

SDG era in Albania started based on a long and successful experience of eradicating extreme poverty and reducing the risk of social exclusion, ensuring high quality basic universal education and promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Albania has embraced the Global Partnership, designed to make a strong contribution to the attainment of Agenda 2030 and is fully committed to implement the Agenda 2030 in the context of the National Strategy for Development and Integration and the European Integration process.

The accession to European Union is the overarching priority and the most important strategic ambition of the country as the as the EU Integration process has full political consensus and nation-wide support as a solid way in achieving a sustainable future for the people of Albania. The success of the European Integration process, culminating with the European Commission's unconditional recommendation in April 2018 to open accession talks with Albania, has been guided by the progress and completion of many complex and inter-related reforms, among which five areas are identified as priorities in this process:

- public administration reform, stable institutions and a modern, professional and depoliticized civil service;
- strengthening the independence, efficiency and accountability of judicial institutions;
- increasing the fight against corruption;
- increasing the fight against organized crime;
- ensuring the protection of human rights, including property rights.

The Albanian Government has affirmed full commitment to the Agenda 2030. The coordination and the leadership of the process is provided by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania and comprising key government institutions as well as other stakeholders from the business community, civil society, academia and international organizations, including the technical support provided by the Department of Development and Good Governance in the Prime Minister's Office and the contribution of the United Nations agencies in Albania. The Albanian Parliament has unanimously approved a resolution confirming Albania's commitment to Agenda 2030 as it plays an important role in monitoring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The scope of the Voluntary National Review is to provide information on the process of implementing the SDGs in Albania and the results achieved. The focus of the report highlights the progress around the key government priorities, which include:

- Innovative and citizen-centered public services;
- Recovery and financial consolidation of the energy sector;
- Fostering innovation and competitiveness, Foreign Direct Investments and domestic investments;
- Integrated water management;
- Integrated land management;

- Financial structural reform.

The report integrates the progress achieved through two important transformational processes, the justice sector reform - designed to strengthen the judiciary system, and the urban renaissance program - aimed at transforming and promoting important features of Albania, with a great focus on upgrading the development centers across the country. The Voluntary National Review elaborates on Albania's people centered efforts in leaving no one behind, by focusing on two important aspect of the theme, relevant to building resilient societies: women empowerment and social inclusion.

To support the implementation of the Agenda 2030, Albania has prepared an SDG baseline report which indicates that 140 SDG targets (83% of the SDG targets) are directly tied to specific components of the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2016 – 2020 pillars. The linkages between Albania's policy goals and the SDG targets in the national strategies and policy documents, depict 134 SDG targets (79% of SDG targets), linked to the specific objectives of the national strategic policy framework. This framework is most harmonized with the SDG targets in Goal 3 "Good health and well-being", Goal 7 "Affordable and Clean Energy", Goal 8 "Good Jobs and Economic Growth" and Goal 9 "Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure", while the least harmonization is with Goal 14 "Life Below Water".

The achievement of the SDGs in Albania would require further and substantial commitment and cooperation of all the relevant stakeholders in the country. Key challenges in this process include the efforts of establishing the national vision for the year 2030, particularly in the most relevant policy areas for Albania, the identification of policy gaps and acceleration of action in priority areas, the prioritization the SDGs in the local context and the strengthening of the institutional capacities of all the key stakeholders engaged in the process, including the monitoring and reporting institutions.