

National Communication exercise – a tool towards mainstreaming climate change into national development agenda in Albania

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1. Background on country profile

Albania is a small mountainous Balkan country. It covers an area of 28,748 km². The population of Albania is 3.3 million. Small rivers that traverse the country have high erosive power due to the rugged relief of the land but constitute an important source of hydropower by supplying over 95% of the electricity. Albania has a Mediterranean climate. As of 2003, the estimated Gross Domestic Production (GDP) average growth per year was 7% per year. 46.6% of the population lives below the poverty line of \$ 2 per day. In 2002 the Government formulated, with financial and technical support from international community, the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSD). This Strategy aims to address poverty reduction through a broad set of reforms and activities. Albania is also in the process of negotiating a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. These two instruments are the main focus of national development and donor support. The Government considers the environment to be an integral component of poverty reduction strategy.

2. Albania and Climate Change

Albania joined the UNFCCC on 1995 and has a status of Non-Annex I country. Recently Albania has joined the Kyoto Protocol. The National Focal Point for UNFCCC and CDM DNA belongs to the Ministry of Environment of Albania through its Climate Change Program / Unit. The Government of Albania has taken considerable steps for the implementation of the Convention such as preparing the First National Communication, Technology Needs Assessment and compiling the National Action Plan (NAP) to address Climate Changes through the UNDP/GEF support. Albania has also just started the preparation of the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC.

3. National Communication exercise

3.1 GHG abatement

According to the First National Communication – this learning-by-doing exercise, Albania is found to be a relatively low net emitter of greenhouse gases, with relatively low CO₂ emissions per capita mainly due to the fact that 95 % of electricity is generated by hydro sources. Energy sector contributes with more than 60% of emissions total. Relatively high CO₂ emissions per GDP are explained mainly due to high energy intensity. Based on the predictions for future emissions, it is expected that by 2020 the emissions total would be raised more than 5 times. Although Albania does not have any commitments for GHG emission reduction, the NAP aims at

reduction of the growth rates of GHG emissions. The abatement scenario of emissions foresees the introduction and implementation of different options mainly focused on energy saving through energy efficiency measures and promotion of renewable energy sources. A tier of GHG mitigation measures for all GHG relevant sectors with a more significant focus to energy sector is proposed and evaluated in terms of many criteria, which does not consist only at reduction potential and cost and benefit but also the contribution to reduce poverty and social acceptability. Measures consist on the thermal insulation in housing, efficient bulbs, solar thermal, LPG (cooking, heating), small schemes SHP, fuel switching in industry, etc.

3.2 Adaptation

The future climate scenario for Albania predicts changes such as increased temperatures, decreased precipitation and reduction of water resources and arable land. The most vulnerable found area is Albania's coastal zone and regarding sectors those highlighted as most vulnerable are water resources, agriculture energy and tourism. Future climate changes are expected to negatively impact the river flow, which in turn will affect the generation capacity of Hydro Power Plants. This is an issue that needs to be taken into consideration. This is why it is addressed under the Vulnerability and Adaptation part of the Albania's Second National Communication by taking under analysis the Drini river cascade that is prioritized as a significant system from the vulnerability point of view (dependence of hydro electricity generation from climate changes).

4. Efforts to mainstreaming climate change into national strategies

National Communication process has not only been considered as a tool for reporting to the UNFCCC but also for mainstreaming to national planning process and programming through mobilization of new resources. Due to such efforts the National Energy Strategy has already integrated many findings and outputs from Albania's First National Communication and Technology Needs Assessment. The strategy aims at increasing the security of energy supply through optimization of the supply and efficient consumption by ensuring at the same time minimal impact to the environment. In the frame of the Millennium Development Goals exercise led by UNDP, the Climate Change Unit /Program managed to naturally link up national energy planning, poverty and climate change issues. According to the NES a national target to be achieved by 2015 for saving energy with 23% and a share of 18% of renewable energy sources have been set. This will bring in turn a GHG reduction of 4 million CO₂ eqv. A law on energy efficiency along with an energy trust fund has been recently adopted in order to support the implementation of the NES.

A package of project idea notes has been developed under the First National Communication and Technology Needs Assessment. Two projects have been sent to GEF for funding and seem to be successful. One of them is a project on market transformation for solar thermal water heating in Albania. GEF has recently approved the PDF B and the pipeline entry of the full project. Another project on building adaptive capacities for a representative vulnerable system is under way. Many from the rest would be a good source possible CDM project ideas.

5. Public awareness

Public awareness is an important component that is crosscutting the overall National Communication exercise. Efforts to raise awareness on climate change have contributed positively to the mainstreaming process. This component will also continue to be developed under the Second Communication phase.