

Government-Donor round table
13 November 2009
Statement by Minister of European Integration, Mrs. Majlinda Bregu

Your Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to speak at this government-donor roundtable, a big occasion for our Government and donors to review efforts and progress done in the reform agenda in this crucial time for Albania. It is also important to share with you the progress achieved on the community assistance framework and what still needs to be done for having a better tailored EU acquis related assistance.

Albania has made significant progress towards meeting the SAA implementation requirements. Thanks also to a constructive donor's assistance, substantial achievements have been reported regarding approximation of legislation and translation of the acquis, the major challenges of the integration process.

Positive assessment has been received on the establishment of the inter-institutional coordination mechanism to strengthen the role of the Ministry of European Integration, supported by the improvement of horizontal coordination of the European integration in the line Ministries

The Ministry of European Integration is moving to play a stronger role for coordinating and monitoring the European Integration process and to perform its tasks as National IPA Coordinator.

In the last years, the Ministry of European Integration and DSDC have intensively cooperated and coordinated to ensure harmonization of EU with other donors assistance focusing the external aid in critical areas related to the EU transition process.

Furthermore the systematic involvement of the Ministry of Finance during the IPA programming has strengthened the co-financing capacity of the Government of Albania. This is an important requirement for the successful implementation the IPA funds.

In parallel, the day by day dialogue with the EC Delegation and the Commission services, has contributed to a better understanding of the common strategic objectives and consolidation of IPA management structures and procedures.

Since 2006 Albania has taken over the leadership in the preparation of the pre-accession instrument thus establishing the Ministry of European Integration, Line Ministries and Albanian Institutions ownership in the programming process.

Moreover, the preparation of the Government of Albania towards EU's Decentralised Implementation System, has required from Albanian Authorities more direct management of the IPA programming and implementation. The commitment by the line ministries and central institutions, has contributed to the improvement of quality of assistance.

The last programming exercises carried out for IPA 2007, 2008 and 2009 have confirmed a strengthened administrative capacity of the Ministry of European Integration in its role as NIPAC.

The priorities assessment and project's selection have been improved on the basis of well established and objective criteria. Our ultimate goal in this process has been to ensure that the SAA priorities are fully reflected in the annual IPA programme.

Quality check criteria were published in the Ministry web page and delivered to all public institutions, as potential beneficiaries. A number of institution building projects have been selected according to the key strategic priorities.

Allow me to remind you some important figures for Albania:

European Commission allocated 61 million Euro for IPA 2007, 70,7 million Euro for IPA 2008, 81,2 million for IPA 2009, recently approved by the IPA Committee, and 82.7 million euros for IPA 2010 currently in programming phase. The Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document for 2009-2011, adopted on July 2009, foresees an amount of 269.4 million for Transition Assistance and Institution Building and EUR 30.4 million for Cross-Border Cooperation.

The Ministry of European Integration has also dedicated many efforts to the management and coordination of regional funds such as the Infrastructure Project Facility addressed to the preparation of EU acquis related infrastructure projects. We are improving the information mechanism among national beneficiaries and increasing the coordination with the DSDC Ministry of Finance and International Financial Institutions during the selection and funding process.

Going towards the decentralized management of the IPA funds, particular challenges lie on our Institutions to ensure the establishment of appropriate structures and appropriate mechanism for smooth implementation of the IPA funds. Together with the already established National authorities for the DIS structure, the upgrading of the European Integration Units and appointment of the SPO in the Line Ministries has been a further important step on this regard.

However, the challenge for Albania now is to make the best appropriate use of the IPA funds and go further with the implementation of the EU Acquis priorities and towards the Copenhagen criteria.

As NIPAC, our short and medium term priority will be to set up a more consolidated coordination mechanism and that a consultation process is effectively in place through a constructive dialogue among the Albanian stakeholders and European Commission and other donors.

To ensure that the European Partnership priorities are properly and timely transposed to projects ideas, we will continue to focus our efforts in updating the relevant strategic documents such as the National Plan for the Implementation of the SAA, and that the Medium Term Budget Programming and the annual budget are part of the process.

The Ministry of European integration, has already defined short and medium term priorities for the Line ministries, following the analysis of the last Progress report 2009, to

ensure further progress on those areas which need to be strengthened to meet the commitments deriving from the SAA.

A road map has been established for the coming integration process challenges, such as answering the European Commission's *questionnaire* and preparing for the detailed legislation's screening when the EU will start the accession negotiations.

These high priorities have to be taken into consideration in the planning of future EU/Donors assistance to Albania prior to the start of the negotiation process.

Last but not least, I would like to stress the importance for Albanian Government and Donors to continue improving an interactive dialogue and policy coordination for an accurate funding utilization to efficiently implement the Albanian European Integration process.

Thank you.