

Check against delivery

**Opening remarks by the  
Minister of Innovation and ICT Mr Genc POLLO  
Government-Donor Round Table  
Hotel Tirana  
1 November 2011, 9:30 hours**

Dear Ministers,

Dear Ambassador of the US, co-chair of this Round Table

Dear Ambassadors and Donor Representatives

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first welcome you on behalf of the Albanian Government and thank for your participation in this Government-Donor Round Table. It's almost a year from our last meeting and I think that today's agenda provides us with the opportunity to discuss important issues that have been at the focus of our joint work since.

This forum is very important to assess the progress of diverse and complex reforms that have advanced thanks also to your significant support. In this view, allow me to mention some key

developments and challenges for us, which require special attention in our cooperation, particularly in terms of our joint efforts toward Albania's EU integration.

First of all, further modernisation of the management of public finances is a milestone for all other reforms as well as a priority for this government. **The Integrated Planning System at all levels of the central government is a success story.** It has forged a new mentality of efficient and policy-related management of public funds. Owing also to the assistance of donors who committed to the Trust Fund supporting the Integrated Planning System - we have concluded a very important phase of its implementation. On the other hand, the experience with IPS implementation shows that adequate administrative capacity requires a long term strategic planning perspective and sustainable funding. The Trust Fund came to an end, but it is obvious that a second phase is needed, aiming at both consolidation of achievements and further implementation in line ministries. I take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Trust Fund donors for their very important aid. The IPS strengthening poses new challenges ahead of us and we would again welcome your support.

Further to modernizing our public administration I would refer to **the overall reform of the inspection system** with the adoption of the law envisaging streamlined procedures and the establishment of the Office of the Inspector General. Relying heavily on digitalized procedures will be essential for the effectiveness, efficiency and probity of inspections. While the World Bank's contribution to this reform in place deserves a special mention, further capacity building is essential and cooperation with you in this respect is welcome.

**The judicial reform**, one of our 12 key priorities, aiming the improving of how justice is served and ensuring the accountability and effectiveness of the courts, has advanced with the adoption of the Judicial Reform Strategy; the support provided by donors, particularly from the United States and the European Union has been precious indeed.

The **fight against organised crime** progressed with developments such as the enhanced security of our ID documents in line with EU standards, the enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies to prevent money laundering and the integrated border management in the fight against trafficking. These government reforms have received continuous technical and financial support from the EU (the PAMECA mission) and other international partners.

The tackling of **the property rights** issues now involves a Task Force chaired by the Prime Minister. We are moving toward a new legislation and also digitalisation of the Immoveable Property Registration Office and detailed information will be presented by my colleagues later on.

On the **Information Society** front, apart from providing free connectivity to schools and post offices across the country, internet provision, penetration and usage has soared supported by an increasingly competitive market and growing investment. E-government has been extended to further areas; this will continue so, making sure that most if not all government services are computerised and delivered effectively.

**Green Albania and sustainable development** have been supported by investments in infrastructure, mainly in roads, water supply and sewerage and urban waste. This focus reflects also attention to environment and balanced development among regions. Solid waste management is at the centre of attention of this government, as demonstrated by the Environment Task Force established under the Prime Minister. **Development of agriculture and mountainous and rural tourism** is priority; besides state budget funds, we are aware that further financing is needed to support these areas,

**The now up and running Regional Development Fund** has provided funding amounting to roughly 100 million EUR in 2010 and 2011. Investments made through this Fund scheme have a significant impact in the development of various regions of the country. The DSDC - as the technical secretariat of this Fund - has taken an initiative to set up a data management system intended to enhance transparency and efficiency; furthermore, we consider the Regional Development Fund to be a key tool for absorbing EU structural funds in the future. I want to encourage our development partners to support this instrument financially and technically assuring that transparency and best practices will guide this process.

**The Population Census** that was concluded yesterday went extremely well; Its salient feature was a very cooperating and forthcoming populace testament to the fact that real Albania can be quite different from the one represented by noisy groups in noisy medias. The data collected will provide a very sound basis for any policymaking in the coming years. I take the chance to thank the donors, the EU and Eurostat in particular, for their contribution.

**The fight against corruption** – will be certainly strengthened by many reforms mentioned and by other steps that cannot be covered here. Let me say that a dedicated and focused project funded by the EU and supported by the Council of Europe is going on providing concrete results. Also GRECO of the CoE ranked Albania second for the highest level of implementation of the GRECO recommendations.

We are pleased to see that joint efforts with donors have consolidated and expanded the reach of programming.

All the sector reforms I mentioned earlier have had your full support for which let me express the deepest gratitude of the government.

**Last week we celebrated two important events:**

- **First, the successful closure** of the US Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Program. This program has assisted us in the last years to undertake several far-reaching reforms targeting to fight corruption and informality and improve the business climate in Albania.

- **Second, the adoption and signing on the UN day** - the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, of the New Cooperation Programme 2012-2016 between the Government and the United Nations. This ambitious programme, builds on the successful experience in the implementation of current programme, and ensures the continuity of the reforms undertaken. I want to take the chance from this round table to invite the One UN Friends and other donors - to support this programme in order to achieve its objectives.

I hope this roundtable inspires us to have substantial discussions and take decisions which will bring our cooperation steps further. At this point, I want to underline the importance of increasing our joint efforts to ensure the sustainability of institutional capacities and further consolidation of country systems.

Once again I take the chance to thank the donors and representatives of the Albanian side attending this round-table. I am taking this opportunity to also thank the World Bank for chairing the Donor Technical Secretariat over the first half of 2011. Special thanks go to the Ambassador of the United States and to the USAID and SIDA office for their commitment and contribution in chairing the Donor Technical Secretariat and in preparing this roundtable. I would like to thank in particular Mr. Andrew Maybrook. He has invested a lot of time and brought new ideas in organising this event.

Thank you for your attention.

