

**DONOR ROUND TABLE, 13 NOVEMBER 2009, TIRANA**

**STATEMENT BY MR HENK G.C. VAN DEN DOOL, AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM  
OF THE NETHERLANDS,  
CHAIR OF THE DONOR TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT**

Minister Pollo,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to address you here today in my capacity as the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat.

Since the Government and the Donor community last collectively met in this setting, almost one year ago, a number of important events have taken place to further improve aid effectiveness.

In April this year, the Government successfully hosted a regional conference on donor co-ordination for EU pre-accession countries.

A follow-up conference was held in Brussels in October.

Also recently a meeting was held in Rwanda, to exchange experiences amongst the 8 *Delivering as One* pilot countries, of which Albania is one. Albania was able to report on sound progress in better co-ordinating programming and implementation of activities that have been jointly agreed with the UN.

On the ground, aid effectiveness and increased coherence of EU-assistance have been promoted through the implementation of the Fast Track/Division of Labour initiative under the initial leadership of Italian development co-operation. Active participation of the government has been sought and has materialized. DSDC is undertaking a donor mapping exercise.

In a meeting as today's, as we all know, information exchange tends to take up a fair share of the agenda, not always leaving enough room for real policy discussion.

We note with satisfaction, therefore, that today's agenda offers ample opportunity for discussion, setting a trend that began during last year's round table.

I hope both donors and government representatives will bring pertinent questions to the floor and set an agenda for future discussions, for those issues on which we can not conclude today.

We also note with satisfaction that our agenda foresees a briefing by Minister Bode on Albania's overall macro-economic and financial situation.

The impact of the global crisis on Albania has so far been limited, but Albania has not altogether escaped its negative consequences.

We believe that all donors are in need of more detailed and up to date information on the sectors of the economy and of the population that have been so far hit by the crisis, to assist the Government in cushioning the impact and to be able to carefully monitor the situation for those most vulnerable social groups.

We hope to have a full debate over the future development of the Sector Working Groups - a mechanism that, despite similar public calls during last year's event, has not yet met its full potential.

We are looking forward to even greater leadership from Line Ministries in developing these Groups into forums where the Government's strategic vision and operational outlook are shared and discussed in a more substantive manner.

We hope that this will help pave the way for the development of sector wide programmes in line with the National Strategy for Development and Integration.

We also believe that both the progress and remaining challenges stated in the latest European Commission progress report need to be clearly noted by the Sector Working Groups.

The role of both international and Albanian non-profit organisations in achieving progress and in tackling the remaining challenges can not be underestimated. We encourage the Government of Albania to develop a strategy to make full use of the development and integration potential offered by these organisations.

Unfortunately, the discussion between the DTS and the Government on how to simplify and accelerate VAT reimbursements has yet to conclude.

We believe that as the new government is now in place, this issue will receive the government's fullest attention and a satisfactory conclusion will shortly be reached.

We would like to reiterate our concerns relating to the level of staff turnover in public administration.

While recognizing that some level of staff turn over is normal after any change of government, we also believe that such a turnover should be both limited and not seriously affect the capacities and institutions that have been built over the past years with, it should be stressed, considerable financial donor assistance.

We hope, therefore, that the implementation of the recently approved Public Administration Reform Strategy will greatly assist in reducing the impact of government change on staff turnover to acceptable levels.

Minister Pollo,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe it is important and necessary at this point to pay proper tribute to the work of the Department for Strategy and Donor Co-ordination in its effective 'bridging role' between the donor community and the Government over the last year.

In particular, we note with pleasure the recent appointment of Mrs Valbona Kuko as the new Director,

We wish her and her team every continued success.

We also pay tribute to her predecessor, Mrs Albana Vokshi, for her major contribution in furthering donor co-ordination over the last four years.

Having commended the effective bridging role played by the department, we should mention some notable examples.

We recognise and appreciate that the Harmonisation Action Plan was drafted in close consultation with the Donor Technical Secretariat and wider donor community.

We again commend the Department for generating such 'buy in' and encourage such a positive and proactive approach to continue in 2010.

Because of the importance of a broad consensus on its relevance and of acceptance of joint responsibility for follow up, good care was taken of the preparation of a Procurement Assessment.

A proven methodology, developed by OECD/DAC, will be applied and the results of experience gained with earlier assessment will be utilized, where possible.

We are convinced that the evident progress made on the Harmonisation Action Plan and to Procurement will improve Albania's score in next year's OECD DAC survey.

The services of Nevila Como, the extremely effective and efficient DTS programme officer, have been instrumental in the effective collaboration between the DTS and DSDC.

As a result of a new agreement the DTS and DSDC now co-share her services, facilitating further the government's ownership for donor co-ordination.

Finally, can I personally thank all the members of the DTS over the last year for their support and wish the team for 2010 all continued success – in particular the OSCE Presence who will take over after this meeting as the next rotating Chair, and the representatives of Austrian and Swiss Development Co-operation that will take over from The Netherlands and Germany/KfW.

Minister Pollo,  
Your Excellencies,  
ladies and Gentlemen,

The overview that I have just outlined clearly shows us that over the last year the Government has taken major strides forward in taking full ownership of the donor co-ordination function.

It has also shown that last year's decision to identify a few issues on which co-operation should focus has very largely been effective.

I hope that at the end of this event today we will also have identified a few more concrete issues to make further progress over the next year.

Finally, it only leaves me to wish us all success for this morning's meeting.

Thank you very much.