Republic of Albania- 2016 ECOSOC Integration Segment: Implementing the 2030 Agenda through Policy Innovation and Integration

2 – 4 May 2016, UN Headquarters, New York

Guiding questions for Member States' input to the Integration Segment:

• What policy integration tools incorporating the different dimensions of sustainable development has your Government used at policy design, decision-making and/or implementation level? Which good practices or lessons could be shared?

While the post MDGs and preparation of SDG process was under way, the government of Albania has prepared the National Strategy on Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI), which soon will be approved by the Council of Ministers.

NSDI-II presents Albania's vision for its national social, democratic and economic development over the period 2015-2020, and its aspirations for European integration, and also presents the strategic objectives for the development of the country, as well as specific targets for the development of sectors and areas taking into account the real financial opportunities. The NSDI, which along with sector strategies, crosscutting strategies, master plans and action plans form the framework of the comprehensive strategic development for the country. NSDI also is a key component of Albania's Integrated Planning System (IPS), which constitutes a set of operating principles to ensure that government policy planning and implementation take place in a coherent, efficient and integrated manner.

The NSDI serves as an important reference document for Albania's development partners in terms of aligning their own country strategies and programs to the country's national development and EU integration strategies, and also reporting on progress.

The NSDI 2015-2020 includes also a note on the SDG, as well as in a separate annex presented the linkage of SDGs to main NSDI policy areas.

The Strategic Planning and Development Unit, within the Department for Development, Financing and Foreign Aid, in the Prime Minister's Office is a central policy coordination structure that is responsible for the coordination of work between the Albanian institutions in order to finalize NSDI II and to follow up with its monitoring. The SPDU has been coordinating and guiding the piloting of the SDG 16 during 2014-2015. The SPDU will be continuing to coordinate and guide the process of SDGs.

The existing planning process of NSDI and sector strategies will be used for the SDGs at the national level. Also, at the subnational level, there will be used some new tools that will be developed within the frame of the regional development policy (the regional development programs for 4 regional management areas).

In mid-2014, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) entered into a partnership to carry out a pilot project to develop and test governance targets and indicators to feed the United Nation's post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework.

The pilot project has national and global dimensions. At the national level, the pilot project provided expertise to integrate good governance performance measures and indicators into the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI, 2015-2020) as well as

increasing capacity for gathering, monitoring and analyzing data for the selected indicators as a baseline for the strategy.

At the global level, the piloting provides for a frame that the Government of Albania (GoA) to share and to inform on the development of the SDG 16, as MDGs successor framework, for the post-2015 agenda in the area of "rule of law, effective and capable institutions".

Based on the analysis, a set of 21 governance indicators are proposed with targets, baselines and sources of data where this information is currently available. The indicators are organized according to the NSDI 2015-2020 pillars.

The approach at this pilot experience will be used to organize also the approach regarding the whole SDG frame. The SDG global indicators will be analyzed within the country context and priorities, in order to identify country relevant targets.

Sharing experiences.

So far, there are initial attempts to translate the 17 SDG goals into the objectives of NSDI II and also into the respective sectorial strategies and crosscutting strategies for each sector development. For this purpose, an analysis has been undertaken to establish linkages between the NSDI II pillars & sub-themes with the different SDGs and the matrix has been included as an annex to the NSDI document.

Below we can present as an example, the linkage between SDG1and the respective sector strategies:

Reducing poverty levels and inequalities among the citizens and regions of Albanian society is a central theme of the SDGs and the Albanian government has demonstrated support and commitment in tackling these key issues for development. The main government policy documents in this area include:

- Inter-sectorial Strategy for Rural and Agricultural Development in Albania
- National Strategy for Social Protection 2015-2020 and its Action plan
- Policy document for Social Inclusion 2015-2020
- National Cross-cutting Strategy for Jobs and Skills 2014-2020
- Business and Investment Development Strategy (BIDS) 2014-2020

There have been some good experiences with integrating MDGs in local development agendas and these will also be used for the localization of the SDGs. It is important to note that the SDGs need to be linked to the local agendas and not the other way around.

In the case of reporting progress on MDGs, the Albanian Government in cooperation with the UN, attempted to elaborate and shed more light on the progress made towards each MDG and provided more details and understanding on this important process for Albania. In this regard progress reports were prepared in 2008, 2010, and 2012 and in 2015.

The MDG reports for 2008 and 2012 were part of the NSDI report, while for 2010 and 2015 were a 10year and 15th year report on MDGs that was published as a separate document.

The reports gave the information on fulfilment of the MDGs based on the performance of each indicator according to the most recent data, and elaborate on progress, challenges, underpinning factors, processes and the institutions involved.

The report might be shared by the Albanian Mission at UN, as well as by the UN agencies in Albania. We hope that our collaboration and cooperation with UN will continue regarding

the monitoring progress on SDGs and we would appreciate the continued support of UN agencies in the preparation of regular reports on the progress of SDGs.

• **Explain the types of institutional framework arrangements that are in place in your country for the successful integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development**.

Actually, it is not envisaged to have any change in the budgeting processes and governance structure in Albania due to the SDGs.

The existing structure of the Strategic Planning and Development Unit (SPDU), within the Department for Development, Financing and Foreign Aid, in the Prime Minister's Office, will continue to coordinate and oversee the SDG process and the existing structures within the line ministries will continue to strengthen their cooperation for the achievements of the objectives set in the respective sectors, including economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The SPDU is responsible for the strategic planning and policy coordination at the central level

This structure has been involved in the MDG process, regarding MSG planning and streamlining in the national policy frame, and in the preparation of the monitoring reports on MDGs. Also, this structure has coordinated the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) monitoring in 2012. SPDU will continue to be the structure for the strategic planning and policy coordination and oversee the SDG process.

• **Has your Government used innovative policy solutions – including (digital) technology, culture, traditional knowledge, creative combinations of traditional and new knowledge, new development models and strategies, among others – to reduce poverty and advance sustainable development?**

Government of Albania approved in April 2015 the Cross-Cutting Strategy "Digital Agenda of Albania 2015, which takes into consideration the objectives of the regional development specified in the Strategy SEE-2020 and supports the EU Digital Agenda. This document sets out the vision and development objectives for the period 2015-2020, as well as the main directions of policies that will be followed to fulfill these objectives.

Also the Albanian Government approved in May 2013 the National Plan for the development of broadband, which is a strategic document for the development of the broadband infrastructure and services. Broadband National Plan is an important development because it provides a clear direction of what the government, public administration and the regulator such as Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AEPC) are going to do for the period of 2013-2020.

The Action Plan for the Broadband Development determines as a vision the development of broadband infrastructure and services in the whole country in order to gain access to the electronic services in different fields, such as, health (e-health), education (e-education), commerce (e-commerce), government services (e-government), by stimulating the economic and social development of the country.

• **What kind of trade-offs has your Government encountered in the use of innovative policy solutions to advance in objectives that are captured in the 2030 Agenda? Has your**

Government found room for decreasing those trade-offs and/or enhancing synergies by adopting an integrated approach?

Integrated Planning System (IPS) is a mechanism established in 2005 to streamline policy making (NSDI and sectorial strategies), programming, budgeting (MTBP), monitoring, evaluation and aid coordination tailored to the government's organizational structures and human resource capacities. IPS is founded on two core processes that apply to all government organizations and activities: i) NSDI, which establishes the government's medium to longer term goals and strategies for all sectors based on a national vision, and ii) the MTBP, which requires each ministry to develop a three-year plan to deliver programme outputs to achieve its policy objectives and goals within its expenditure ceiling as set out in the government's fiscal plan. In addition, four core processes that affect a wide range of government organizations and activities are reflected in NSDI and MTBP, including European Integration, the Government Programme, Public Investment, and External Assistance.

The Government in March 2015 adopted **the sector approach** to policy coordination. The main institutional mechanism for the sector approach is the **Integrated Policy Management Group** (IPMG). The IPMGs are to lead and coordinate on a continuous and systematic basis, the development, implementation and monitoring of sector reforms in Albania in line with the Government's six key Priorities, the NSDI-II, the MTBP, the EU accession process and Albania's international obligations. The IPMGs will initially be responsible for the development of National Sector Programs and specific sector programs. Actually, the IPMG concept is implemented in four pilots: (1) integrated water management; (2) competitiveness and innovation; (3) good governance and public administration; and (4) employment and social sector. By 2016, it is expected that the IPMGs will be extended to the other sectors.

• **How do the civil society, academia and the private sector engage in promoting policy integration and the use, dissemination or development of technology for policy decision-making in your country?**

Transparency and participation in decision-making is a key element of the progress, not only for the development of the country, but also into fulfilling the country's international obligations.

In order to improve transparency and increased participation in decision-making, through consultation with stakeholders, in 2014 is adopted the law on public discussions of political acts and legislative, as well as is adopted a new law on access to information, for whom they are take the necessary measures for the full implementation of quality respectively: Law no. 119/2014 "for the right to information" and Law No. 146/2014 "On public information and consultation", which foresee the publication of the legal acts and by laws on the electronic register. This register is an official website, which serves as a central point of consultation, and provides access and offers the opportunity to all interested parties to communicate with the public body.

• **Has your Government formed multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at designing and/or implementing integrated policies and innovative solutions?**

Government of Albania approved in May 2015 the Road Map for an Enabled Environment for Civil Society, which provides that the strengthening of dialogue between government with citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the process of drafting public policies brings a range of benefits. It enables the government to obtain information resources and extensive expertise, which improves quality of new policies and provision of public services, but also contributes to efficient monitoring and evaluation of existing policies, as well as determining the necessary changes.

• What can the ECOSOC system do to support countries in adapting their policy framework to advance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The UN-System in Albania and in the region can provide support:
- Providing of know-how with respect to methodical aspects of the monitoring system
- Provide support to identify gaps in terms of capacities
- The consolidation of capacities regarding establishment of the monitoring system of SDG
- Supporting national processes to reach consensus on the targets.

In the context of defining indicators for progress on SDG, different countries can determine the various indicators (based on relevance). Even in the case the countries define the same indicators, probably the measuring methodology can be different. This can make the figures presented for the indicators to be incomparable.

In this regard it is necessary that UN (The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Indicators SDG (IAEG-SDGs)), as the main coordinator of the process to recommend and determine not only the common indicators, but also their measurement methodology.

Having a clearly defined set of regularly tracked universal targets should help to incentivize states to focus on effective implementation of development plans and to provide an opportunity for linking international ambitions and processes with national decision-making at the point of target-setting and benchmarking.

Further support is needed to interact technically and share experiences with the scope to:
- Reach a common understanding of linkages between SDG outcome document and regional review
- Reach a common understanding of linkages between SDG outcome document and national strategic documents
- Conduct a dialogue related issues to be addressed through region-specific SDGs indicators
- Initiate a dialogue on data requirements and statistical capacity needed for proposed SDGs indicators
- Share understanding of the follow-up and review mechanisms and processes at national, regional and global level
- Explore the possibility for establishing a network to contribute to integration of indicators at global and regional SDG related for a.