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Photo: The ceremony of signing the Memorandum of Understanding on Fast tracking Initiative on Division of Labour, 31 May 2010

Memorandum of Understanding on Fast Tracking Initiative on Division of Labour

On 31 May 2010, the Government and European donors signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Fast Tracking Initiative on Division of Labour. Participating countries in this initiative were represented by Ambassadors Saba D'Elia (Italy), Florian Raunig (Austria), Yvana Enzler (Switzerland), Helmuth Lohan (EU Delegation) and Chargé d'Affaires, Elisabeth Stam (Sweden)

who all signed the memorandum. On behalf of Government, it was signed by Minister of Innovation and ICT, Genc Pollo who said: "The signature of Memorandum of Understanding is a way of improving our co-ordination efforts and increasing the effectiveness of aid delivery. It is now a new phase for the Fast Tracking Initiative on Division of Labour, the implementation phase." He thanked

the working group, the DSDC and donors for their work that made the Fast Track Initiative on Division of Labour a reality. He congratulated the Italian Development Co-operation Office in Tirana for steering these discussions. The Fast Tracking Initiative on Division of Labour is seen as added value to the existing coordination mechanisms established by the Government.

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Message by the Minister of European Integration

Distinguished readers,

Allow me as Minister of Integration to note with pleasure that the relations between Albania and European Union so far are excellent. During the course of a year of SAA implementation, the Albanian Government has intensified its efforts to conclude every agreement with success and address any issues related to EU integration. Thanks to our joint efforts and commitment, we are already a NATO member country, and within a year we hope to be a Member State of EU. I am privileged to present here, on behalf of the Government of European Integration, the state of play of SAA implementation.

The entry into force of SAA between Albania and the EU marked a new chapter in the bilateral relations. A year ago Albania took another important step towards EU integration, the submission of the application for EU membership. That was followed by its approval by the EU Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and receiving EC Questionnaire on December 16th, 2009. Since its delivery, the Albanian public administration was intensively involved in the process of answering the 2284 questions and over 2000 sub-questions. This was a comprehensive process which involved 62 public institutions, 30 local experts from academic areas, as well as civil society and various interest groups. The answers to the questionnaire were submitted in due time, paying particular attention to the quality of answers.

Our great efforts were rewarded on 27 May 2010, when the European Commission announced the removal of the short-term visa regime for Albania. That was a great historic achievement and a dream come true for every Albanian citizen. As a Minister of Integration, I emphasize my commitment to address the conditions that have not been met yet by Albania with the same earnestness as the road map for the visa liberalization. With regard to the recommendation for the development of strategies and policies for the re-



integration of returned Albanians, a team of experts have designed a very good strategy that shall be approved and adopted soon. This will lead to the fulfilment of one of the required criteria. The Government of Albania is intensively working to meet the obligations deriving from SAA implementation, such as: European Partnership, Copenhagen Criteria, as well EC Progress Report Recommendations 2009. In addition, considerable progress has been achieved with regard to the completion of the legislation and effective implementation in the field. The law on civil confiscation of the proceeds of organized crime (anti-mafia law) and the law on jurisdictional relations with foreign authorities in criminal matters have been adopted, thanks to the assistance of European and other missions. Pursuant to the recommendations on the fight against corruption, that constitutes one of the conditions for integration, the Government has already adopted the Anticorruption Plan for 2010, that guarantees the implementation of the inter-sectoral anti-corruption strategy. The anti-corruption reforms have produced positive results in the key sectors of the economy, particularly the introduction of the 100% electronic procurement. In the health sector introduction of the payment system for the visits as part of the Health Strategy, has reduced the corruption level. This year the Appeal Commissioner Body

for Public Procurement was established, which will deal with complaints on the public procurements. This structure reflects the EC recommendations for the division of public procurement procedures from the appeal process.

In implementation of SAA obligations, the Albanian Government has carried out important reforms regarding the facilitation of registration of private businesses, designed to improve the business climate, reforms in enterprises and privatisation, public internal financial control, free movement of capital, statistics etc. Thanks to such reforms, in the first quarter of 2010 the Albanian economy registered a very good performance in exports. The data indicate that in January 2010, 44 per cent more exports were registered, compared to January 2009.

With regard to decentralization of IPA components, efforts for the first and second components are in track. Following EC mission recommendations in January, preparations for the decentralization of components 3, 4, 5 are under way and the respective structures are being established.

During his visit in Tirana last month, the Commissioner Stefan Fule congratulated Albania and the Albanian Government for their achievements in the fulfilment of European aspirations and highlighted the fact that they are in the process of preparing the opinion about Albania, which is the best indication of the progress attained. In conclusion of my greetings for this esteemed newsletter for the readers, I wish to thank you for this opportunity and assure you of the strong will of our Government to succeed in the achievement of this duty of paramount importance: membership of our country in the European family, the family we belong to.

Sincerely,



Minister of European Integration



Photo: Albania and Germany sign the protocol of co-operation 2010-2011

Albania and Germany sign the protocol of co-operation 2010-2011

On 18 May 2010 a Development Co-operation Protocol for 2010-2011 was signed between the Ministry of Finance and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development. For the Albanian side negotiations were headed by the Ministry of Finance and the DSDC and accompanied by wide consultation with ministries and institutions benefiting from this protocol. Areas of co-operation include: water and sewage, energy, business and SME Development, education and vocational training. Total financing was 85.6 million, including a soft loan of 22 million Euros that will be given to commercial banks for business development. Both sides expressed their commitment to the successful implementation of projects.

Government signs co-operation agreement with GTZ

The Minister of Education and Science, Myqerem Tafaj, the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal

Opportunities, Spiro Ksera, the GTZ Regional Director, Ulrike Gantzer-Sommer and German Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Jan Rudolf, signed a co-operation agreement to guarantee project implementation from January 2010 to December 2011. The project Vocational Education in North-East Albania aims to help young people from Northeast Albania to have real job prospects when they leave school, especially help graduates from vocational schools become more employable. According to the agreement, Ministry of Education and Science will plan human resources, appoint experts and offer support to other national and regional institutions to implement the programme. The project began in August 2008 with a dialogue between regional training institutions, employment offices, and commerce and industry and an analysis of the labour market in the region. The project investigated work force requirements and the required qualifications. It studied how the regional employment patterns were represented in terms of gender, disadvantaged groups and age. The project prepares young people for their entry into the labour market through careers advice, work experience

IPS support group gathered to discuss the progress of IPS Trust Fund

The tenth Meeting of the Integrated Planning System (IPS) Support Group was held on 28 May 2010 to review the progress, challenges and next steps. Representatives from the Ministries of Finance, European Integration, DSDC, Department of Public Administration, donors contributing to the IPS Trust Fund and the DTS participated in the meeting co-chaired by the Director of DSDC, Valbona Kuko and Deputy Minister of Finance, Nezir Haldeda.

Director Kuko presented the steps undertaken within the IPS from May 2009 to May 2010, highlighting that the IPS calendar has been implemented in a timely manner.

An overview of finalized and contracted procurement processes for the IPS Trust Fund components, detailed status and implementation, including specific disbursement figures and projection until 2011 was given by Anila Tanku, General Director Central Finance and Contracting Unit.

Participating donors were pleased to see more progress since last meeting and a better relationship with Government beneficiary institutions. In principle, donors agreed to an extension of IPS Multi-Donor Trust Fund until September 2011 but requested to see a detailed explanation for the extension, a revised procurement plan as well as an Implementation Action Plan from the government to serve as the government commitment that all activities under IPS Multi-Donor trust Fund will be completed by September 2011.



Photo: ICT Sector Working Group, organised on 17 May 2010

and other projects. Advice given to institutions in the four districts is targeted towards co-operation with management and labour, and capacity development so that they can implement vocational training.

ICT sector working group gathers for the first time

On 17 May 2010, the Ministry for Innovation and ICT organized the first meeting of sector working group on ICT. The meeting was chaired by Minister Genc Pollo, and aimed to analyse progress in the sector, new policies adopted to develop ICT and Information society and steps to be taken to turn targets into action. DSDC Director Valbona Kuko said that this forum will help Government and donors to reach common objectives. Minister Pollo provided an overview of new policies and institutional changes and priorities in ICT. Regarding Digital Albania he said that the Government initiative was being assisted through the establishment of the Ministry for Innovation and ICT. Participants were introduced to the Policy Paper for Electronic Communications and its action plan, previously approved by the Council of Ministers. The day of the meeting coincided with the World

Day of Information Society.

Transparency International held its Annual Regional Meeting in Tirana

Transparency International Europe and Central Asia held its Annual Regional Meeting in Tirana from 12 to 15 May 2010. The event provided a forum to discuss good governance and anti-corruption reforms as a key aspect of the EU accession process. It explored how the reforms could be sustainable and how anti-corruption standards could be promoted. The event was organized by Transparency International and the Government. Transparency International Europe and Central Asia Department Director, Dr. Miklos Marschall, and Prime Minister Sali Berisha held a joint press conference on the first day highlighting the progress Albania had made in fighting corruption by implementing the strategy and in approving its 2010 action plan. The next two days of the Regional Meeting focused on the new Transparency International Strategy 2010-2015 whose aims were to contribute towards the development of shared key programmatic and organizational goals for the movement over the next five years, and an improved



Photo: Conference Strengthening Scientific Research and Higher Education held on 21-22 May 2010

movement-wide mission statement. On the final day, participants attended thematic workshops on networking and problem solving session.

Strengthening Scientific Research and Higher Education Conference

The regional conference Strengthening Scientific Research and Higher Education Conference -from Bilateral to pan-European Cooperation took place in Tirana on 21-22 May 2010. It was held by Ministry of Education and Science and the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, and funded by Swiss Government and One UN Programme. The aim was to foster regional and international co-operation for enhancing the competitiveness of South Eastern Europe countries on the European and international research arena. The meeting was convened as an SEE Expert Meeting and Ministerial Round Table, where the first day was focused on discussions among experts from the region. Day two was designed as a roundtable of SEE Ministers responsible for Science and Higher Education. The meeting stressed that while all SEE countries now have full access to European and other regional research funding programmes, progress had to be made in ensuring

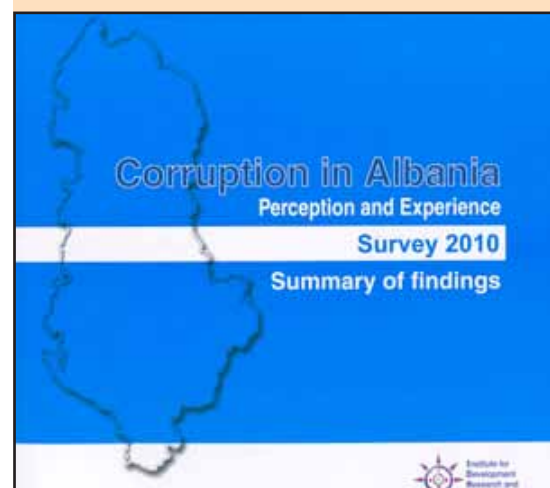
that SEE research teams demonstrate successful results in the competitive processes of accessing these funds. The event was chaired by Minister Myqerem Tafaj, while on the second day it was greeted by Prime Minister Sali Berisha, Minister Genc Pollo and the UN Resident Representative, Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett.

Politicians, election experts visit London

A group of Albanian politicians and election experts paid a four-day study visit to London, organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania. The group was comprised of the Mr Oerd Bylykbashi, the Prime Minister's Chief of Cabinet, Damian Gjikhuri, a Socialist Party MP, Edmond Panariti, the Chair of the Socialist Movement for Integration General Steering Committee, the Central Election Commission (CEC) Chair Arben Ristani, Deputy Chair Deshira Subashi and Director of Electoral Commissions Alfred Spahiu. The delegation followed the voting and counting process in the parliamentary and local government elections on 6 May, and met with election experts and local officials. The visit is expected to benefit the electoral reform in Albania.

Corruption in Albania: 2010 Survey

In May, USAID released its sixth annual public opinion survey. Conducted by IDRA with the support of USAID, the survey tracks the perceptions of citizens, public officials, and judges regarding corruption as well as their experience with corruption. According to the survey, corruption among public officials is common. 91.8% of the respondents think that corruption among public officials is either "Widespread" or "Somewhat widespread". Citizens' trust in institutions continues to be very low. The health sector still remains the one most quoted for bribery. In 2010, 33.5% of respondents said that they have offered a bribe to a doctor or a nurse, 79.7% said that it was difficult to get information from the courts; a deterioration of 10.2% from 2009. The economy is the number one public concern in 2010. Citizens continue to be pessimistic about the economic future and roughly a quarter of respondents thinks that the country's economic situation will be worse a year from now. For more information or to download the report, please visit: <http://albania.usaid.gov>



Quo Vadis civil society? Conference organized by OSCE Presence and EU Delegation

On 25 May, the OSCE Presence in Albania and the EU Delegation organized a conference on civil society, which brought together civil society representatives, non-governmental organizations, central and local government and donors. The conference addressed issues such as improvement and implementation of legislation, increase of citizens' participation in the decision-making, increase of accountability and image of civil society organizations, and transfer of ownership from foreign donations to local resources. The Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Robert Bosch, and the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, delivered opening remarks. "There is no doubt that the development of a vital civil society alongside political parties, media and other factors would be beneficiary for Albanian democracy as a whole. The International community stands ready to support continued efforts but more importantly it needs civil society actors to take the lead and drive the future development of their sector in the interests of all Albanians," Ambassador Bosch said. Ambassador Lohan said the European Union considers the strengthening of civil society instrumental to a country's democratization and integration in the EU. He said the international partners were particularly interested in listening to the participants' opinions about: the existing legal framework, collaboration with public administration, the need to reflect and strengthen in you're their own internal functioning the principles of transparency and accountability, and how they believed that the results of their work could be made sustainable. General Secretary of the Council of Ministers, Gjergj Lezhja stressed the concrete action that the Government has taken in support to civil society, such as: establishment within state budget of the national fund for civil society, approval of law on the agency for civil society, drafting of the charter of civil society and establishment of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society. He said that 'Our Government considers inclusion of civil society in decision making as a process that is closely related to EU integration and



Photo: Quo Vadis civil society? Conference organized by OSCE Presence and EU Delegation on 25 May 2010

we are committees in creating bridges of cooperation and a healthy partnership with civil society.'

The GTZ "Strengthening civil society and democratic structures in Albania" Project

The "Strengthening civil society and democratic structures in Albania" Project, funded by GTZ through GOPA, will conclude its activity in December 2010. The last year of the project implementation aims at establishing the Agency for the Promotion of Civil Society, whose duty is to disburse the Civil Society Fund approved by the Government. The technical assistance provided to the Agency through this Project aims at making the Fund operational as soon as possible, through a transparent disbursement process. The Fund shall support draft-proposals made by the Civil Society, based on the policies designed and published by the Board of Agency. The assistance to the Agency will also consist in sharing experiences with counterpart agencies in the region, training of staff, creation of opportunities for contacts and cooperation with civil society organizations and institutions at all levels, benefitting from the experience of other donors present in the country, etc. The Agency is being established pursuant to the Law on the "Establishment and Functioning of the Agency for the Promotion of Civil Society" adopted by the Assembly of Albania on 9 March 2009. During 2010, the GTZ Project

is committed to send to the Parliament a draft of the "Political Paper on the Cooperation between the State and Civil Society" (Charter of Civil Society), designed by the joint work of civil society actors and the Government. The draft-paper has been subject of a long process of consultation with 207 civil society organizations in 7 regional meetings, organized over the second half of 2009. The draft-Charter of Civil Society remains open for improvement and contributions until when it is passed by the Parliament.

Regional conference on decentralized management of IPA funds

On 18 May 2010, the Ministry of European Integration organized a regional conference on the decentralized management of IPA funds. The event was held under the EU funded IPA 2008 Project Preparation Facility implemented by the Austrian Development Agency. The event was chaired by the Minister of Integration, Majlinda Bregu and included the participation of the Head of EU Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode, Deputy Minister of Integration, Strategic Coordinator Albania Jorida Tabaku, and General Director Central Finance and Contracting Unit, Anila Tanku, as well as the Minister for European Integration and NIPAC Montenegro, Ms Gordana Djurovic, Head of Department for EU Programmes

in the Field of Promoting Economic and Social Cohesion, Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds (CODEF), Croatia, Iva Frkic, Deputy Minister for European Integration and Strategic Coordinator in Montenegro, Aleksandar Drljevic. The aim of the regional workshop was to exchange experience on the different stages of IPA preparation and implementation, from the initial strategic framework and programming to the financial management and control, mainly for IPA components III (Regional development) and IV (Human Resources Development). Ministers Bregu, Bode and Djurovic provided a presentation of efforts made to meet the Copenhagen Criteria and preparation for decentralisation and programming, management and implementation of EU Cohesion development policies and their instruments (Structural Funds). Ambassador Lohan said that decentralised management will require a thorough knowledge by the National Authorities of EU Financial regulation and procurement rules and its proper implementation. Mrs Iva Frkic made a presentation of the past Croatian experience on the programming for components III and IV and key element for lessons learnt on the process. The second part of the event was chaired by Deputy Minister of Integration Tabaku, which addressed to topics relating to the preparation of strategic documents, the Strategic Coherence Framework and Operational programmes for Components III and IV, road map for decentralisation of all IPA components and assistance for structural-funds type investments.

Nine priority spots in Albania assessed and remediation action plans prepared

On 4 May 2010, the Government and UNDP presented to stakeholders, the findings of a study of nine environmental 'hot spots' in Albania. This study was part of the UNDP project Identification and prioritization of environmental hotspots in Albania funded by the Dutch Government. It includes an assessment, remediation action plans and cost estimates for nine environmental hot spots in the: Berat Battery Factory, Perrenjas Mine Site, Buildings at Biticka Mine, Dajti Enterprise Site in Tirana, Tailing Dam in Guri i Kuq



Photo: Regional conference on decentralized management of IPA funds, held in Tirana on 18 May 2010

on the shore of Ohrid Lake, Ferrochrome Smelter in Elbasan, Pesticides Dump in Rreshen, Berat Textile Factory and former Kinostudio. The total cost of rehabilitating these nine sites is 62 million Euros. The UN Resident Co-ordinator, Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett said that "Albania does not have specific legislation related to hotspots. While new legislation related to Environmental Impact Assessment, waste management, water and air quality has been passed, gaps remain for ground water, soil protection, industrial pollution and ownership of polluted sites. "Who owns the pollution?" remains unanswered. The Government of Albania and the respective national institutions need to take the lead and address these issues, including resource constraints as well as technical and

capacity gaps." Minister of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, Fatmir Mediu, said "We should be aware that the cleaning of environmental hot spots is a challenge to be faced, which can not be successfully realized without the joint efforts of all stakeholders, and without nourishing the appreciation and interest for the environment, which should be considered as an added value for which we are responsible to protect and manage efficiently for the generations to come". The UNDP and the Government have already conducted the cleaning up of Bajza railway station, Balez chemicals depot and several satellite sites. Recently, interventions to reduce the risk associated to the tailing dams at Reps and Rreshen mines have started.



Photo: Donor's meeting Tackling Environmental Hot Spots, organised on 4 May 2010

National partners commit to improve nutrition status of children and women in Albania

Officials from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, the UN came together on 11 May 2010 to commit to improving nutrition status of children and women. They agreed to implement a joint programme on Child Food Security and Nutrition targeting malnutrition among high risk child groups. "Unlike many other projects, this one seeks a wide consensus - this is shown by the Memorandum of Understanding on Food and Nutrition that will open the way to activate official structures and create an inter-ministry committee", said Mr. Petrit Vasili, Minister of Health. Participants discussed the situation of nutrition and food security and the need to incorporate nutritional objectives into sectoral policies.

Inauguration of Inter-ministerial Operations Centre

PAMECA has assisted with the development of the Inter-ministerial Operations Centre and on the 17 May, Prime Minister Berisha inaugurated the Centre. In the presence of the Ministers of Defence and Interior, Chiefs of Navy and Police and several other senior officials, he said that "it is important that the borders of free countries are no longer controlled by military forces and with the functioning of the Centre, we will ensure the civilian control of Albanian maritime space". He spoke of the positive results in the fight against illegal activities in the maritime space due to the Centre. He said that the Government had invested 2.4 million Lek for the radar system installed along the coastline. This system will support this Centre in its law enforcement and search and rescue activities. With this Centre, Albania has fulfilled one of the main conditions for visa liberalisation, he said. The Government will support this Centre by turning it into a positive example for the region. Due to strong co-operation with neighbouring countries and due to EU support, Albania will make the Adriatic Sea one



Photo: National partners commit to improve nutrition status of children and women in Albania

of the safest seas in the region.

Inauguration of Closed Reception Centre

On 13 May 2010, Prime Minister Sali Berisha inaugurated the Close Reception Centre for illegal migrants in Albania and praised the work done in order to establish a modern centre which fulfils EU standards. The project is funded by the EU and the Prime Minister thanked the EU Delegation for their support.

USAID Fosters Regional Trade

In May, the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development (CEED), active in seven

Balkan countries outside Albania, chose Albania for this year's regional conference citing Albania as one of the few "growth markets" in Europe that uniquely avoided recession in 2009 with a GDP growth rate of 2.5%. Prime Minister Berisha urged participants to consider Albania's role in the EU economy. "Before you decide to go to China, investors would better think to come to Albania which in fact is not a 1 billion market but is a European market." The USAID co-sponsored the 4th Regional CEED Conference and B2B Meetings held on May 22 in Tirana along with several local businesses and organizations including Raiffeisen Bank, the Albanian American Enterprise Fund, the Kauffman Foundation, Small



Photo: Inauguration of Inter-ministerial Operations Centre on 17 May 2010

Enterprise Assistance Funds, and EBRD's TAM BAS Programme. The event was a key networking and business growth opportunity for Albanian and regional entrepreneurs, bringing together executives from over 60 Albanian businesses and from about 70 firms from the region. The event showcased opportunities for cross-border trade and investment in Albania's industries to entrepreneurs from neighbouring countries. Some 250 business-to-business meetings were conducted between participating businesses. USAID will organize further similar events to enhance business relationships and help generate new deals between Albanian enterprises and foreign buyers.

Journalists discuss Albanian media situation on World Press Freedom Day

Albanian journalists and analysts discussed the current situation in the media at a roundtable conference organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania to mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. The participants also discussed challenges including freedom of expression, editorial independence and media responsibility. The conference was addressed by the Head of the Presence's Democratization Department, Hartmut Puerner, members of the National Council of Radio and Television's Ethics Council, Fatos Lubonja and Bashkim Hoxha, and media expert Lutfi Dervishi.

USAID Links Research and Extension Services to Farmers

In May, experts from agriculture technology transfer centres (TTCs), researchers, productivity specialists and representatives of private farmers/producers associations met in Fushe Kruja to discuss ways of helping Albanian products and farmers to become more competitive. The aim was to discuss the role that research and extension services could play to make the sector more dynamic and competitive and called on TTCs and the Agriculture University of Tirana



Photo: Roundtable conference organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania to mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May

to work with USAID to identify ways to make research and extension more effective and efficient in helping farmers increase productivity and competitiveness. Mr. Astrit Balliu, Head of Research at AUT, announced that new research projects will focus on apples, olives, and other high-value commodities.

Inauguration of National Food Authority

The creation of the National Food Authority is an important step in the EU integration process. The Authority has merged five inspectorates into

one. The aims to bring the Authority and inspectorates out of their current arbitrariness. Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended the inauguration ceremony of the Authority along with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, Genc Ruli and the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan from, an institution that has heavily assisted the drafting of the legislation on functioning of this authority and up to refurbishing of the premises. Ambassador Lohan expressed his enthusiasm for the creation of such an important institution targeting to achieve the integration standards into the EU family.



Seminar on linking research and extension services to farmers

Switzerland shares good practices on promoting gender equality

The Swiss Co-operation Office in Tirana (SCO-A) organized a workshop in Tirana for sharing good practices in gender equality mainstreaming with partners and representatives from Government, civil society and the donor community on 26 May 2010. The event was opened by the Swiss Ambassador, Yvana Enzler, and the Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Filloreta Kodra. Some 100 participants contributed to sharing good practices in gender equality mainstreaming. "Albania's journey towards European integration will be easier if men and women walk together in the same pace", said Ambassador Enzler. She recognized that progress has already been made but that "more needs to be done" regarding gender equality mainstreaming. She presented the latest brochure produced by the Swiss Cooperation Office that highlights good practices on gender equality mainstreaming. Deputy Minister Kodra, expressed appreciation of the Swiss Cooperation's work in gender equality. "Gender equality is being implemented by the Government of Albania and this will continue to be high on Government's agenda", she said. Three examples of good practices developed by the Swiss Cooperation in Albania were presented, demonstrating how gender equality mainstreaming was successfully implemented in projects including support to farmers' associations in rural areas, to Roma through education, and support to decentralization and local government. Drawing from Swiss good practices which highlighted how project partners and population groups have contributed to increased gender equality, participants shared experiences in working groups on promoting gender equality in projects in rural areas, social inclusion and local governance. The Deputy Head of SCO-A, Rahel Bösch, summarized the successful achievements and called upon participants to join their efforts together: "Overall, there is a good



Photo: Workshop for sharing good practices in gender equality mainstreaming, organised by Swiss Co-operation Office in Tirana on 26 May 2010

framework and good potentials – so let us be practical and modest, just do it!". The theme of gender equality mainstreaming will continue to be of high priority in SCO-A's work in the next four years.

Sixth Crans Montana business forum held in Tirana

The 6th Crans Montana Forum was held in Tirana on 6 to 7 May 2010. Government and business leaders took part in the forum to share expertise and develop common strategies. The agenda included items on: regional peace and stability; NATO integration and the new position

of Albania and Croatia in the Western Balkans; the impact of the crisis on South-Eastern Europe; the new and performing investment climate, and investment opportunities through privatization and the major Government priorities to attract long-term investments. The forum was opened by Prime Minister Sali Berisha who said that Albania will avert an economic crisis because of low fiscal burden on the business; the downsizing public sector which is no longer a burden on the taxpayers; and strategic investments in infrastructure. Energy, roads, minerals and tourism were some of the areas of interest for foreign companies participating at the event.



Photo: The 6th Crans Montana Forum, held on 6-7 May 2010

Inauguration of air quality monitoring stations

In the framework of a two year project Protecting health from Climate Change in Albania, funded by Germany and implemented by WHO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Institute of Public Health, two modern air quality monitoring stations were established in Tirana. The stations which are located in the Institute of Public Health and in the main policlinic in Tirana were officially inaugurated on 26 of May 2010 by the Minister of Health, Dr Petrit Vasili, and the German Ambassador Bernd Borchardt. They underlined the importance of these stations which would provide reliable data similar to those of other Western countries. The media was present during the inauguration and had the chance to see the figures in the displays of the equipment which, although very preliminary, showed pollution levels well over the WHO and EU norms. The results are expected to support policy-makers in their decision how to



Photo: Inauguration of air quality monitoring stations on 26 May 2010

improve the air quality in Tirana but also to raise the awareness of population to use green alternatives. Regular periodic

bulletins are being expected to be issued by the Ministry of Health based on the data obtained.

In-country Missions

World Bank

Distribution Privatization - Partial Risk Guarantee, ECSSE APL 2 Transmission Project, ECSEE APL5 Dam Safety Project and PSGRP- Power Sector Generation and Restructuring Project, took place from May 26 – June 9. The aims were (i) to follow-up on discussions between OSSH-CEZ, ERE and the Government on the implementation status of the distribution privatization process in light of the PRG, (ii) to review the implementation of PSGRP project, the progress achieved towards the finalization of work for the commissioning of the Vlora plant and any contractual and/or related procurement related issues including a possible extension of the project's closing date, (iii) to follow-up on the restructuring process of ECSEE-APL2 and progress achieved in the implementation of the contract for the rehabilitation of substations, and (iv) to assess the finances of KESH in light of the

review of sector viability and assessment of the ability to fulfil the financial covenants of the ECSEE-APL5 project and to participate in the Panel of Experts meeting from 1-4 June 2010.

Western Balkans Programmatic Poverty Assessment took place from 26 till 28 May. The aims were to: (i) discuss capacity building activities on the construction of the rural income variable; (ii) to discuss INSTAT plans for household survey data collection in the future, including the possibility of running smaller scale ad hoc surveys to be commissioned by World Bank projects; and (iii) to identify future areas for collaboration;

A World Bank Mission for the Albania Avian Influenza Control and Human Pandemic Preparedness and Response Project visited from 31 May 31 till 4 June. The aims were to: i) assess progress achieved in implementation of the project components and actions agreed in the supervision missions of October 2009, ii) to assess the borrower working and procurement plan for the completion of the AI Project in the last six month of project implementation under the revised

PDO of the restructured project; iii) to identify any minor needs and gaps in pandemic response that the project can further help with and; iv) make sure that the project and component performance indicators are met and duly reflected in Task Force Secretariat reports;

Land Administration & Management Mission LAMP Restructuring Mission took place from 24 till 28 May. The aims were to finalize the draft Project Restructuring Paper, including confirming reallocation amounts, implementation arrangements for Component D (Emergency Response) and agreeing an Action Plan with critical steps needed to accelerate preparation and implementation of the emergency response.

Water Supply Investment Project Preparation Mission took place from 24 May till 4 June. The aims were to (i) confirm the outlines of the new investment project with key counterparts; (ii) to begin preparations to update the Water Sector Strategy, including the hosting of a workshop highlighting international best practice; (iii) to

provide support in launching the project preparation activities, including assisting the PIU in preparing Terms of Reference and tender documents to begin the feasibility and design studies for the proposed operation; and (iv) to agree an action plan and next steps in preparing the new investment operation and updating the Water Sector Strategy.

Water Resources and Irrigation Project Preparation Mission visited from 17 till 28 May. The aim was to advance the preparation of the project based on the agreements reached during the identification mission. The team conducted discussions with the Government, donors and stakeholders involved in the preparation of the project on the following issues: the selection of priority basins and investments; project implementation approach and arrangements; and issues of a substantive nature, including the framework for water resources and irrigation reforms. The mission would like to discuss and agree on a timeline with the Government to delivery key outputs that are required for the preparation of the project, including the Project Preparation Facility.

Albania Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Project, Briefing Mission took place from 10 till 12 May and Supervision Mission from 24 to 28 May. The aim was to meet with officials from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Interior (as implementing Agency), Ministry of Agriculture, the Institute for Energy, Water and Environment (IEWE) and the Insurance Regulator to brief them on the recent enhancements to the Southeast Europe and Caucasus South-eastern Europe and Caucasus Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Project (SEEC CRIF) and to discuss the implementation of project component 4 on catastrophe insurance. The aim of the mission was to follow up on the implementation of project components 1 – 3, and to assist the General Directorate of Civil Emergencies with preparations for damage and loss assessment training to be provided by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) in early June, 2010. For this purpose, the mission met with officials from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunications,

Ministry of Finance and the IEWE.

Integrated Planning System Trust Fund and macroeconomic dialogue mission, 10 May - 4 June: On IPS issues (A) To assess progress in the implementation of Treasury Modernization, and discuss any pending issues regarding the live operation of the Treasury system which began on April 1 this year; (B) To discuss progress on other important issues for the Treasury modernization including: i) the drafting the technical proposal for the AFMIS and EAMIS/ IPSIS system, following the comments provided by the World Bank team in November 2009 and the technical supervision mission of February 2010; ii) work on rehabilitation of the system centres following comments on TORs from WB team; iii) Progress in the selection process for Treasury and IT advisors (C) To review progress in the implementation in other areas of the Trust Fund activities, (D) To discuss the requested extension of the IPS Trust Fund. On Macroeconomic dialogue (A) To discuss the prospects for the economy in the current situation and the overall direction of economic policy (B) To discuss the draft Country Economic Memorandum and the medium term growth agenda for the economy. Integrated Coastal Zone Management

and Clean-up Project (ICZMCP), Implementation Support Mission took place from 16 to 21 May. The purpose of the mission was to review the progress of actions with regards to effectiveness of the amended Development Credit Agreement and co-financing grant agreements, as well as to discuss and agree on key actions to put back on track the implementation of the restructured Project. Specifically, the team reviewed all project components and their readiness for implementation.

Education Excellence and Equity Project Mission took place from 17 to 21 May. The mission was focused on both technical aspects directly related to the achievement of the priorities of the Annual Reform Program, as well as safeguard and fiduciary elements of project implementation. The team sought to learn about the latest progress in education reform, as well as discuss with stakeholders ways of moving forward with activities that have not progressed as much. Topics of interest include the School Grant Pilot, teacher training related to the secondary school curriculum reform, progress in the use of information technology in schools as well as future plans for e-learning activities, and latest developments moving forward with the higher education reform.

governmentdonor*dialogue*

As of 15 November 2009 until 15 May 2010, the OSCE Presence in Albania will be the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat.

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From January 2010 Government-Donor Dialogue will be available in both English and Albanian language.

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If you would like to contribute, send your text to the Donor Technical Secretariat (DTS) Office (nevila.como@aidharmonisation.org.al) or the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC) (agerxhani@km.gov.al) by the 5th of every month. An ideal word count for submissions is around 100 words.

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