards, (such as those for the insulation of buildings) is required.

The most powerful instrument for reducing emissions is mainstreaming the objective of reducing greenhouse gas effects in the decision-making process at various levels:

- Government-particularly the strategies on energy, economy and transport must include steps for limiting emissions;
- Industry and Commerce- must be encouraged to be efficient in terms of energy and emission reduction;
- Individuals - must be persuaded to see energy efficiency as a criterion in their actions and purchases.

Such measures need to be accompanied by amendments to the legal framework and an introduction of economic instruments in order to encourage reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and use of renewable energy resources.

- Is this a policy priority in your country?

We are working on preparation the strategic documents that should addresses the climate change issues as a priority in our country.

- Are regional scientists, politicians collaborating on this?

Not in the right level.

- What message could be highlighted in a GSDR on this?

Increasing the awareness in the government level as well as setting up capacities in national and local level. The participation of academic level in climate change issues is a must.

- How could messages from a GSDR be used at the national level to advance this topic?

Through integration of climate change in sectorial policies, transposing the EU legislation on climate change to the national legislation, establishing the relevant infrastructure within the Ministry of Environment, and setting up the national network.

- What would be the needs of the region in terms of trans-national collaboration, capacity building, etc.?

Identification of common projects in capacity building to address adaptation and mitigation.

Water

- Is this a policy priority in your country?

The strategic objective of the Albanian Government but also the political vision of the Ministry of Environment and other line institutions responsible for water – related issues, is the good administration of the water resources, rational use, improvement of the aquatic environment, protection of the inner surface waters, transitional waters, marine waters, ground waters and their status.

- Are regional scientists, politicians collaborating on this?

The new on “Integrated Water Resources Management” has been adopted and will enter into force by 16.12.2013. The new law was prepared with the assistance of all the stakeholders involved in the water sector, ranging from politicians, professors to the local communes. Several meetings and workshops were held due to this purpose. Furthermore, a long list of DCMs will be prepared under a defined programme till 2016, which will help towards a proper implementation of the water law. Therefore, the involved stakeholders will be invited again to contribute, including politicians as well.

- What message could be highlighted in a GSDR on this?

The EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60 which is fully transposed in the Law Nr. 111/2012 dated 15.12.2012 on “Integrated Water Resources Management”, requires two major pillars to be put on place:

- Drafting of River Basin Management Plans. The seven main rivers in Albania fall into six river basins Drin-Buna, Mati, Ishëm –Erzen, Shkumbini, Semani and Vjosa. For one river basin (Mati) there is a management plan drafted by the competent authorities. It was agreed to draft the management plan for Ishem-Erzen with the assistance of Italian government. Under the “Water Resources and Irrigation” project with the World Bank assistance, it will be prepared Drin-Buna and Seman river basin management plans. Regarding Vjosa and Shkumbini river basin there is no development which might lead to the drafting and adoption of the management plans due to lack of financial means for the respective projects.
- Entering into bilateral and multilateral Agreements for trans-boundary water courses management. There is an Agreement between Albania and Montenegro for the lake Skadar in 2003, and in 14.12.2010 between the two countries was signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the lake Skadar and Buna river. There is bilateral agreement between Albania and Greece for trans-boundary water resources management, but the collaboration has not resulted so effective. In November 2011 it was signed a Memorandum of Understanding for “Drin river basin: a strategic shared vision” between Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, Greece and Macedonia. Hence, there is a crucial need for realizing the bilateral agreement with Kosovo and Macedonia.

- How could messages from a GSDR be used at the national level to advance this topic?
 - **By providing useful assistance in collaborating with representatives at national level of Albania and its neighbor countries (Kosovo and Macedonia) in order to achieve bilateral agreements towards a better management of the shared water resources.**
 - **By bringing together stakeholders from Albania and Greece in the field of water – related issues in order to discuss the possibility of drafting a shared river basin management plan for Vjosa river basin, following the Drin example.**

- What would be the needs of the region in terms of trans - national collaboration, capacity building, etc.?
 - **Institutional and legal reforms in the field of water management;**
 - **Completing the all river basin management plans and support on the implementation;**
 - **Drafting and implementation of the measures related to floods and droughts;**
 - **Exchanging experience and the best practices in integrated water resources management;**
 - **Establishing an inventory for groundwater and support on its management;**

Land Use Management

These issues are of crucial importance to environmental management. Two main issues arise:

- Land Use Planning (spatial planning)
- Enforcement of controls

Measures being taken by the Ministry of Public Work, Transport and Telecommunication to reform the spatial planning system are fully supported by the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry of Environment will work with the Ministry of Public Work, Transport and Telecommunication to provide guidance to local authorities on the integration of environmental considerations into the new land use plans. Land use management plans (spatial plans) will need to be subject to the provisions for strategic environmental assessment: this will require additional resources in the Ministry of Environment to monitor the implementation of these provisions.

- Rapid and sustainable development is the fundamental objective of the new Albanian Government. Albania should develop by protecting to the utmost its natural resources from contamination and degradation, consequently promoting environmental values and put them to the benefit of the country's economic prosperity.
- Such a development will be guided by the new Government vision and policies, which will ensure an integrated development of both rural and urban areas whilst supporting environmental protection. The Government will be attained through an effective synergy of specific sector policies into a unique and integrated approach.

Thank you for your attention!!!