



Republic of Albania

Ministry of Environment

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

FOR THE

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Johannesburg,
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FOREWORD

The National Report of Albania for the assessment of the progress towards Sustainable Development was prepared during the period 2001-2002 along the lines of country preparations for the Johannesburg Summit which will take place on 26th of August until the 4th of September 2002. This Summit, also known as the Rio+10, is being organised 10 years after the historic Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro that adopted the Agenda 21, aiming to have a great impact on the world developments of the 21st century.

In the Rio Summit, countries committed themselves to work more towards sustainable development. Today, 10 years later, despite improvements on the legislation, strengthening of institutions responsible for environment and sustainable development as well as the commitment and respective steps for the implementation of Agenda 21, analysis shows that there are still outstanding problems. More action is needed regarding the general environmental crisis, damages to the nature and ecosystems, land degradation, loss of forestry, air and water pollution, and there are still increasing problems related to poverty, healthcare as well as social conflicts. For this reason, it was considered necessary that in this anniversary, each country on its own and the entire world make a review of policies and strategies implemented so far in order to come up with joint decisions to solve the problems and address the weaknesses that have been identified. This Summit offers a great opportunity for every country to understand better its own situation through a comparative approach with regard to the progress made towards sustainable development.

Apart from this, the purpose of this Summit is to ensure a renewed political commitment and stronger support for sustainable development from governments as well as civil society.

The Albanian report was prepared through an inclusive process, with the participation of a large number of stakeholders representing the state administration, NGOs, academic institutions and others. This process pointed out all the up-to-date strategic achievements in the environmental protection and sustainable development towards the implementation of the Agenda 21 in Albania.

The sustainable development of the country is a difficult, complex and long-term process. It requires the integration of all environmental, economic, social and ethical factors in all the national development strategies. Despite a wide variety of inherited problems, there are many facts and developments of the past decade that make us consider as positive the progress done so far and feel optimistic about the future in terms of national, regional and international developments.

Albania is in the path of a progressive development process. The dynamics of this development requires a further intensification of integrated inter-sectorial efforts for the development of new policies to support sustainable development, complementing the legislation and bringing it closer to that of the advanced countries, ensuring the constant presence of the environmental perspective in the development with the intention to improve the lives of present and future generations of humanity. The World Summit of Johannesburg is indeed an appeal for all.

Lufter XHUVELI



Minister of Environment

PREPARATORY PROCESS OF THE NATIONAL REPORT

Within the framework of preparation for the WSSD, the UN is assisting all countries to prepare their national assessment to report on progress and obstacles encountered during the last decade towards sustainable development.

The preparation of this report started in the end of 2001 with the support of the UNDP office in Tirana and through the co-ordination of a main task force of experts from the Ministry of Environment and representatives of environmental NGOs composed by Prof. Dr. Besnik Baraj, General Secretary of PPNEA (Environmental NGO), Dr. MSc Tatjana Hema, Deputy Minister of Environment and Dr. MSc. Narin Panariti, Director of Environmental Policies and Project Implementation Department.

The formulation of the report was co-ordinated through the Ministry of Environment and the UNDP office in Tirana, respectively by Ms. Narin Panariti and Mr. Vladimir Malkaj, UNDP Development Adviser and Guido Santini, UNDP Environment Specialist.

The preparation process included a wide participation of stakeholders including GOs, NGOs and academic institutions that were part of the inter-sectorial group set up for this purpose.

This process started with a round table in which the inter-sectorial group discussed the report's terms of references as well as its objectives and methodology. The main task force practically served as a secretariat of the inter-sectorial group that continuously promoted the dialogue and the particular contributions of its members.

The revised draft of the report was widely consulted with the members of this group in a second round table and a series of meetings between the Ministry of Environment and UNDP.

With the intention to broaden up the consultation process as well as to improve the final product an advanced draft report was distributed to the participants of a National Conference on "Environment and Sustainable Development" organised by the Ministry of Environment on 3rd of June 2002. The Conference also included in its agenda the emphasis on the relevance of the Johannesburg Summit and the necessary preparations for a good representation of Albania in this world event. It also pointed out the national and global importance of the application of sustainable development criteria in all the development sectors of Albania.

Comments and suggestions of these meetings are reflected in the current report content and the recommendations given at the end of this report.

The Report has been also revised by the Capacity 21 Regional Coordinator, from UNDP RBEC Regional Support Centre in Bratislava, who coordinates the preparation of National WSSD Assessments in RBEC Region.

At the end, the report was consulted with the Ministry of Environment to include the final remarks and the Minister of Environment contributed to the final revision and prepared the report's foreword.

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

- A series of development strategies on important sectors of economy with relevant impact on environment have been approved since 1992. They include agriculture, forestry, water supplies, solid waste, coastal administration, bio-diversity and social and economic development of the country as well as others. The national environmental strategy has been approved together with two national plans.
- Environmental legal framework is being improved, completed and brought closer to the European one in accordance with the international agreements on environment.
- Albania, which came out of decades of total isolation, is now a signatory country on 14 international and regional agreements on environment and contributes to the Stability Pact and regional Mediterranean programmes. Albania is making intensive efforts to open the negotiations towards the EU Stability and Association Agreement and the creation of the overall conditions to bring itself closer to the European standards. Albania is also a member of the WTO and co-operates through bilateral and multilateral agreements. All these ongoing processes have had an emancipating impact on the field of environment.
- There have been positive developments towards education and public awareness about the environmental issues and public participation on environmental decision-making as well as the organisation of environmental movements from the civil society and the non-profit sector.
- A series of environmental projects, which funding of up to 8 million Euros (without including the water sector) have been enabled through foreign donors and have led to improvements in institutional capacity building, completion of the legal framework, formulation of strategies on specific environmental areas, preservation of nature and a decrease of pollution as well as the efficient management of the natural resources.
- There are in place various cross-cutting policy and decision-making structures for the administration of the natural resources and the development of several sectors of economy to enable a better co-ordination and decision making in favour of sustainable environment.
- The political and institutional attention as well as the budget allocation to the environment has been continuously stepping up leading to the first ever establishment of the Ministry of Environment in Albania.

WEAKNESSES

- Along the inherited environmental concerns, the intensive and difficult process of uncontrolled urbanisation have had an aggravating impact on the environment and its infrastructure due to the overwhelmed capacities on these areas from the perspective of living conditions, employment and social infrastructure.
- Illegal construction has been a characteristic feature of the transition process in the country: towns and the suburban areas, coastal areas, natural parks and the protected ones.
- The characteristics of the unsustainable development, such as bad management of natural resources and their degradation and overuse, continue to remain widespread phenomena. Soil erosion and degradation, the loss of bio-diversity, poor management of forestry and water resources are environmental issues of immediate priority.
- The country has a relatively high number of degraded environmental areas, some of which are a great threat to the public health due to the high degree of exposure to pollution.
- Public awareness and participation in the environmental decision-making as well as the environmental information and education are not yet at the adequate level.
- The commitment of the non-profit environmental organisations is modest and with minimal impact upon the decision-making.
- The fulfilment of obligations stemming out of the international agreements, including the global environment is still low.
- Inter-sectoral co-ordination has not been very efficient and it is hampered by the lack of capacities at the central and local government for problems related to environmental protection and sustainable development.
- The formulation of policy documents on various sectors of economy has not taken properly into consideration the environmental protection and the principles of sustainable development. In the same time they have not been always supported by the inclusion of all the relevant stakeholders.
- There is no national strategy of sustainable environment and a National Committee on Sustainable Environment in Albania.
- The implementation of environmental laws is poor and limited. The legal framework needs to be completed with supporting sub-laws and regulations in order to increase its implementation.
- The new Ministry of Environment needs to expand its institutional strength and professional capacities. Investments in the field of environment continue to be limited and the strengthening of capacities of the Ministry of Environment in this field constitutes a priority challenge.

A. TOWARDS A NATIONAL STRATEGY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A1- The concept of sustainable development in the country's politics.

1. In spite of positive achievements in these 11 years of democratic transformation, state governing and institutional reforms, law and order, poverty reduction and employment, social services and infrastructure remain the main political priorities of the country.
2. Confrontation with the environmental problems that were inherited or which developed as a result of economic and social development unmatched with environment protection is one of the greatest challenges of transition, which is not always confronted with the same scale of priority.
3. In the first years after the Rio Summit, as a result of economic, social and political situations related to a difficult transition, the narrow understanding of the importance of the environment, low institutional level of the entity responsible for environmental protection, financial and technical impossibilities, the issues of environment protection and sustainable development were not part of the list of highest priority problems.
4. During the last years, the government has gradually begun to pay more attention to these problems. As a result, in a number of important documents of national policies, there have been attempts to pay the deserved attention to the environmental issues, integrating them with problems in other fields.
5. The most visible result of the attention paid by the government to environmental issues and sustainable development is the creation, for the first time in the country's history, of the Ministry of Environment. This important step was undertaken in continuation of the general progress achieved in the environmental field during transition years; the progress made in capacity and government awareness increase and in the estimation of the environmental reality in other countries of the region, and the continuous support of the international community. At the present, this step is being followed by others which aim at the reformation and the restructuring of this ministry in such a way that it can successfully respond to all the challenges of the time in the field of the country's sustainable development.
6. Although Albania has still not created and approved a Strategy of Sustainable Development and has not established a National Committee for Sustainable Development, it has been an active participant in the events of the Mediterranean Committee for Sustainable Development (MCSD). Apart from this, in the last years a series of important political steps have been undertaken that lead to a sustainable economical and social development, which includes environment protection as an integral part.
7. Moreover, the environmental legislation, which at the present is in its preparation phase, includes the necessary clauses that legally open the way for the foundation of a Committee for Sustainable Development and of a series of intersectoral committees with many actors, to more practically monitor and support the sustainable development of the country.
8. The policy of the Albanian Government in the field of environmental protection was consecrated for the first time in the basic law "On Environment Protection" (1993)

and in the National Action Plan for Environment (1993) approved in 1994. This plan, which was prepared in assistance with the World Bank, aimed at the integration of environmental protection in the programs of country development, and assigned many duties to various Ministries and institutions. It also envisioned the undertaking of organisational, administrative, legal and technical steps for the administration of the environment.

9. Meanwhile, during the years 1993 to 2000, five reports have been prepared on the state of the environment. These reports present a progressively trenchant analysis of the state of the environment related to pressures of its development and at the same time recommend the steps that should be taken to improve the situation.
10. Even the new Constitution, inspired by principles of Agenda 21 and by the international environmental conventions, in specific clauses sanctions the aim of the state “for a healthy and ecologically suitable environment for present and future generations” and “for the rational utilisation of forests, water resources, pastures, based on the principle of sustainable development” and also the right of each individual “to be informed of the state of the environment and its protection.”
11. A series of empowered laws, regulating the administration of natural and mineral resources of various sectors, contain special clauses for environmental protection. However, it should be emphasised that until today, the Albanian legislation has stimulated the usage of command and control means more than the usage of environmental economic instruments.
12. In the framework of efforts to get closer to Europe, there have been attempts to put in use these kind of contemporary political instruments according to the model of the developed countries. The launching and the wide use of these economical instruments, which aim directly at the sustainable management of environment and natural resources, make up for one of the primary duties of the National Action Plan for Environment (2001). The long-term implementation of this step will enable not only the efficient usage of resources and the environment and will not only encourage a new attitude towards it, but it will also provide more sources for the increase of revenues to be used for investments in the environment.
13. In this decade, a series of developmental strategies for important sectors of the economy affecting the environment, such as agriculture, forests, solid residues, water, administration of coastline, etc. have been approved. Also, a set of indicators of sustainable development have been proposed, a number of which have been approved by the government.
14. Apart from this, Albania has signed, ratified, and adheres to a number of international conventions; it has contributed to the Stability Pact and Mediterranean regional programs, it has made intensive efforts to open negotiations for signing the Stabilisation Association Agreement and to create the necessary conditions to come closer to Europe in all the sectors. Meanwhile, it has also become a member of WTO. All the above have directly or indirectly effected the formulation of new and modern environmental policies in Albania.
15. Especially in the last years, in order to successfully deal with the development challenges, the Albanian Government has prepared several strategic development documents that made possible the approval of the National Strategy of Social and Economical Development (NSSD). It has also prepared the respective support program, which is an important step in supporting the future of the country's

development with long-term strategic visions. The consideration of long-term visions, the dynamism, the co-operation with partners and protection of the environment are precisely the primary principles on which the National Strategy of Social and Economical Development relies. The process of preparation and its approval have been all-inclusive with special focus on drawing the opinions of civil society and non-profit organisations.

16. Even the entire process of preparation of this national report, which by means of an all-inclusive methodology analyses the achievements, identifies the scale of policies implementation, deficiencies, and difficulties and recommends actions and initiatives to be taken in the future, will be an important contribution towards sustainable development.
17. One of the most conspicuous achievements of this decade is the international co-operation in the field of protection and administration of the environment. This co-operation includes areas such as: institutional strengthening, capacity increase, creation and improvement of legal environmental frameworks, protection of the sea and the coastline zone, administration of water resources, preservation of biological diversity, nature protection, administration of waste, climatic changes, rehabilitation of historical pollution, environmental investments, and public information and participation. Throughout this period Albania has signed and adheres to 12 international environmental conventions.
18. A series of projects, the sponsoring of which was made possible by funds provided by foreign donors and from the budget of the government, in the amount of 10 million Euros not including the water sector, have been accomplished during the years 1993 to 2002. The goals of these projects have been: a) the strengthening and the setting up of institutional capacities; b) the completion of the legal framework; c) the preparation of strategies for special fields of environment; d) nature protection and the decreasing of historical pollution and damages, etc.
19. EU, GEF, UNDP, WB, UNEP, METAP, the governments of Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Italy are some of the international partners that have mostly contributed to environment protection and sustainable development.
20. The co-operation with the United Nations Economical Commission for Europe develops in the framework of the activities organised by the Committee of Environmental Policies. Albania has taken active part in the "Environment for Europe" process and at present it is undergoing the "Environmental Performance Evaluation" process.
21. The co-operation of the Albanian government with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has enabled the undertaking of some quite important environmental projects and it is being worked intensively to use these opportunities as financial mechanisms for global conventions.
22. The co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) involves the membership and execution of respective duties in some important international environmental conventions of global character.
23. Albania is an active member of the Stability Pact in the Mediterranean region and of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Program (RERP); it is the leading country for some regional projects, it is making intensive efforts to sign the

Stabilisation and Association Agreement and to create the necessary conditions to come closer to Europe in all the sectors. All these have directly or indirectly contributed to the formulation of new and modern environmental policies in Albania.

24. Despite its serious efforts, due to the lack of foreign assistance in this area, Albania has not managed to implement a National Agenda 21. Nevertheless, in cities with severe environmental problems, some local agendas have been implemented. More specifically, Local Action Plans for Environment and Local Action Plans for Environment and Health have been prepared for a considerable number of cities and prefectures.

A2- Actions undertaken in the framework of Rio Conventions

A21- Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

25. In 1995, Albania ratified the Convention on Climate Change. Since the year 1998, it has been working on preparations for the first national meeting regarding this convention. The main activities undertaken and completed are:

- Preparation of the first national meeting inventory of green-house gas emission (GHG), vulnerability analysis, adaptability and abatement plan
- Capacity building
- Raising public awareness
- Regional co-operation
- Usage of first meeting's achievements in function of the developmental strategy of the energy sector.

A22- Biodiversity Convention (UNCBD)

26. Albania ratified this convention in the year 1996, undertaking international obligations and responsibilities for the "in situ" and "ex situ" protection of biodiversity, for the improvement of legislation, management systems, scientific research, public training and raising of awareness.

27. In order to implement the obligations arising from the convention and to protect biodiversity, the following activities have been undertaken:

- The law on protected zones and the law on bio-diversity have been compiled and they are going through the approval process.
- The government has approved the Strategy and the National Plan of Bio-diversity (2000), including the first national report in the framework of the convention.
- For more than 2 years, a regular monitoring program of endangered species is being implemented.
- The National Committee of Nature and Bio-diversity and the intersectional groups of the action plan have been created.
- Some big projects focusing on the protection of bio-diversity and the environmental administration of some protected areas such as Lake Ohrid, Vloja Bay, Karavasta, etc are actually under their implementation phase.
- A series of management plans has been compiled for some protected areas.

- A big project of forests management and their transfer to the community is being implemented.
- The Strategy of Forests and Pastures Development (2000) has been approved.
- Work is also being done on the bio-security protocol ratification.

A23 – Convention to Combat Desertification

28. Albania ratified this convention in the year 2000. The first national report on the implementation of the obligations resulting from this convention was completed in the spring of 2002. The country has not ratified a land protection strategy as yet. Partial studies have been carried out on the land's condition, erosion level and actions have been undertaken to fight erosion, etc. The legal framework is still incomplete. Land protection is considered a first priority in the National Action Plan for Environment, the Strategy of Social and Economic Development, the Strategy of Agriculture, Forests, Bio-diversity and in other documents.

B – INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION

29. Several strategies and sectorial action plans have been compiled and approved since 1992, such as: National Action Plan for Environment (1993) and (2001); Management Program of Coastal Zone (1996); National Report on Habitat II (1996); National Action Plan for Environment and Health (1998); Green Strategy for Agriculture (1998); Strategy of Forests and Pastures Development (1998); National Water Strategy (1997); National Plan of Waste Management (1996), etc. These plans and strategies represent efforts to integrate environmental issues in the atmosphere of sustainable development principles. The foundation of the Ministry of Environment itself is an example of the government's will to include and integrate environmental issues among other important priorities of the country.
30. The preparation process of NEAP in the year 1993, supported also by foreign technical assistance, represented one of the first attempts towards the integration of environmental considerations into the policies and action plans of other sectors. Although it assigned responsibilities to a series of important institutions and ministries such as the Ministry of Economy, Finance, Industry and Mines, Trade, etc, in reality, the ex - National Environment Agency (NEA) remained responsible for its implementation.
31. The compilation process of NEAP 2001, a document that was written in its whole by Albanians, aimed at overcoming these deficiencies, which were evident in the previous document, and it increased significantly the level of integration and participation during the formulation process. It was compiled by approximately 60 individuals belonging to different levels of decision-making starting with the Deputy Prime Minister of the time, line ministries, and ending up with the experts of the different directorates of the National Environment Agency (which is today the Ministry of Environment), different line ministries, institutes of scientific research, civil society and diverse environmental NGOs. This plan, which was approved by the government in the year 2002, deals extensively with the sustainable development as one of its most important national priorities and challenges. It agrees with and argues that:
 1. In order to achieve an effective and sustainable environment administration, it is necessary to follow an all-inclusive environmental policy.
 2. The compilation and the implementation of sustainable environmental policies, action plans, and their integration in sectorial policies during the process of economic reform is the main component of the environment administration system.
 3. The compilation of sectorial environmental policies requires the completion of various supporting studies based on the detailed analysis of environmental indices of the state of the environment, of the atmospheric pressure, of the moving forces, of the impact on the environment and of the counteraction in the national level.
32. The Coastal Zone Management Plan was also compiled by an interdisciplinary institutional work group in which architects, geographers, environmental engineers, city-planners, demographers, hydrologists, etiologists, archaeologists, forest engineers, biologists, economists and environmentalists were included. They represented various institutes such as the University of Tirana, the country's scientific research institutes, study centres, etc. Despite the time that has gone by, the government has not yet approved this plan.
33. The National Environment and Health Action Plan of (NEHAP) was also compiled through inter-department co-operation. This co-operation was inclusive of various

health institutions, the Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Trade, the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works, the Tourism Committee, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Ministry of Public Economy, different NGOs and the former NEA.

34. The preparation process of the National Report for the International Conference of Habitat II was also an integrating process of problems in some fields. An inter-department work group that was inclusive of the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Committee for Environment Protection, the Institute of Statistics, the University of Tirana, etc. completed it.
35. However, in spite of the positive efforts and steps taken during this decade in the inter-disciplinary and inter-department integration in the treatment of environment issues or the formulation of development policies, there is still much to be done. So for example the Privatisation Strategy of State Enterprises in Strategic Sectors has not considered the problems of the environment adequately. Institutions concerned with the environment were not part and were not consulted in the process of strategy formulation. For this reason, this document was reviewed and now the environment is one of the assets that are taken into consideration during the process of public property privatisation. However, this process leaves still much to be desired.
36. The efforts for the compilation of the Strategy of Social and Economic Development marked a more complete and positive experience, in regard to the sectorial integration. The 2-year national process marked the participation of hundreds of experts from different fields and it was lead by the Prime Minister himself. The process also included donors (WB, DFID, EU, EC, OSCE, USAID), representatives and experts of various governments, civil and business society, local government units, the Committee of inter-ministries' policies, etc.
37. Work groups from the Ministry of Health, Education and Science, Labour and Social Affairs, Agriculture, Economic Co-operation and Trade, Transportation and Public Works were part of the work group headed by the Minister of Finance. Half of the participants in these groups, which were composed of 9-10 individuals each, were representatives of the civil society; 11 groups were agriculture-oriented and 12 were education-orientated groups. They included parent and student organisations, local governments, private schools etc. The number of participating groups from the health and social affairs' sectors were 11 each.
38. The process of GPRS formulation involved various workshops with broad participation and with a heterogeneous composition. Most of the participants came from outside Tirana, more than half of them were from small towns and rural areas, and a considerable part of them were women. A lot of work was also done to acquaint the parliamentarians with the strategy objectives and to find a consensus.
39. Special consultations were held with the local government in several rounds that aimed at collection of data, suggestions, and the institutional pledge of the local government. Consultations with the business community were held in two rounds and with the participation of the representatives of the Union of Commerce and Industry Chambers, the American Commerce Chamber, the Committee of Albanian Agricultural Business, the Foreign Investors Association, the Italian Investors Association, the Albanian Bankers Association, etc.

40. Even though GPRS itself is a medium-term strategy, the main objectives of this strategy's development policies are long-term and aim at:
- The increase of GDP per capita by 2 to 3 times in the 10-15 upcoming years
 - Technology modernisation
 - Industry growth
 - Infrastructure improvement
 - Improvement of education and public health, especially for the poor
 - Improvement and protection of the environment
 - Reduction of regional differences
41. At the beginning, the strategy was not expected to deal with environmental issues. Environment related issues became part of its structure thanks to the capacity growth of NEA and the increase of the government's awareness of environmental issues. The environment as an issue represented a sub-chapter in the strategy and its problems were occasionally dealt with in other chapters related to sustainable rural and urban development.
42. The main issues related to the environment dealt with in GPRS are: the institutional consolidation of the Ministry of Environment and of the Environmental Inspectorate, the defining of other central and local institutions' environmental responsibilities, the creation of emergency structures for cases of natural disasters, the increase of awareness and the participation of the business community in the consulting and decision-making structures, the adoption of economic environmental policies and instruments, the adoption of discharge and environment quality standards, the reduction of pollution caused by already existing sources near inhabited zones, which risk the damage of economic values or compromise development and that weigh heavily on the poor. Other issues are: the measures taken for the development and exploitation of sustainable sources, which create the premises for their efficient usage and enable equal access to them especially by the poor and the bringing of the natural resources closer to the user.
43. The inclusion of environmental issues in the strategy was also associated with a workshop "On Poverty and Environment," which treated in detail the complex relations of their reciprocal dependence. What made this strategy successful was that for the first time in an important political document of the country, environment protection through implementation of healthy, sustainable and integral policies was not considered anymore an obstacle for economic development, but an important factor for poverty reduction, the growth of the economy, and long term development of the country.
44. GPRS is conceptualised as a dynamic strategy that stimulates the extensive and active participation of the interested groups not only in the compilation process but also in its implementation process.
45. The willingness to integrate environmental issues/policies with the sectional ones is expressed clearly in the foundation and the functioning of several decision-making inter-ministry structures such as: National Council of Territory Regulation, the local Councils of Territory Regulation, National Committee of Waters, National Committee of Energy, Committee of Tourism Policies, etc, in which, by a legal decision, experts and dignitaries of environmental institutions participate. Several boards, with the participation of representatives of the fields of economy, tourism, territory regulation, etc, have been founded and are functional in managing different

environmental projects. At the same time, the representatives of institutions concerned with the environment participate, in the boards of infrastructure projects.

46. At present, the Ministry of Environment has prepared the drafts for several legal acts, which aim at bringing the Albanian law closer to the European environmental law. Several new laws regarding the protection of the air, the sea, the environment, the bio-diversity and a new ministerial decision for the monitoring in Albania have been approved recently. Drafts of the new law on environment, the law on the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Strategic Environmental Assessment have also been prepared. All these drafts have been prepared according to respective conventions aiming at the integration of sustainable development policies even in practice.
47. Recently the law on local power decentralisation has been approved, which aims at the strengthening of the local administration; the increase of its responsibility, contribution and role in the country's development. In this framework, a sector has been set up, in the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation, which deals with environmental emergencies. Meanwhile, considering the ineffective role of the Regional Environment Agencies in controlling and implementing the environmental law, and also utilising the positive international experiences, multiple efforts are being made to increase their professional capacity, to ensure institutional strengthening and a better co-ordination and organisation of their job in the future.
48. Also the preparation of the National Report on Sustainable Development went through a process of extensive participation of the Ministry of Environment representatives, line ministries and various NGOs working on related issues. Several political documents of the last decade, which deal with various issues of sustainable development, were used to compile the National Report on Sustainable Development. During this process several consultations were held with experts, also two workshops with broad-participation and a national meeting were organised.
49. As regards the participation of environmental NGOs in the preparation of policies and strategies, etc, it must be said that in spite of emancipation and results achieved, there is still much more to be done, not only by the Government, but also by environmental NGOs in order to increase and strengthen their professional and organisational capacities. However, their number has increased significantly recently (from 7 organisations in 1994 to 70 in 2000 and in April 2002 around 100), but the logistics, commitment level and the activity of most of them, still remains inadequate. Inadequate were also the NGOs efforts to strengthen the relations and partnerships with business organisations, which in many occasions might sponsor their activities. Apart from this, when considered in general, the activity and the environmental movement of these organisations have had a positive impact on raising the public's awareness during this decade.
50. In spite of the modest improvements it has experienced, at least in the conceptualising level, from some leaders, policy-makers or decision-makers, in practice the state-business partnership is far from the desired level. However, the strengthening of this partnership is one of the duties approved in NEAP 2001 and its practical realisation remains not that simple. This is necessary not only during the strategies formulation phase, but especially also during their financing and implementation. The state-business partnership is essential in enabling the functioning of the enterprises by applying environment management systems, completion of EIAs, fulfilment of environmental permit conditions, etc.

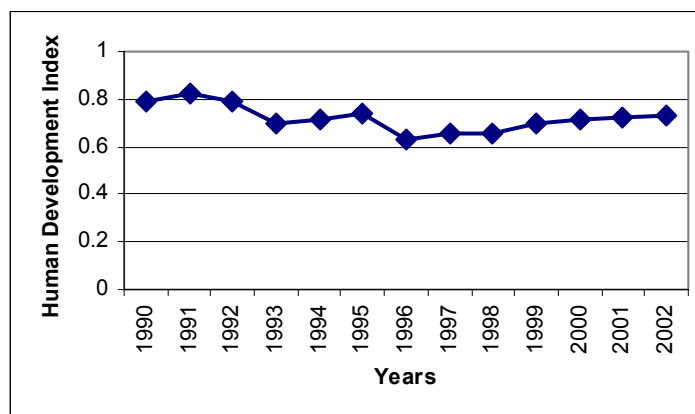
51. As we have seen from previous descriptions, the strategies formulated in the past decade have attempted to be integral, sustainable and to have a broad basis of participation of various governmental, academic, and local government institutions, of NGOs, business organisations and other big social groups. However, the fact that the participation of governmental institutions has been easier than the participation of other groups attracts attention. Harder work is needed in the future to bring the new strategy close to the scientists, local community, NGOs and important social groups in accordance with the subjects treated.

C – CRITICAL NATIONAL ISSUES

C1 – Environmental social and economic issues during 1992- 2002

52. The democratic changes of 1990's that happened in Central and Eastern Europe were reflected and were too complex in Albania as well, in the economic, political, social and environmental aspects. During the last decade, temporary economic and political stabilisation was followed cyclically by political and economical crisis. Thus, the lack of political and economic stability in 1997 had negative impacts even on the natural environment and its sources as a result of explosions, fires, and misuse of toxic war materials etc.
53. Following the social and economic developments of the last decade, Albania occupied the 92nd place out of 173 countries, with 0.733, in Human Development Index measured in 2002. This index was measured based on life span, education level and standard of living. Meanwhile, in this process, even the people's concept of poverty or welfare has changed. Welfare is no longer considered only as the possession of several material benefits, but a resultant of many vectors.
54. According to the statistical results of the UNDP Global Human Development Reports, the Human Development Indicator for Albania has had generally an increasing positive annual trend starting from the second half of the past decade as illustrated below:

Years	HDI
1990	0.79
1991	0.821
1992	0.791
1993	0.699
1994	0.714
1995	0.739
1996	0.633
1997	0.655
1998	0.656
1999	0.699
2000	0.713
2001	0.725
2002	0.733



55. People's current concept of poverty, besides the fundamental life elements such as food, clothing, and shelter, now also includes: lack of hope, exclusion from economic and social life, impossibility to carry on family and social traditions, lack of proper road infrastructure, lack of fresh water, canalisation, energy, heat, security, quality of health and education services, etc.
56. This new and broad concept of the public perception of welfare is also the basis of a typical phenomenon of Albanian society in the last decade – massive immigration. However, we must emphasise that migration had an overall positive impact on population's social and material welfare. Currently, it assures the main support for economic survival of the poor strata of the population, especially those in rural areas.
57. This decade was characterised by an intensive and difficult process of uncontrolled urbanisation resulting in an artificial population increase in big urban

centres, where the employment opportunities and the life standards are higher. The inhabitation, employment, health, education, road infrastructure, urban waste management, and canalisation systems capacities have been surpassed in these areas. At present, the capital city has increased its population by 30% and it has become a metropolis in which 18% of the population is concentrated. This has turned the capital into an area with huge environmental problems.

58. The transition process has been associated with illegal constructions all over the country: in cities and their suburbs, at seaside, in the natural parks, and in the protected zones. For many years, kiosks covered the green areas of the city. However, in the last 2 years, the situation has been put under control, especially in the capital city, and the green zones are returning to their previous state.
59. Efforts to survive after the closing of most state enterprises during this decade speeded up the development of free initiative. Positive steps have been taken towards the liberalisation of trade and in 2000 more than 75% of the country's GDP was achieved in the private sector. Besides the positive economic effects that the free initiative brought about, the lack of business ethics and low level of knowledge and consciousness, which are typical of the newly born Albanian businesses, caused visible negative impacts and abuses on the environment such as: the cutting of forests, illegal fishing and hunting, the usage of drinking water for industrial and agricultural purposes, etc.
60. Meanwhile, the closing of the producing enterprises did not bring about only unemployment but also the abandoning of the working areas. Dangerous toxic residues were left out of control, increasing the exposure to danger in certain zones, which unfortunately are populated by poor people who have emigrated recently from the poor northeastern zones of the country.
61. Under such circumstances, the capacity growth of national and local institutions still remains a long-term priority for facing the challenges of sustainable development.

C2 – Environmental critical issues

62. Among the critical national issues relating to the environment that have a direct impact on the reduction of the potential of the country for sustainable development are:
 - Land degradation
 - Environmental hot spots and the public health related to them
 - Loss of bio-diversity
63. The main problem related to **land degradation** in Albania is erosion. This is not only related to natural tendencies which in 20 % of the cases depend on the geological characteristics of our country, but especially with a series of factors that tell of a non-sustainable and unlimited usage of the land such as: massive deforestation, especially in the hilly and mountainous areas, the unlimited grazing of cattle especially of goats, which has increased significantly over the last decade, the damage of the works that aim at stopping the erosion, the damage of drainage networks, etc.

64. In the year 1997, when the country was in a deep crisis and anarchy, the illegal cutting of the woods reached 550.000 m³. In the main cities, the green areas surface reduced to 2 m² per capita. At the country level, the green areas surface at the moment is estimated at 14-17 m² per capita, while in the urban areas of the first and second category this surface is estimated at 5 to 6 m² per capita.
65. At present, it is estimated that the losses due to erosion reach 20-30 ton/ha per year, but in specific areas it reaches 150 ton/ha per year. Due to the damaging of the land improvement system flooding occurs often, while due to erosion in hilly areas often land sliding phenomena is encountered. In addition to all the above, the non-sustainable practices of land usage after privatisation in general have brought about salinisation, and the abandoning and pollution of the land due to urban and industrial discharge.
66. Land erosion is a national priority problem recognised as such since by NEAP 1993. In spite of this, little has been done to resolve this problem in the last 10 years. However, the highest decision-making structures for the usage of the land and the planning of the territory at the national level (Council for the Territory Regulation of the Republic of Albania), and in the local level (Council for the Territory Regulation) have been created and they are functioning as of a long time but the necessary co-operation has not yet been ensured, nor an integrated policy, which enable the finding of solutions to the problem.
67. Among other main problems related to the land administration, we can mention: the degradation related to fertility decrease, the salinification, the pollution of urban and industrial land, the land sliding and flooding, the unsustainable use of land, the lack of plans for its integrated use, unclear assigning of responsibilities to the institutions in charge, the incomplete legislation and poor law implementation, the uncontrolled urbanisation, etc.
68. Considering the importance of land issues, in the year 2000 Albania became party to the Land Convention and it is currently working on the preparation of the first report relating to its implementation.
69. One of the indications of the land unsustainable usage practices is also the pollution from past industries and the creation of environmental hot spots as a result. At the present the country has 9 zones that contain such toxic and cancerous residues left most of the time out of control. Five of them have been considered environmentally hot zones even in international studies. These zones contain residues of mercury, lindan, 6-valent chrome, tiram, dioxides, furam and other residues of pesticides or petroleum products, and also the respective abandoned installed equipment.
70. Very high contents of some toxic materials also with cancerous effects are found in the drinking water, in the agriculture products, and in the milk of the cattle. The problem with most of the hot zones is their proximity to the inhabited areas populated mainly by poor migrants from the northeastern part of the country. In some cases these people have found lodging in the contaminated interior surroundings of the ex-industries themselves.

71. The environmental rehabilitation of these zones is one of the priorities of the country's Strategy of Social and Economical Development and of the National Action Plan for Environment, and it is closely related to the necessity for public health improvement and to the right of the public to live in a healthy environment. It is also seen as an opportunity for increasing tourist potential of the coastal areas, which are found near some of the hot zones.
72. The **loss of biodiversity** has become another national critical problem. High biological diversity is a characteristic of the country in spite of its limited surface area. It is favoured by the great diversity of the relief, climate, geographical position, landscape, and the hydrological, geological, and pedological factors.
73. Albania offers 27 endemic species and 160 sub-endemic species of high plants with a special preservation importance; 40 molluscs species, 7 species and subspecies of sub-endemic fresh water fishes, a diversity of habitats, and sea, coastal, lagoon, and river delta ecosystems. It offers also sand dunes, lakes, rivers, Mediterranean bush-wood, foliate and pine forests, sub-alpine and alpine meadows and pastures, ecosystems of high mountains, etc.
74. The country's high level of flora is represented by 3200 kinds of high plants and 756 kinds of vertebral or makes up for 30% of the European flora. There are 90 globally endangered species, among them also the *Pelecanus Crispus*, *Phalacrocorax Pygmeus* and *Acipenser Sturio*.
75. The restricted exploitation of nature has negatively affected the biological diversity of the country. At least 2 kinds of plants and 4 kinds of mammals have disappeared completely, 17 kinds of birds do not nestle anymore in the country's territory, while 122 kinds of vertebral and 4 kinds of plants have lost 50% of their population. The export of ether-oil and medical plants has damaged quite a lot the condition of the latter. Powerful ecological crises have been encountered in the lake and river ecosystems. Uncontrolled fishing with illegal means has damaged the biodiversity seriously.

D. CRITICAL GLOBAL ISSUES

D1 - Environmental Education in the school system

76. In continuation of the domestic and international development in the environmental field, the first efforts have been made to reform the education system. Efforts are being made to rebuild it, to renew the programs of the subjects taught, to prepare new texts and improve the professional preparation of the educators. At the same time, some special educational programs related to the environment have been included in the school curriculum. Also, most of the scientific research in the universities and research institutions is directed towards the protection of the environment. In the last three years, the Ministry of Education has experimented in some schools, with the introduction of a class of environmental education through a pilot project, which is giving good results.

77. Despite all the positive developments, the inclusion of environmental education in different levels of the school system, starting with the pre-school level, hardly satisfies the real need for an intensive and extensive environmental education, which remains a priority. We can point out as the most important events that have directly or indirectly impacted the environmental education in schools the following:

- The creation of Environmental Engineering as a university department.
- The introduction of the Legislative Environmental Right in the Department of Justice.
- The opening of the Environmental Chemistry and Physics Branches and the preparations for the opening of a new section dealing with the environment in the Biology Department of the Natural Sciences Faculty.
- The publication of the first two pilot texts for high schools on “Environment Learning,” which are still in their pilot phase.
- The directing of university scientific research towards environmental chemistry, ecology, etc, the involvement of the scientific institutions of the country in Mediterranean monitoring projects, and in activities that contribute to the implementation of the national obligations, which arise from multilateral environmental agreements.

78. Despite the difficulties and the problems of these last 10 years, there have been positive developments in the direction of education and in making the public aware of environmental problems. The environmental NGOs, the universities and the Ministry of Environment have played an important role in these developments. Additionally, international organizations such as the EU, UNDP, World Bank, OSCE, Dutch SNV, REC, ORT, SOROS, ECAT Tirana, the Albanian Foundation of Civil Society, MilieuContact OostEuropa and others have given an important support, especially through promotion of public awareness and participation in the course of specific programmes and projects implementation.

79. Among the measures taken for the environmental education of the public we can mention:

- The publication of texts and magazines concerned with the environment and the publication on the Internet of satisfactory environmental information.

- The publication from the Ministry of Environment of 5 reports on the state of the environment in Albania.
- The publication of NEAP and LEAP and the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the country.
- Organising of informative activities on the environment by the Ministry of Environment.
- The publications of two volumes, with Albanian legal environmental acts and International Environmental Acts, in which the Republic of Albania is a party.
- The organising of training courses on the environment by different foundations.
- The involvement of NGOs in the implementation of different projects such as the one on the management of the coastal and marsh ecosystems of Narta (GEF/UNDP), the management of Lake Ohrid (GEF/WB), Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP), a series of projects funded by different donors in the framework of the RERP of the Stability Pact, programs funded by different donations by REC, Soros program, etc.

80. The environmental education of the public has known increase especially in some fields:

- The encouraging of the community in becoming responsible for the environment they live in.
- Their preparation for participation in discussions, observations, in the finding and exercising solutions, and for the partaking in decision-making.
- The communication through short materials, discussions and the concentration of the attention towards the environment and the development of the qualities needed to work for the preparation of the projects, and the improvement the state of the environment.
- Active participation in the protection of nature and life resources in the methodological aspect, concentrating on personal decision-making and the responsibilities that every one has towards the environment.
- The sensitising of public opinion in regard to the protection of the environment and the contributions that it might and should give, in the discussion of regional environmental problems and the finding of the possible solutions.

D2 –Public information on environment problems

81. The main way of informing the public on the environmental problems up to now has been through the televised and written media. Despite the fact that the place that pollution problems and damages of the environment occupy in the newspapers, in the regular sections of the press, in systematic periodical publications, and in television and radio is still small, it is impossible not to notice a relative increase in their number and not to notice the increase of the public interest regarding these issues.

82. The degree of “active” informing, by which is meant the preparation and the distribution of regular information to the public and the environmental NGOs by the governmental structures, is not enough when compared to the problems of the

environment. In addition to the publication of the “Report on the State of the Environment” (which comes out in very few copies), once in two years, no local or central governmental institution publishes or distributes information regarding the environment. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment has made efforts to create an Information Centre, which is small at present but that is expected to expand, to be well equipped, and to offer quality information on the environment in the future.

83. Within the last five years, public information has increased as a result of extensive activities of the civil society, in general and the environmental NGOs in particular. The media, especially the written and visual ones have been and remain concerned with the problems of the environment. Another success during this time has been the amendment of the law “On the Protection of the Environment” in 1998. This amendment, based on the constitution of the Republic of Albania, guarantees by law the right of the public to information. In addition to this, in the year 2000 the Albanian Parliament approved the Aarhus Convention “The right of the public to information, participation and filing of complains with the Court”. Even the environmental legislation, which is in its preparation process, includes a separate chapter on environmental information and public access to it, which is written in full accordance with the requirements of this convention.

D3 – National environmental movements

84. Albanian environmental organizations have carried out activities in the following fields:
- The protection of bio-diversity of the zones and the compilation of respective strategies, the evaluation of habitats, the deposition of solid waste, the studying of the problems of urban pollution, etc.
 - The involvement of the community in decision-making, round table discussions, signings of resolutions, etc.
 - The environmental education of the community through workshops and training, media programs, publication of different materials, realization of concrete activities with school students, etc.
85. In fulfilling their objectives, they have mainly aimed at sensitising public opinion, while the public protests have mainly appeared in the form of some signed resolutions directed to the local or the central governmental structures.
86. The up-to-date communication and co-operation with well-known NGOs such as: Euronatura, Milieukontakt, Oosteuropa, Lega Ambiente, WWF, IUCN, etc, the creation of environmental NGO networks in the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe in the framework of the REPeP of the Stability Pact etc, are practices that have acted as an incentive to the intensifying and the increasing of national, regional, and global synergy for the protection of the environment.
87. In this framework the co-operation between Albanian NGOs and those of the neighbouring countries has recently increased. A number of projects are successfully being implemented for the setting-up of these networks, the computerization of their information, the organization of training workshops, etc. Other activities carried out by ENGOs of inter-border places such as Shkoder and

Pogradec, which are relatively big projects concerning Lake Shkoder, Ohrid and Prespa, come across as interesting and have been effective.

88. Despite all the positive examples of the efforts made by the ENGOS in different districts, which have been the main engine for the sensitising of the public up to the levels where it actually stands, their activity in general remains far from the requirements of the time especially when it comes to the attraction of the public to activities or in exercising pressure on the government with regard to the policies of sustainable economic and environmental development.
89. The actual needs for the intensification and expansion of the environmental movement make it necessary to increase the capacity of the local ENGOS and their orientation in defined directions and the exchange of experience with international ENGOS in their respective work fields. The actual needs make it also necessary for the respective governmental structures to offer help and support to NGOs.

E - RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional Strengthening

1. Identify and assess the possibility of establishing a nucleus of a National Commission of Sustainable Development within the current or near future management structures of the Steering Committee of NEAP, in order to avoid initially adding to the proliferation of government committees. By this understanding, the composition of the Steering Committee should include not only stakeholders related to environment but also others coming from scientific and academic institutions, business associations and civil society, which represent other development sectors of the society. This first step should entail reviewing and amending accordingly the Terms of Reference of such an existing Steering Committee, to ensure oversight and maximal integration of economic, environmental and social priorities of development.
2. Identify and establish contacts with Committees of Sustainable Development in other countries in order to exchange practical experiences on how such institutions should function and share best practices.

Policy document formulation and implementation

1. Develop a National Strategy for Sustainable Development. For this purpose, the experience and models of other countries should be exploited, implementing the practices in accordance with the actual conditions of Albania. The strategy of sustainable development should be relying on the existing strategies for different sectors. The strategy should be accompanied by a medium-term action plan with clear responsibilities and the required financial resources.
2. Develop and implement concrete working plans for the implementation of different conventions signed or ratified by Albania, including all the relevant institutions having even specific roles in the implementation.
3. Complete the legal framework according to the need to fulfil all the responsibilities arising from different environmental conventions.
4. Undertake actions related to the solution of international priority problems of the 21st century including development of indicators to track attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.
5. Develop and implement the action plans on the climate, bio-diversity and land.

Inter-sectorial co-ordination

1. Establish a network of the focal points in the line ministries and the Ministry of Environment in order to facilitate their communication and co-operation for the integration of the environmental policies into the sectorial ones.
2. Increase the inter-ministerial co-operation in order to minimize the impact on the environment as a result of the globalization of the economy.

State and Private Sector

1. Develop and implement work programs in order to increase the co-operation and the bilateral profit between the government and business organizations.
2. Gradually introduce environment management systems in the developed businesses.

3. Develop environmental programmes, which match with private sector interests.

Strengthening co-operation with Civil Society Organizations

1. Promote greater participation by the public and stakeholders as well as co-ordination of information and co-operation among the government, NGOs and the general public, especially through the use of ICT
2. Strengthen and support specialization of environmental NGOs in specified fields.
3. Promote increasing of NGOs co-operation with line ministries and government institutions in general, through involvement in joint projects.
4. Promote increasing and strengthening of the co-operation among NGOs and the business associations.
5. Promote strengthening the co-operation and the involvement in joint projects of professional environmental NGOs based in the capital city with those working in the provinces and regions.

Strengthening of environmental education

1. Publish into Albanian relevant international documents on sustainable development such as Agenda 21 and disseminate them to different actors, including the government administration, the schools and the general public.
2. Publish, in easy-reading and non-expensive forms, materials on environmental management systems to be used for the education of non-governmental organizations and different business groups.
3. Work intensively and constantly for the introduction and the strengthening of environmental education in all the levels of the educational system, starting from the pre-school level.
4. Promote public awareness initiatives all around the country, jointly with NGOs and international organizations

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