



■ Photo: On 27 August 2010, the Albanian President Bamir Topi conferred the Medal of Gratitude to Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania

Ambassador Helmuth Lohan receives the Medal of Gratitude

On 27 August 2010, the Albanian President Bamir Topi conferred the Medal of Gratitude to Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania “for [his] particular contribution towards the acceleration of Albania’s integration process in the EU.” Ambassador Lohan said that working on enlargement in Albania had been very rewarding. “The interlocutors, from the President of the Republic to the many Albanians I had the privilege to meet professionally or privately,

were remarkable for their openness of heart, their friendliness and their belief in European ideals and European integration. The award of the Medal of Gratitude to the Ambassador of the European Union is strong proof of Albania’s commitment to the objective of European integration – the fact that it is being bestowed upon me as a person is an extraordinary honour that makes me feel proud and happy. I would like to assure you... Mr President, that the European Commission, the Union’s External Action Service, other Euro-

pean institutions and their staff will continue to assist Albania on her integration path. In the final analysis, it is, of course, Albania herself that determines the speed of her progress towards the Union. In this sense, I wish you, Mr President, and all Albanians every success in your endeavours for rapid rapprochement with the European Union.” Ambassador Lohan took up his post in Albania in September 2006 and completed his tenure as Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania on 31 August 2010.

In this issue:

- **Albania signs Development Cooperation Agreement with Denmark**
- **Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary General visits Albania**
- **Formulation of the New National Water and Wastewater Sector Strategy**
- **Public consultation guides regional development as part of EU pre-accession process**
- **USAID Improves the Competitiveness of Leading Albanian Garment Manufacturers**
- **Albanian Cities using IT for Tax Administration**
- **Donor Support to Regional Development**



■ Photo: Albania signs Development Co-operation Agreement with Denmark

Albania signs Development Co-operation Agreement with Denmark

On 1 September 2010, a Development Co-operation Agreement was signed between the Government of Albania, and the Government of Denmark. The agreement aims to strengthen the legal and institutional framework of their development co-operation to reinforce friendship ties between the two countries through de-

veloping their co-operation. The agreement will contribute to economic growth and a sustainable, socially equitable development and to the political, economic and social reforms necessary for Albania to adapt to EU structures. Denmark will make available financial assistance, material resources, technical assistance, and training opportunities. The agreement was signed by Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark, Karsten Ankjaer Jensen.

VET sector working group holds its second meeting for 2010

On 8 September 2010, the Ministry for Education and Science in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities organized the second sector working group meeting on VET for 2010. The meeting was chaired by Minister Myqerem Tafaj, and Minister Spiro Ksera, aiming to discuss with donors the new draft bill for some amendments to the Law on Vocational Education and Training. Minister Tafaj described VET as one of the most important priorities in education. VET in Albania supports the sustainable social and economic development of the country in the context of regional and

European integration. The amended law 'On Vocational Education and Training in Albania', aims its harmonization with requirements and standards of the EU. The changes proposed can be grouped as follows: i) Changes related to the structure of the VET system, which are based on professional qualifications alternatives recommended by the Albanian Qualifications Framework; ii) Changes related to public-private partnership as the main way toward a rapid development of an innovative system to VET; iii) Changes related to social partnership which is now a basis for development of the VET system.

UN Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, visits Albania

On 7-8 September 2010, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary General, visited Tirana. The delegation headed by her was also composed of Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Director of the UN Deputy Secretary General's Office, Z. Pio Smith, Special Assistant of the UN Deputy Secretary General and Ms. Gülden Türköz-Cosslett, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Tirana. The aim of the visit was to review the progress made toward the "Delivering as One UN" Program in Albania, since coherence of the United Nations system constitutes one of Ms. Migiro's main responsibilities. During the visit, the delegation met with the UN staff in Albania, Prime Minister, Mr. Sali Berisha, Albanian Assembly Spokesperson, Ms. Jozefina Topalli, and President, Mr. Bamir Topi. A visit was also paid to one of the projects funded by the "Delivering as One UN" Project, at the Vocational Training Center "Don Bosko" in Tirana.

Ms. Migiro emphasized that the major progress of Albania in all aspects is an excellent example that other countries can draw lessons from. Further on, she focused on the implementation of the "Delivering as One UN" Program in Albania, which, being one of the pilot countries, Albania has implemented very successfully with its commitment and the political support it has given to this Program. She also emphasized that the key to success lies in the Ownership of the Government and other Albanian institutions in this process, which was also seen in the results of the Country Led Evaluation Report and its conclusions presented during the Hanoi Conference. On the other hand, Ms. Migiro pointed out that transition of Albania to the group of middle-income countries is a tremendous achievement, which will also be reflected in the way programs shall be implemented in Albania, focusing them on the provision of capacity building know-how and expertise. Ms. Migiro thanked the Prime Minister for making available a "UN House", a meaningful testimony of the priority that Albania has accorded to



Photo: Visit of UN Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro on 7-8 September 2010

this Initiative.

Ms. Migiro conveyed her appreciation of the achievements Albania has made in some of the Millennium Development Goals and their review for 2015, making them even more ambitious and bringing them in line with the EU standards. She mentioned some of the goals achieved in the area of public health, with a reduction in the rate of infant and maternal mortality; in education; in the alleviation of poverty; and protection of the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. All these achievements have been published in the Progress Report on Albania on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, compiled in July 2010, by the Albanian Government and UN Office.

Formulation of a New National Water and Wastewater Sector Strategy

A consultation workshop was held on 28 September 2010 to discuss the principles and policies for Albania's new Water and Wastewater Sector Strategy. Organized by the Minister of Public Works and Transportation, Sokol Ollashi, the event presented best practices and discussed options for including lessons learned in the new strategy. The workshop included officials from central and local governments, utilities, and industry associations, NGOs and donors. "We are pleased to be in a position to assist

the Government of Albania and have jointly agreed in the new Country Partnership Strategy (2011-2014) between the Government and the World Bank to focus on the water sector as a key pillar. This would not be possible without a strong commitment of the Government to carrying out reforms in the sector and its desire to ensure this is a widely-embraced national strategy." said Stephen Karam, Programme Leader for Water and Urban Sector for Albania. World Bank presentations focused on critical sustainability challenges, ranging from the need to better target subsidies, to programmes promoting improved demand management, to achieving financial sustainability at the utility level, to institutional arrangements that benefit from efficiency gains while ensuring accountability to local communities in the provision of services. The World Bank credits donor co-ordination led by the Austrian Development Agency and co-operation with EU, KfW and GTZ on a sector investment master plan and tariff reform programme respectively as a hallmark of this partnership. The strategy is intended to provide a guiding framework for policies and investments in the sector, including a proposed World Bank-funded Water Sector Investment Project now under preparation. The workshop was the culmination of several months of sector analysis and consultations at the community level carried out by the Government and sector experts. Completion of the draft strategy is planned for late October and will incorporate feedback provided in the workshops.

Switzerland and IFC Support Vlora Municipality Improve Business Environment

Switzerland and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in co-operation with the Vlora Municipality are co-funding the project on sub-national competitiveness. It focuses on improving the local business investment climate by simplifying administrative procedures and providing better services that will help reduce the cost and risk of doing business. IFC has signed an agreement with the Municipality that marks the launch of a joint commitment to increase the competitiveness and level of private investment. Vlora is the second locality to be included in IFC's sub-national competitiveness project. "Our activities with IFC complement our development plan. We hope to reduce the administrative burden for doing business and attract new companies to invest in Vlora. IFC's assistance in this effort is crucial," said Vlora Mayor, Shpëtim Gjika. "In line with the national strategy on business and investment, Swiss Cooperation focuses on improving the local business environment in the areas of policy implementation, regulatory framework enforcement and capacity building," said Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania Country Director, Daniel Züst. Improving the competitiveness of municipalities is especially important during the financial crisis when competition for investors is getting tougher. "We are pleased to work with Mayor Gjika and his team. By assisting Vlora and other municipalities in Albania to simplify procedures, we hope to develop a more favourable business environment, stimulate investment and development of the country's private sector," said Ivan Nimac, the IFC Investment Climate Programme Manager for South East Europe. IFC is also implementing the sub-national competitiveness project in Durrës and Shkodra municipalities, equally funded by Switzerland. It is estimated that citizens and businesses in Durrës, Shkodra and Vlora will be able to save 6 million USD annually as a result of administrative simplification and the reduction in time, fees and taxes.



Photo: Public consultation on the strategic coherence framework for IPA component III and IV.

Public consultation guides regional development as part of EU pre-accession process

On 24 September 2010, the Ministry of European Integration in co-operation with UNDP held a public consultation on the Strategic Coherence Framework for IPA Component III (in the areas of regional development) and IPA Component IV (human resource development). The event provided a chance for participants to discuss the draft Strategic Coherence Framework that was made possible through UNDP support. The document outlines how regional development should be realized, and the roles and interaction of public institutions and other partners. This included a review of the purpose and structure of the Strategic Coherence Framework, opportunities and constraints imposed by the programmes that will guide IPA implementation, the relationships between its various components and EU policies for economic and social cohesion. Minister of European Integration, Majlinda Bregu said "As part of our future steps in the process of preparing for IPA III and IPA IV funds, we are set to build our internal system and procedures for the decen-

tralized management of components III and IV of IPA with technical assistance from the EU... At the end of this capacity building process in our administration, the application for accreditation of the decentralized management system for IPA components III and IV will be submitted to the European Commission. This will take place by mid 2012 and we expect the EU to approve conferral of management powers by the end of 2012 and thereafter project implementation will commence." The UNDP Country Director, Norimasa Shimomura, said: "Currently involved in regional development policies, UNDP welcomed earlier this year the request of the European Commission and the Ministry of European Integration to support the process of IPA III programming. Our support through technical assistance was made possible thanks to the very good cooperation with the EU Delegation in Tirana." The first operating programmes will last for three years. IPA III covers transportation, environment and regional competitiveness, while IPA IV covers employment, education and professional training and social inclusion issues. The draft Strategic Coherence Framework and its operational programmes will be finalized by the end

of 2010 and will direct negotiations with the European Commission in 2011. The UNDP Project Integrated Support for Decentralization contributes to harmonizing national efforts and the building of capacities and institutions for regional development in line with the national Cross-cutting Strategy for Regional Development and the EU regional development and cohesion policies and instruments.

USAID Improves the Competitiveness of Leading Albanian Garment Manufacturers

During September and October, USAID funded 12 workshops with Albania's leading garment and footwear manufacturers to improve their competitiveness and export sales. The workshops equipped senior managers with tools to improve productivity, including how to install management and quality control systems to reach efficiency targets and reduce production costs. These tools will help Albanian garment com-



Photo: Garment workers at Meko 98 in Tirana fill orders for the latest fashions destined for European and regional markets (Credit: Paul Cohn)

panies improve the quality of their products to meet international standards, helping them to more effectively compete in European markets. Albania's garment industry accounts for some 27% of all national exports and employs some 40,000 workers. "USAID is working in this sector because of the poten-

tial to increase sales for the companies and create more jobs for Albanian workers. It is important for Albania's economy to have industries and companies that develop high standards of quality and are competitive in the domestic and foreign markets." said USAID Mission Director, Joseph C. Williams.

Korça starts Reconstruction Projects, 1st City to use Commercial Funds for Infrastructure Investments

On 15 September 2010, the Korça Municipality, with support of USAID celebrated the ground breaking of a local infrastructure project funded with funds from a municipal loan. The loan will fund the reconstruction of Korça's main city square; infrastructure improvements on the main "Republika" Boulevard, at the intersections on the Fan Noli road, and in Neighbourhood No. 15.

All the improvements will enhance traffic circulation and safety, and increase business activity in the area. USAID provided technical assistance to the Municipality of Korça throughout the borrowing procedures, assisting with the financial analysis, negotiations with commercial banks, presentations to and approvals by the Municipal Council and Ministry of Finance, and the drafting of the loan agreement with ProCredit Bank.



Photo: Road construction began in Korça's Neighborhood 15. Credit: USAID/LGPA.

Albanian Cities using IT for Tax Administration

On 23 September 2010, the Mayor of Librazhd, Kastriot Begaj, and USAID Of-

ficer, Stephen Herbaly, launched a new computerized tax system for the Municipality. Developed through USAID's Local Governance Programme in Albania, the system allows for more efficient

and effective administration of tax collections and services that will lead to greater tax revenue for the city and improved services for citizens. This is the 10th opening USAID has supported in 2010 in its partner cities. These systems help municipal managers have real-time access to a wide range of data needed for planning, management, and evaluation of municipal functions. In future years, cities with the new software will be able to develop revenue projections and be able to plan additional municipal services based on higher tax revenues.

Regional Best Practice Competition hosted by Lezha Regional Council with Swiss support

Regional Best Practice Competition 1 in Local Governance was hosted at the end of July by Lezha Regional Council as the final launching event of the second phase of Programme for Local Development and Decentralization supported by Swiss Government and implemented by Intercooperation Al. The programme supports the decentralization process as a key element of the National Strategy for Development and Integration. The Programme aims to promote exchange and to scale up good practices developed in the Shkodra and Lezha Regions at a national level. Competition 1 linked with a



Photo: USAID Officer, Stephen Herbaly and the Mayor of Librazhd, Kastriot Begaj, inaugurated the new tax administration office in the city (Credit: USAID).

Local Baseline Survey will lead to a number of local governance indicators having a benchmark among the LGUs and serve as a learning platform. From May to July 2010, the Programme processed 63 applications of good practices from 32 local government units. The

jury composed of members from the Ministry of Interior, Associations of LGUs, the Council of Europe and SCO-Al awarded five best practices per each category: Shkodra Municipality for strategic planning; Bushat Commune for financial and fiscal manage-



Photo: Swiss Ambassador, Deputy Minister, SCO-A, Ministry of Interior, dldp and awarded LGU-s

ment; Lezha Municipality for waste management as public service, Dajç Bregu i Bunes Commune for communication and information; Rubik and Rreshen for the inter local government co-operation. The event was attended from Deputy Minister, Ferdinand Pone and Ambassador of Switzerland in Albania, Yvana Enzler as well as officials from other similar programmes and donor agencies, LGU-s and civil society representatives. The collection of Regional Best Practice Competition 1 in Local Governance and other details regarding the process are available on the www.dldp.al.

Regional Development Concepts approved in Qarks of Shkodra and Lezha

The regions of Shkodra and Lezha both have strategic documents guiding their development efforts until 2015. The County Councils (Keshillat e Qarqeve) adopted the Regional Development Concepts on 17 and 24 September 2010 respectively. These documents lay down the vision and development aims as well as a set of measures, covering agribusiness, education, environment, tourism and SME promotion. The contents were elaborated in a participatory process involving a series of partner workshops under the guidance of the Qark administrations with the support of GTZ, as part of GTZ's programme for Economic Development and Employment Promotion.

Both regions are looking forward to support from domestic and international institutions for the implementation of these measures. The documents are available for download at www.qarkushkoder.org and www.qarkulezhe.gov.al, while printed versions will be available soon.



Photo: Bike tour "Take the bike, leave the Car!" organized in the Deshmoret e Kombit Boulevard on 22 September 2010 by Milieukontakt International Albania.

22 September – Car free Day

On 22 September 2010, Milieukontakt International Albania organized a bike tour "Take the bike, leave the Car!" in the Deshmoret e Kombit Boulevard. This activity was supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest-

ry and Water Management, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and UNICEF. For 3 hours the area was taken over by bikers. Many people, children, teachers, citizens, diplomatic corps and decision makers took part in the activity. Act Now Campaign called upon all institutions that promote air quality of

air to undertake awareness campaigns and offer alternative public transport. All of us should choose to walk or take the bike whenever driving is not necessary not only on 22 September, contributing to a better and healthy air. Commodity offered by using cars affects citizens' health.

PAMECA Anti-Corruption Training

Following a detailed analysis, the first phase of the roll-out of anti-corruption training jointly to the officers from the Borders & Migration Directorate and the Customs Administration between August and September 2010. This was delivered in Tirana, Durres, Shkodra, Vlora, Kukes and Korca. The PAMECA Anti-Corruption Training Expert, Charles Moffat, trained 18 trainers, 15 from the Police and 3 from Customs and supported their initial delivery of the training to 240 senior officers across the regions. The two-day training package included topics on the nature of corruption and the underlying personal and organisational causes of corruption. October saw the commencement of the roll-out of a similar programme to officers from the Traffic Directorate. Charles Moffat, trained 16 trainers from the Traffic, Public Order and Professional Standards Directorates and supported their initial deliv-



Photo: PAMECA Anti-corruption training in Vlora

ery of the training to 80 traffic officers in Tirana. During this phase, a further 6 new trainers were accredited in that role. Further phases of the programme will see the roll-out of this training to all officers from the State Police and the Customs Administration. Courses are also under development for supervisors and senior officers.



Photo: The PAMECA Anti-Corruption Training Expert, Charles Moffat

World Bank

Natural Resources Development Project, Implementation Support Mission, took place from 20 to 30 September 2010. The aims were: to assess the progress to date and review the quality of implementation of forest, pasture and micro-catchment arrangement plans; review the implementation plan for the one year project extension; and agree on proposed activities to be supported under the additional funding requested from SIDA.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-up Project, Implementation Support Mission, took place from 27 September to 6 October 2010. The aim was to review the implementation progress of project components and activities, including those related to environmental and social safeguards, procurement and disbursements, and to identify any implementation issues. The mission also reviewed the status of the Social Vulnerability Assessment which under the revised schedule would have to be completed by 16 December 2010.

In-country Missions

governmentdonor*dialogue*

As of 15 June 2010 until 15 November 2010, the Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania is the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat.

Any comments regarding Government-Donor Dialogue (both positive and negative) are strongly encouraged

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

Want to contribute?

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) (akabashi@km.gov.al) by the 5th of every month. An ideal word count for submissions is around 100 words.

Frequency

Each edition will be sent to you on the 15th of every month.

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