

# Albania

## Environmental Performance Reviews



### Third Review - **Highlights**



## Legal, policy and institutional framework

**The Government has progressed with aligning its national agenda, as set out in the National Strategy for Development and Integration for the period 2015–2020 (NSDI-II), with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** The challenges include developing a national vision until 2030 and aligning the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation and monitoring efforts with the European Union (EU) accession process. Knowledge about the SDGs among central government authorities is insufficient. Awareness of the SDGs among local government authorities, civil society, academia and the private sector is low.

**Since 2011, Albania achieved significant progress in the adoption of new, modern environmental legislation.** This process was driven by the efforts to approximate the EU environmental acquis, as the country was granted candidate status in 2014. However, some subsidiary acts due to be adopted are still lacking and the implementation of legislation lags behind. Sometimes the legislation is too advanced vis-à-vis the administrative, institutional and financial capacities in place.

**The adoption of the new environmental cross-cutting strategy for the period 2015–2020 has been delayed.** As of late 2017, although several issue-specific strategies on environment exist, Albania does not have a visionary umbrella policy framework for environmental protection.

**The strategic environmental assessment (SEA) instrument is relatively new.** The key challenge is to ensure proper application of the SEA instrument by key sectors of the economy. The proposing authorities often do not follow all the requirements and steps of the SEA procedure. There have been cases of sectoral documents bypassing the SEA requirements. The evaluation of the environmental effects of a plan or programme, especially with regard to cumulative effects, represents a challenge for staff in the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

**Progress was achieved in reforming the environmental enforcement system when, in 2014, the State Inspectorate of Environment and Forestry was established as a separate public institution subordinated to the then Ministry of Environment.** The introduction of a risk-analysis-based approach to inspection planning has started. However, the related guidance materials are not yet in place and training is needed. Challenges include strengthening the transparency of inspectors' work and improving coordination among various inspectors at local level. Compliance promotion is part of the mandate but compliance promotion activities are not performed.

**The country is pursuing a territorial reform accompanied by administrative and financial decentralization.** Implementation of their environment-related functions, including the new functions assigned, represents a serious challenge for municipalities. Few municipalities have adopted local environmental action plans, despite the legal requirement to do so. The process of developing local integrated waste management plans has started. Preparation of air quality plans for zones and agglomerations is another challenge.



### **BOX 1: TARGET 17.14 OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



#### **Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

#### **Target 17.14: Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development**

This target covers one of the systemic issues for the achievement of SDGs. It addresses how the country works across policy sectors and coordinates them to achieve joint objectives of sustainable development, and the extent to which policies in various sectors are coherent and aligned with sustainable development. The global indicator for target 17.14 refers to the existence in the countries of mechanisms to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

If judged solely by this indicator in the ordinary meaning of its words, Albania does have the mechanisms to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. Even though no national council for sustainable development is in place, the recently established integrated policy management groups (IPMGs) and various interministerial working groups serve as consultation and integration mechanisms aimed at increasing policy coherence. However, building such institutions to enable integrated approaches to decision-making and policymaking is one thing, while making them effective is another.

Policy coherence for sustainable development is the very purpose of the Integrated Planning System introduced in the country. The system is well designed, with clear rules in place, but it does not yet function smoothly, with delays occurring in the development and adoption of strategic planning documents and the lack of reporting on some strategic documents. The link between reporting and designing future policies on the basis of lessons learned in implementation of previous ones is not always present.

Future efforts to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development could therefore focus on: (i) ensuring the effectiveness of the IPMGs, to be demonstrated by the results they deliver; and (ii) improving the functioning of the Integrated Planning System, in particular the aspects of timely planning and delivery, reporting and transparency.

## **Recommended measures:**

- **Ensure that the SDGs are integrated into future planning documents;**
- **Prioritize the development and adoption of subsidiary legislation;**
- **Strengthen strategic planning in the environmental field;**
- **Ensure that all documents subject to SEA undergo an SEA;**
- **Ensure regular publication of compliance and enforcement data;**
- **Assist municipalities in the implementation of their environment-related functions.**

Note: The sections entitled "Recommended measures" represent an abridged version of selected recommendations from the environmental performance review (EPR) report and are provided for information purposes only. Please consult the text of the report for the full text of recommendations as adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy.



## Greening the economy

**Governmental strategies provide policy declarations and some initiatives on renewable energy, energy efficiency and tourism, but these are not managed within a common framework referencing the principles of green economy.** The measures related to green economy that are implemented in the country are scattered and no national policy document specifically refers to green economy as a target.

**The implementation of the National Strategy for Integration and Development for the period 2015–2030 and several other documents in line with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires investment in environmental infrastructure and services.** To date, the Institute of Statistics has not adopted an international classification of environmental expenditures, which would facilitate the international comparability of national statistics. Another challenge is to develop statistics for the measurement of green growth indicators.

**Environmental taxes provide only a soft incentive for pro-environment behaviour by individuals and organizations.** Mostly, tax rates have been set with no consideration of the impact and effects of emissions on the environment in terms of externalities or environmental damage to citizens and businesses. Environmental taxation and fiscal instruments are not subject to harmonized regulation or management at the central level and no specific unit within the central government is vested with direct responsibility for the environmental tax system.

**Albania does not earmark financial resources for environmental protection.** No national environmental fund or state budget line for an environment-related purpose has been established. Furthermore, the conditions for widening public and private environmental expenditure do not exist.

**Albania has recently made significant investments in the tourism sector.** However, the uncertainties over property ownership, lack of formalization and standardization of the services and poor access to basic infrastructure, energy and waste management remain the main obstacles to pronounced tourism development. No strategy specifically targeting sustainable tourism has been developed.

**A sound legal framework setting up the functions of local government units has been approved, which includes the possibility for them to collect local fees and indirect taxes.** However, fiscal decentralization has not yet been applied. Local governments lack appropriate financial resources or local revenues proportionate to their own, shared and delegated competences.

**A significant lack of appropriate infrastructure is evident in the public utilities sector.** It is considered responsible for some of the inefficiencies in this sector, including water leakage, inaccurate metering and poor waste management.



**BOX 2: GREEN MARKETS**

Small developments are perceivable in markets for quality food and agricultural products. The most significant green market in the country is the hydropower sector, but the environmental content of the energy sold looks minimal in the consumers' perception. Albanian consumers still seem to show an inelastic demand for green goods and services and more price-sensitive behaviour. The relative abundance and low price for hydropower as well as the low prices of agricultural products seem to drive consumption decisions in the fields of energy and foods. The very limited use of certification schemes and other environmental labelling initiatives confirms the early stage of development of green habits and markets in Albania.

**BOX 3: FINANCING THE WATER SERVICE SECTOR: NON-REVENUE WATER**

Non-revenue water (NRW) is a challenge in Albania. On average, 67 per cent of the drinking water produced is non-revenue. Between 2007 and 2014, the share of NRW in total abstracted water was always higher than 62 per cent, peaking at 70 per cent. NRW causes significant commercial losses that translate into budgetary imbalances and financial sustainability problems for the water service providers. The main causes have been identified in underbilling (responsible for an estimated 60 per cent of commercial losses), bypassing of water meters, illegal connections (24 per cent) and inappropriate working of metering devices (16 per cent). Reducing the volume of NRW could help finance the water sector without burdening consumers with excessive costs, while also addressing cost issues and full cost recovery needs in particular.

**Recommended measures:**

- **Develop a statistical information system for environmental expenditures based on existing international standards;**
- **Develop statistics for the measurement of green growth indicators;**
- **Promote sustainable tourism;**
- **Establish financial mechanisms to support environmental protection activities;**
- **Continue the process of fiscal decentralization;**
- **Support local government units and service providers to increase resource-efficiency, especially in the waste and water services.**



## Environmental monitoring, information, public participation and education

**There has been mixed progress regarding environmental monitoring since 2011.** Despite certain improvements, the annual national environmental monitoring programme is significantly underfunded: the National Environment Agency receives only 3 per cent of the budget needed to implement the programme and is required to prioritize activities. There are no accredited laboratories for analysing air quality.

**Albania has defined 160 national environmental parameters and indicators that are to be monitored.** However, only a subset of the most relevant parameters and indicators is being used for monitoring and annual reporting. The list of indicators is also outdated in relation to the continued process of transposing EU legislation into Albanian law.

**Each year, an indicator-based state of environment report is produced.** While these reports are important to keep track of the state of and trends in the environment, a regular, comprehensive state of environment report based on the Driver–Pressure–State–Impact–Response (DPSIR) framework is not being undertaken to complement the annual indicator reports. The link between the findings of the annual state of environment reports and policy-setting is not clear.

**Despite several international projects, there is no operational national integrated environmental management system (IEMS) in place in the country.** Databases and platforms exist but are neither integrated nor connected. IEMS, once functional, would require maintenance and further development.

**Information on the environment is accessible free of charge to the public through the websites of the governmental authorities.** The extent of environmental information available on the websites is ultimately limited by the amount of monitoring, and hence data and information, and this is reflected in Albania's relatively poor progress in implementing the shared environmental information system principles.

**Since 2011, there has generally been an increase in the number of requests for environmental information and greater participation in public consultations on significant issues.** Nearly all information requests are fulfilled within the 10-day limit. While access to information is fairly good at the central level, it remains more challenging at the municipal level.

**The 2015 National Programme for Environmental Education in High Schools for the period 2015–2017 is a good step to reach target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aimed at ensuring that all learners acquire, by 2030, the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.** However, no financial and human resources are dedicated to the implementation of this policy document. In many cases, environmental education and education for sustainable development (ESD) are still being carried out by international agencies and donors.



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**There has been mixed progress on environmental education since 2011, yet, with current plans and initiatives, the future prospects look to be brighter.** ESD has yet to be integrated and delivered in the current educational system.

#### **BOX 4: POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTER**

The decision enabling the functioning of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) entered in force in June 2016. The PRTR requirements will apply to data on the emissions of about 230 companies. The scope of the PRTR includes routine, intentional and accidental release of pollutants, in addition to the transfer of waste and wastewater pollutants. In early 2017, the National Environment Agency launched an online reporting tool for the PRTR. The main challenge is to ensure the flow of information from the operators.

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### **Recommended measures:**

- **Increase financial resources for environmental monitoring;**
  - **Ensure the functioning of IEMS;**
  - **Through IEMS, improve access to information and make near-real-time data available to the public;**
  - **Complement the current annual indicator-based reporting with a more comprehensive state-of-environment report every three to four years;**
  - **Develop a regular programme to support the integration of environmental education and ESD into the curriculum;**
  - **Improve teacher training on environmental education and ESD.**
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## Implementation of international agreements and commitments

**The prompt ratification of recent multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) is evidence of the political importance that the Government attributes to being an engaged participant in international cooperation in the environmental domain.** The aspiration of EU membership is the main driver for the adoption of environmental legislation in Albania, while MEAs can be considered a second major impetus. Effective response to international agreements and commitments necessitates strengthened capacity and financial resources in all involved entities, in a way that is consistent with the responsibility of being a party to MEAs.

**While Albania continues to be supported by a number of bilateral and multilateral donors, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) accounts for an increasingly large proportion of the external financial assistance received.** The Government continuously seeks to enhance coordination with the donor community. Information on environment-related projects supported by foreign assistance is collected but remains insufficient for adequate monitoring of the development and outputs of the projects.

**Efforts have been made by Albania to comply with its international reporting obligations.** However, the absence of monitoring data on species and habitats, air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has impacted timely reporting in these fields.

**There is a general absence of information provided by the Albanian environmental authorities to the public on the status of Albania's participation in global, regional and bilateral agreements and on the implementation of those agreements.** With the recent exception of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not involved in the decision-making processes with regard to the country's participation in MEAs. NGOs are rarely involved in the preparation of national reports on the implementation of MEAs.

**Since 2011, several new designations under international conventions have been made.** Under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the country designated its fourth Ramsar site (Albanian Prespa Lakes). In 2014, the UNESCO International Coordinating Council of Man and the Biosphere Programme declared the Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, the first in Albanian territory.

**Albania is clearly committed to preventing and combating air pollution and to accession to and implementation of international agreements in this domain.** Further joint work between Albania and the secretariat of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution would allow the country to become a party to the Protocol on Heavy Metals and the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants, as amended, and to undertake an in-depth assessment of the costs and benefits deriving from accession to the amendments to the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone.





### **BOX 5: TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION AND TARGET 6.5 OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



Target 6.5 focuses on transboundary water cooperation, among other aspects. One of the two global indicators is the proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation (6.5.2).

Albania is very active in transboundary water cooperation. However, not all transboundary waters shared by Albania are covered by transboundary water agreements. The effectiveness of existing agreements is also an important issue. According to the information provided by Albania in 2017 as part of the reporting under the ECE Water Convention and for SDG indicator 6.5.2, the current value for indicator 6.5.2 is 76 per cent. This level indicates a need for efforts to increase the proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation on the way to 2030.

An important issue is that Albania has not delineated transboundary aquifers in collaboration with the neighbouring countries and that delineation of water bodies and aquifers using geographical information system technologies is needed.

## **Recommended measures:**

- **Ensure administrative, technical and financial resources for implementation of MEAs;**
- **Establish a publicly-accessible system for monitoring of environment-related projects;**
- **Ensure access to the texts of multilateral and bilateral environmental agreements, including translations into the national language;**
- **Increase the involvement of NGOs in the preparation of national reports to MEAs;**
- **Become a party to the amended protocols to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.**



## Climate change mitigation and adaptation

**Total GHG emissions are relatively low (9,036.8 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2009).** However, the most recent official documents (such as the 2016 Third National Communication on Climate Change) are based on obsolete data up until 2009.

**Energy activities are the main source of GHG emissions in Albania, accounting for 39 per cent to 51 per cent of overall direct GHG emissions in the period 2000–2009.** Energy production is based mainly on hydropower, fuelwood and domestic and imported fuels used for electricity production, heat production and transport.

**The amount of GHGs emitted from industry increased from 1,118.00 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2005 to 1,701.12 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2009.** The main source of emissions was the cement industry, followed by metal production.

**The amount of GHGs emitted from agriculture decreased from 1,403.08 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2005 to 1,130.86 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2009.** This was due to a reduction in the total number of livestock during this period.

**Unlike in many countries, forests in Albania became a net CO<sub>2</sub> emitter.** This occurred due to the reduction in the volume of forest from 83.295 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2000 to 75.726 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2009.

**Albania lacks data and studies on the impact of climate change on different components of nature, including water resources, land and soil cover, forest and other natural vegetation, biodiversity and ecosystems.** Nor are studies and data available on the monetary impact of anthropogenic climate change on the country's economic sectors.

**Albania has set important targets in the area of climate change.** The Government committed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the period 2016–2030 by 11.5 per cent compared with the baseline scenario. Another target is to reduce energy consumption by 9 per cent by 2018 compared with average consumption in the period 2004–2008. In the area of renewable energy, Albania aims to achieve a 38 per cent share of renewable energy sources in gross final energy consumption in 2020.

**The country lacks policies on adaptation of different economic sectors and infrastructure to climate change, as well as to other natural and anthropogenic hazards.** At the same time, the country is vulnerable to impacts of natural and anthropogenic phenomena and hazards, such as floods, precipitation patterns, heat and cold waves, forest fires, landslides and erosion. Implementing policies that build and strengthen resilience to climate-related and natural hazards would be an important step in progress towards Albania's achieving targets 1.5, 13.1, 11.b and 13.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



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**Albania lacks specific legislation to support and promote the reduction and stabilization of GHG emissions and carbon capture and storage.** A draft law on climate change was prepared to bring to the national legislation the principles, definitions and requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and relevant EU directives. A draft national climate change strategy, which includes both the national climate change mitigation plan and the national climate change adaptation plan, is under development.

**To date, the only activities related to climate change awareness-raising were implemented in the framework of international projects.** The Government does not implement systematic measures to improve education and awareness-raising on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning, as advocated by target 13.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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## Recommended measures:

- **Include in relevant studies the impact of anthropogenic climate change on components of nature and on economic sectors;**
  - **Implement policies and measures to increase the resilience of economic sectors;**
  - **Implement measures to raise awareness on climate change mitigation, adaptation and early warning on natural and anthropogenic hazards.**
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## Air protection

**Air quality improved greatly in the course of the last 10 years.** Since 2005, emissions of sulphur oxides decreased some 35 per cent, and emissions of ammonia around 10 per cent, while emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), non-methane volatile organic compounds and particulate matter 10 µm or less in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>) increased slightly. Albania reduced the use of fossil fuels in energy production and industrial processes and introduced European standards for fuel quality.

**The negative impact of transport on air quality has increased, due to the higher number of vehicles (e.g., the number of passenger cars increased by 94 per cent in the period 2009–2014).** Intensive urbanization that is not followed by adequate development of infrastructure (e.g., district heating systems and sustainable public transport) poses a major threat to air quality.

**The current network for air quality monitoring does not allow for providing a correct picture of air quality.** The number of monitoring stations is limited and the macro- and microlocations of existing monitoring stations are not accurate. There is no monitoring station in Fier where exceedances of air quality standards were recorded in the past. Monitoring in Elbasan is affected by the microlocation of the station. The current composition of the network does not cover air quality assessment in rural or rural background locations.

**The health impact of air pollution is not assessed.** In the absence of such an assessment, Albania is not able to measure its progress towards SDG target 3.9 (by 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination) in relation to air. The population, especially vulnerable groups, is not provided with sufficient and timely data on air quality accompanied by recommendations on health protection.

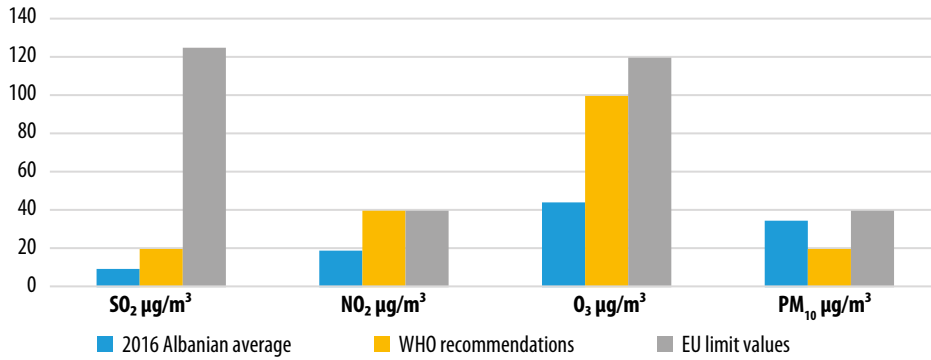
**The legal framework on air quality has been improved through the process of accession to the EU and is complemented by an adequate national policy framework.** Further efforts are needed to build capacity for development of air protection policies on the regional and local levels.

**Due to high fragmentation of the arable land, only a limited numbers of farms practise more intensive agriculture that allows them to produce for the market.** Organic farming, which can contribute not only to production of healthy organic food but also to the protection of air quality and other aspects of the environment, is not well promoted.

**Consumption of chlorofluorocarbons was phased out in 2008, so the country is now working on reducing the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).** The import of HCFCs is controlled by the import licensing system. The first phase-out step was successful, reducing the consumption of HCFCs in the period 2013–2015 by more than 50 per cent.

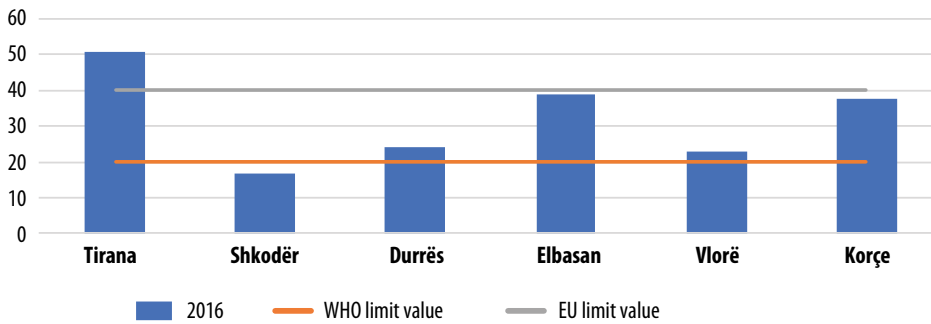


**Figure 1: Average concentrations of SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> in Albania compared with WHO recommendations of limit values and limit values set by the EU for those pollutants, 2016**



Source: National Environment Agency, 2017.

**Figure 2: Annual mean concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> in selected cities, 2016, µg/m³**



Source: National Environment Agency, 2017.

## Recommended measures:

- Enlarge the air quality monitoring network;
- Adjust the location of existing monitoring stations;
- Regularly assess the impact of air pollution on health;
- Raise public awareness on the impact of air pollution on health;
- Promote the application of organic farming principles.



## Water management



**The current monitoring data on the quality and quantity of water resources are insufficient.** Water bodies have not been identified, delineated and characterized in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). WFD-compliant classification schemes are still to be developed.

**Available monitoring data and assessment criteria do not yet allow for a comprehensive assessment of the environmental state of water bodies.** Generally, most of the rivers are polluted in their middle or lower reaches. Most groundwater bodies appear to be still of good quality, although there are insufficient monitoring data to assess their possible pollution with pesticides or heavy metals.

**The first river basin management plan (RBMP) was prepared for the Mati River basin in 2010, but it has not yet been implemented.** RBMPs are under development for the Drini-Buna, Semani and Shkumbini River basins. The lack of RBMPs clearly prevents Albania from progressing towards achieving target 6.5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**The piped drinking water supply is monitored at both the abstraction sites and selected taps.** The quality of drinking water abstracted from private or local wells in rural areas is not monitored.

**Water supply coverage in rural areas increased from 57 per cent in 2011 to 63 per cent in 2015 but remained at the same level (about 90 per cent) in urban areas.** The coverage in both urban and rural areas in 2015 lags behind the objectives stipulated in the National Strategy of Water Supply and Sewerage for the period 2011–2017.

**Sewerage system coverage remained about 51 per cent throughout 2011–2015.** There is a significant difference in sewerage system coverage between urban and rural areas but no disaggregated data are available after 2010, when there was 83 per cent coverage in urban areas and 11 per cent in rural ones.

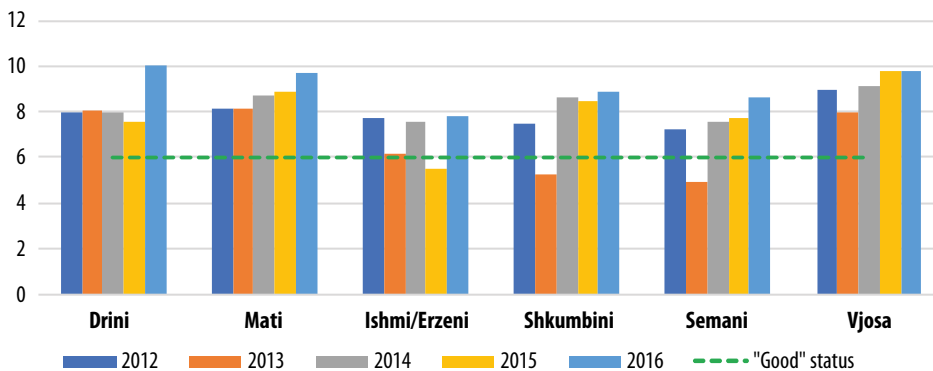
**By 2016, Albania had built – with donor support – eight urban wastewater treatment plants (UWWTPs), with a capacity covering around 25 per cent of the country’s urban population.** However, the lack of financial capacities and limited technical capacities rendered three of them idle, with unclear long-term operational arrangements. More UWWTPs are under construction.

**Non-revenue water is a serious challenge: on average, 67 per cent of drinking water produced is non-revenue water.** Non-revenue water causes significant commercial losses that translate into budgetary imbalances and financial sustainability problems for the water service providers.

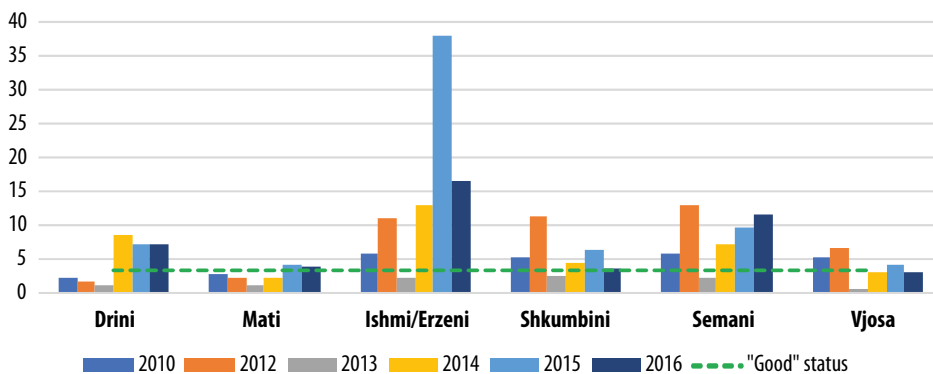
**Table 1: Water supply and sanitation, 2015**

Indicator	
Water coverage (%)	81.0
Urban	90.4
Rural	62.6
Hours of supply (hours/day)	12.1
Non-revenue water (%)	67.0
Metering ratio (%)	64.0
Sewerage coverage (%)	50.0

Sources: Regulatory Authority of the Water Supply and Waste Water Disposal and Treatment Sector, Report on the Performance of the Water Supply and Sewerage Companies, 2015.

**Figure 3: Annual average concentrations of dissolved oxygen, 2012–2016, mg O<sub>2</sub>/l**

Source: National Environment Agency, State of Environment Report 2015 and 2016.

**Figure 4: Annual average concentrations of BOD<sub>5</sub>, 2010, 2012–2016, mg O<sub>2</sub>/l**

Source: National Environment Agency, State of Environment Report 2015 and 2016.

## Recommended measures:

- Enable water monitoring and assessment in line with the WFD requirements;
- Prepare WFD-compliant schemes for assessment of the status of surface water, coastal water and groundwater bodies;
- Develop and implement RBMPs compliant with WFD;
- Ensure a strong policy framework to support progress on water supply and sewerage.



## Waste and chemicals management

**Waste management has undergone profound improvements during recent years in terms of legislative background: Albania has transposed the most important part of the EU acquis related to waste.** However, the implementation and enforcement of these laws is at a very low level. Albania still lacks the basic infrastructure for proper waste management.

**The financing of the costs of waste management is still unresolved, due to the lack of a comprehensive cost and tariff system that reflects the real costs of the services. The “polluter pays principle” is not functioning in the current municipal solid waste management system.** This seriously hinders the willingness to further invest in waste infrastructure. Much-needed capital investments have slowed down since 2011; only one new investment in facilities was completed between 2011 and 2016.

**Despite the legal and regulatory framework, separate waste collection is rarely done systematically.** Recycling companies fail to acquire enough raw material from the domestic market to operate at full capacity. Enforcing separate collection of waste and mandatory recycling and reuse of waste would help Albania achieve progress under target 12.5 (by 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**There are still numerous industrial and mining sites that present a potentially serious risk to the environment and human health.** From 2011 to 2016, there were no significant improvements or works on hotspot rehabilitation. Continuing to remediate these industrial and mining sites might reduce deaths and illnesses from contaminated sites and contribute to achievement of target 3.9 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

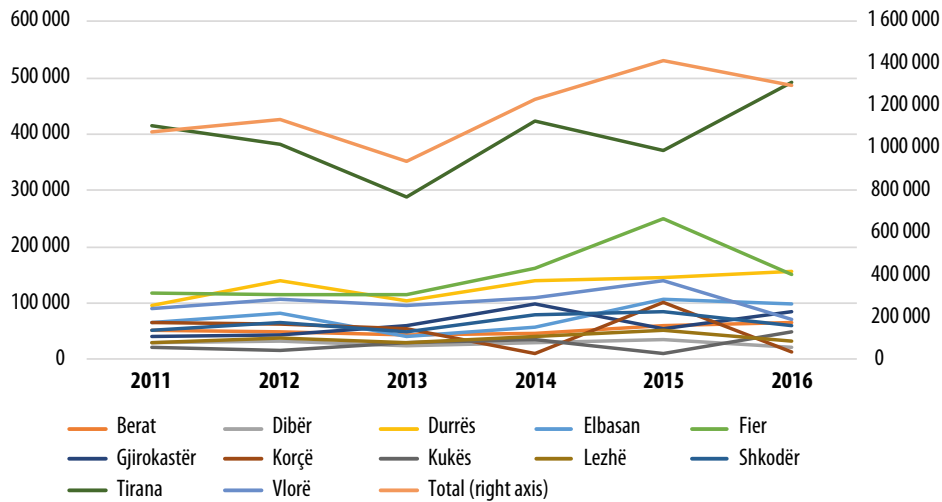
**The adoption of the new Law on Chemicals Management and related by-laws in 2016 is a significant legislative development.** However, there is a lack of knowledge and awareness about the newly-introduced rules and procedures, not only among the companies working in this field but also among the different stakeholders in the public administration.

**The amount and origin of generated hazardous waste is unknown, mostly due to the lack of data collection, which is partly due to the lack of separate collection of hazardous waste.** The lack of data hampers the establishment of sound management of hazardous waste. Albania is not able to measure progress against indicator 12.4.2 (hazardous waste generated per capita and proportion of hazardous waste treated, by type of treatment) to allow the tracking of progress towards the achievement of target 12.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



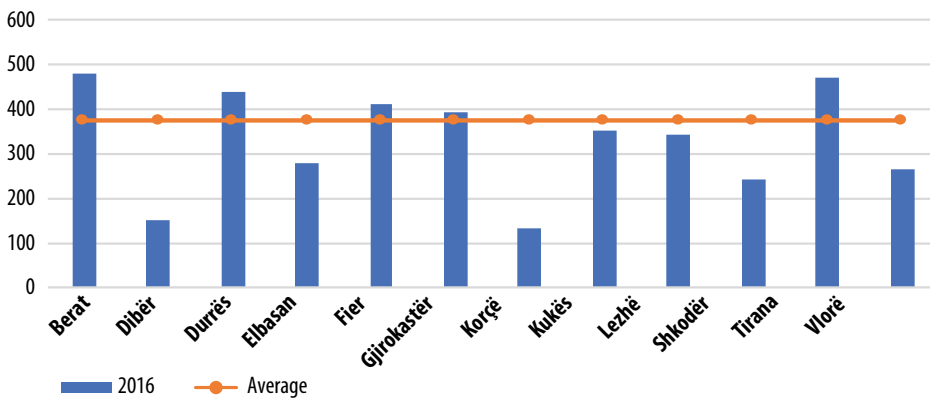


**Figure 5: Municipal solid waste, 2011–2016, tons**



Source: Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Annual Survey on Urban Waste, February 2017.

**Figure 6: Municipal solid waste, 2016, kg/inhabitant**



Source: Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, INSTAT, Annual Survey on Urban Waste, February 2017.



## Recommended measures:

- Strengthen efforts towards the closure of legal and illegal dumpsites and the construction of sanitary landfills;
- Establish cost and tariff schemes for waste management services that reflect the actual costs;
- Establish a viable market for recyclables and increase the recycling rate;
- Implement the necessary capacity-building and organizational development activities on chemicals management;
- Establish a data collection system on generated hazardous waste and chemicals.

## Biodiversity, forestry and protected areas

**Since 2012, Albania has increased protected areas by 1.61 per cent. The country has 800 protected areas covering a surface of 477,566 ha or 16.61 per cent of the whole national territory.** The 2016 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan envisages the expansion of the system of protected areas by increasing the combined surface of protected areas to 17 per cent of the total surface of land and internal waters and to 6 per cent of the coastal and marine areas.

**The institutional framework for the development and management of protected areas has improved with the creation of the National Agency of Protected Areas in 2015.** Furthermore, the Law on Protected Areas, adopted in 2017, paves the way for using the revenues generated by protected areas for their development, field work, communication and awareness, afforestation and fire prevention.

**Since 2011, there has been significant development in protected area management plans.** In the period 2011–2015, management plans were adopted for 11 protected areas.

**The Government has followed a “drastic” approach to combat illegal hunting and logging.** As illegal hunting has presented one of the major pressures on carnivorous mammals and migratory birds, in 2014, Albania declared a hunting moratorium and in June 2016 extended this moratorium for the next five years. Due to the large loss of forest cover in the past 25 years (an estimated 20 per cent), in early 2016, the Government imposed a 10-year moratorium on logging, with the exception of fuelwood used by local communities.

**Albania still does not have a national ecological network.** As part of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), Albania has developed a proposal for Emerald sites. As of early 2017, neither the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention nor the Government has officially adopted it.

**Albania is the regional leader in the number of built and planned hydropower plants (HPPs).** However, no cumulative impact assessment of HPPs in the country, and in particular in protected areas, has been undertaken.

**Albania progressed with the establishment of the legal and institutional framework for monitoring and reporting on biodiversity and forestry.** However, implementation still lags behind, due to a lack of funds and overlap of monitoring responsibilities, impeding the analysis of trends.

**Municipalities face difficulties in meeting their new responsibility for forest management and establishing competent forest management structures.** Data on the state of forests reported by municipalities are scarce. This situation needs to be urgently addressed for Albania to be able to make progress towards sustainable forest management in line with target 15.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Some 8.2 per cent of all national forests are identified as high-nature-value forests.** However, the country still lacks a specific legal framework for the protection of these forests.



**The harvesting and export of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) have significantly increased over the past decade.** In 2015, 13,000 tons of NTFPs were exported, worth more than €27 million. The current legislation is inadequate to ensure the sustainable use of NTFPs. It does not cover all NTFPs exported and it does not set quotas for allowed harvesting per area.

#### **BOX 6: FUNDING OF PROTECTED AREAS**

According to the 2002 Law on Protected Areas, all revenues generated by a protected area were transferred to the Government without any repayment to the protected area that had generated them. The then Ministry of Finance used to allocate funds on an annual basis to the National Agency of Protected Areas, which distributed them to the regional agencies of protected areas. As a result, the National Agency of Protected Areas could finance only the staff costs and utilities, and in some cases not even those. In some protected areas, the allocations of funds were so small that logging became the only source of revenue to cover the salaries of the protected area staff. Protected areas did not themselves have the authority to develop in a sustainable manner.

This situation should change with the adoption of the new Law on Protected Areas No. 81/2017. The new Law stipulates that revenues generated by protected areas are to be used by the National Agency of Protected Areas for the development of protected areas, the purchase of transport and equipment for field work, the development of management plans and inventories, afforestation, fire prevention and communication and awareness activities. Subsidiary legislation still needs to be adopted to make these provisions operational.

## **Recommended measures:**

- **Increase funding for the monitoring of forests and biodiversity;**
- **Assist newly-formed municipalities with the implementation of forest management responsibilities;**
- **Build the capacity of municipalities in sustainable forest management;**
- **Develop legislation for the protection of high-nature-value forests and NTFPs;**
- **Develop a national forest certification system.**



## Transport and environment



**Albania has taken significant steps to improve its transport sector over recent years, with major investment projects and policy changes stimulating the growth of the sector.** The number of national investment projects in the road sector has improved connectivity in the country, as have investments in port facilities. However, to date, not enough efforts have been directed at facilitating the development of sustainable transport.

**The provision of public transport, especially rail services, remains low, even with an urban population that uses significant non-car modes of transport.** The lack of multimodal facilities is limiting the potential use of public transport and stifling the use of more sustainable modes of transport. Municipalities have yet to complete measures aimed at improving urban public transport services through the introduction and extension of bus and cycle lanes.

**With a share in the transport sector of no more than 1 per cent, rail transport has been falling dramatically in recent years.** The rail sector's performance is very poor, with maximum speeds significantly lower than road transport outside the city centres. Work continues on rehabilitating the rail network, and particularly its infrastructure, to improve the competitiveness of rail with other transport modes. There are not enough measures aimed at ensuring that the railways are made safe through improved signalling and the removal of unauthorized crossings.

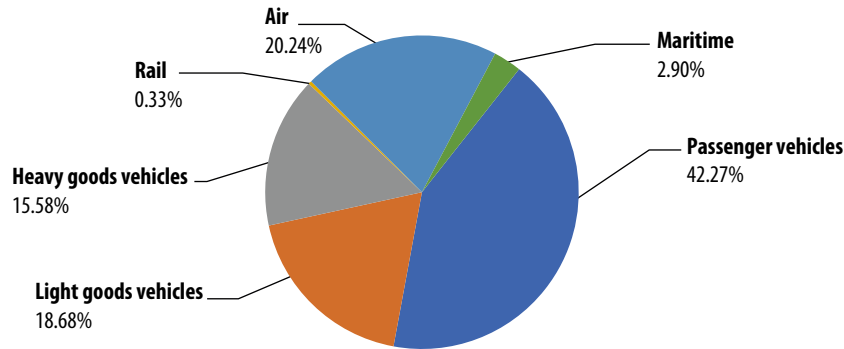
**About 60 per cent of newly registered cars are second hand. This means that more polluting cars enter the Albanian market than would otherwise occur.** According to the National Inventory on Air Emissions, in 2015, road transport accounted for 73 per cent of NOx emissions.

**In the past two years, the significant fall in the number of deaths on the roads has plateaued and in 2016 the number has actually increased.** This calls into question whether target 3.6 (by 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved. A number of actions are currently being undertaken, with international support, to improve road safety through infrastructure and policy initiatives.

**Significant steps forward have been taken in greening the maritime sector through greater attention being placed on the disposal of waste from ships and the development of contingency plans in case of environmental incidents.** However, although investments to install adequate equipment to gather and treat waste from vessels are ongoing, waste is carried by road vehicles to appropriate treatment facilities on land. Efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the sector are particularly important to help achieve target 14.1 (by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce maritime pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

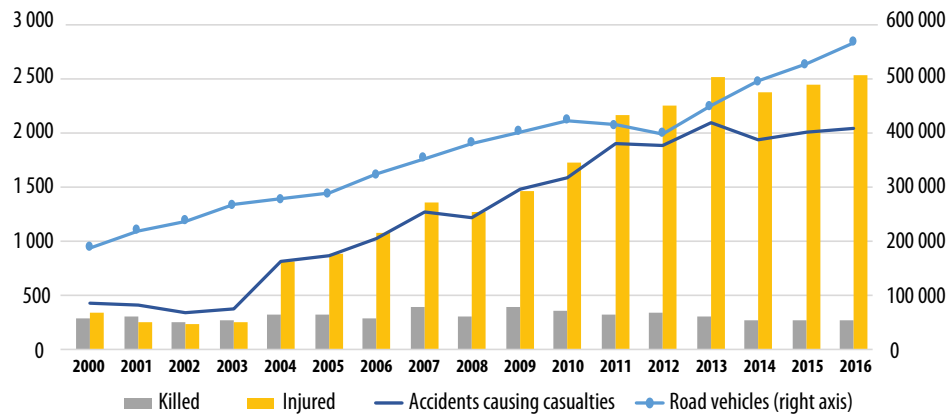


Figure 7: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport, excluding urban transport, 2014



Source: Draft sustainable transport plan, 2016.

Figure 8: Casualties in road accidents, 2000-2016



Source: INSTAT, 2017.

## Recommended measures:

- Adopt the draft sustainable transport plan and implement its provisions;
- Invest in the upgrading of railway lines and related facilities;
- Ensure that investments in public transport stations seek to maximize multimodal transport possibilities;
- Encourage municipalities to procure public transport services that maximize environmental performance;
- Adapt the road and vehicle ownership taxation to ensure that owners of vehicles that emit more pollutants pay higher taxes;
- Ensure that only vehicles of a level equivalent to the most recent EURO standards are allowed to be imported;
- Dedicate sufficient resources to the enforcement of traffic rules;
- Continue investments to improve the environmental performance of ports;
- Complete accession to Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.



## Energy, industry and environment

**Albania is highly dependent on a single source of energy – hydropower – that does not guarantee constant production.** The renewable sources of energy other than hydropower, together with connection to natural gas following the implementation of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline project, represent strategic opportunities for the country to reduce its vulnerability on a single source of energy, along with adopting cleaner solutions for the environment.

**Oil extraction activity has a long history in Albania.** The recent oil well blast event at the Patos-Marinza site in April 2015, with a leakage of oil on to the terrain, calls for closer attention to the pressures of oil extraction industry on land use, soil and water bodies.

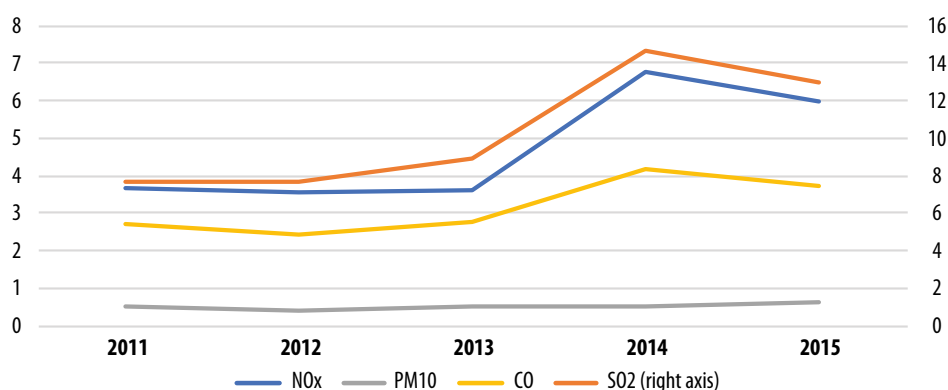
**Albania inherited several industrial installations that operated until the early 1990s.** The current objective is to attract capital to reuse such industrial buildings and establish new and greener production activities on former industrial sites. However, the plan lacks specific support in terms of both economic and fiscal incentives and technical assistance on environmental protection.

**Industrial waste management in Albania is at a poor level.** The use of waste as a secondary raw material for manufacturing industry is not developed.

**There are no incentives to attract investment to the industrial sector, in particular for those willing to invest in new technology as a direct contribution to improving environmental protection.** This might hamper the implementation by Albania of target 8.2 (achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value-added and labour-intensive sectors) of Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

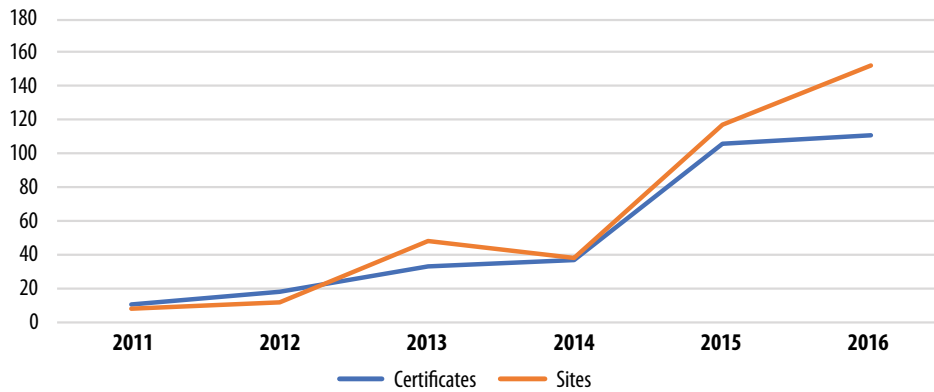
**Albania participates in the Assistance Programme of the Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and has prepared a self-assessment report in 2015 and an action plan in 2016.** However, the country currently lacks mechanisms for consultation with neighbouring countries on the identification of hazardous activities with possible transboundary effects and has not notified the neighbouring countries of such hazardous activities.

Figure 9: Emissions of selected pollutants from industry, 2011–2015, Gg



Source: National Environment Agency, 2017.

**Figure 10: ISO 14001 certificates and sites, 2011–2016, number**



Source: International Organization for Standardization. ISO Survey ([https://www.iso.org/the-iso-survey.html?certificate=ISO per cent209001&countrycode=AF](https://www.iso.org/the-iso-survey.html?certificate=ISO%20per%20cent209001&countrycode=AF)), 2017.

## Recommended measures:

- **Promote production of electrical energy from alternative sources to hydroelectric power stations, with particular reference to other renewable sources;**
- **Promote the use of natural gas as a cleaner combustible input for industrial activities;**
- **Carry out an environmental analysis of the oil extraction industry;**
- **Develop best practices to use abandoned industrial sites, at the same time ensuring their environmental rehabilitation;**
- **Create an enabling framework for the recovery of waste;**
- **Promote the installation of innovative processing plants based on the use of cleaner production methods;**
- **Identify hazardous activities with possible transboundary effects and notify neighbouring countries accordingly.**

### PHOTO CREDITS

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# Albania

## Environmental Performance Reviews

### Third Review - Highlights

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environmental Performance Review Programme assesses progress made by individual countries in reconciling their economic and social development with environmental protection, as well as in meeting international commitments on environment and sustainable development.

The third Environmental Performance Review of Albania examines the progress made by the country in the management of its environment since the country was reviewed in 2012 for the second time. It assesses the implementation of the recommendations contained in the second review. The third review covers policymaking, implementation and the financing of environmental policies, as well as efforts in the area of greening the economy. It addresses air protection, water management, waste management, biodiversity and protected areas and discusses integrating environmental concerns into selected sectors, in particular, transport, energy and industry. The review makes suggestions for strengthening efforts towards a comprehensive and systemic response to sustainable development challenges and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Highlights of the third Environmental Performance Review of Albania draw attention to the key findings of the review to inform and guide policymakers and representatives of civil society, as well as the international community, in their efforts to improve environmental management and to further promote sustainable development in Albania.

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