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CROATIA

Statement by

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I have the honor to present Croatia's Voluntary National Review of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals.

At the outset, let me first briefly introduce the Republic of Croatia:

Croatia has 4,1 million inhabitants, living in the land area of 56.500 square kilometers (size-wise Croatia is 124th in the world). Maritime area (inland maritime waters and the territorial sea) comprise 31.500 square kilometers.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (2018 data) is around 15.500 USD.

Since 2013, Croatia is a Member State of the European Union.

Croatia is the only country in Europe (and the world) with the access both to the Mediterranean (through the Adriatic Sea) and to the biggest European river, the Danube.

Croatia established an integrated approach to SDGs, anchored around the 2030 National Development Strategy (to be adopted in the first half of 2020).

We have outlined eight priority areas, corresponding with specific SDGs

- Recognizable Croatia: SDG 3, 4, 8, 11;
- Economically stable and efficient Croatia: SDG 8, 11, 16;
- Competitive, entrepreneurial and innovative Croatia: SDG 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12;
- Safe Croatia: SDG 9, 11, 16, 17;
- Connected Croatia: SDG 8, 9, 10, 11, 17;
- Green Croatia: SDG 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15;
- Inclusive Croatia: SDG 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16;
- Croatia – land of advanced regions: SDG 8, 9, 10, 11, 16

Croatia is ranked 22nd (out of 162 countries) on the 2019 SDG Index. In four SDGs (1, 3, 6, 8) we are firmly on track, and in additional 9 our performance has been moderately increased. There is not a single SDG area with decreasing performance.

Considering the brevity of time, I would like to highlight main data in the following areas:

Statistics

Data collection and reliable, high quality statistics is essential prerequisite for thorough assessment and monitoring of SDGs' implementation. With this in mind Croatia established the Information System for Strategic Planning and Development Management. Croatian Bureau of Statistics developed an internet portal modeled after the UN portal Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.

Health

In Croatia all citizens are guaranteed the right to healthcare and the right to healthy life. Life expectancy at births for both genders (2017 data) is 77.9 years (80.9 years for women and 74.9 for men). Infant deaths per 1.000 live births stand at 4.0 (2017 data). Maternal mortality in 2017 and 2018 is zero (0/100.000 live births), meaning that no women in Croatia in that period died from complications during pregnancy, childbirth or postnatal care.

The Healthy Living programme (for the period 2016 - 2022) is focused on five health areas: i) education; ii) physical activity; iii) nutrition; iv) workplace and v) environment.

In organ donation rates Croatia is among very top countries in the world, with 41.2 pmp (per million people in the population) rate (Q1 2019 data) surpassed only by Spain.

Education

In Croatia children up to the age of 18 spend on average 13.3 years in the educational system. Rate of early leavers from education and training is very low: around 3%.

Around 70% of secondary school students choose vocational (occupational) programmes.

In 2018 experimental programme – School for Life – was introduced, with participation of 74 primary and secondary schools, encompassing 8.500 students.

Gender equality

Freedom, parity, gender equality and respect for human rights are the ultimate values of the constitutional order of Croatia.

Number of employed women (24 – 64 years of age) has increased up to 81.7% (Q1 of 2018 data). However, the percentage of women in the labor inactive population still stands at 58.8%.

According to 2017 data, average net salary for women is 12.5% lower than the average net salary for men (mostly in financial and insurance sectors).

In Croatia fathers are equally entitled to the right of parental leave up to four months; this regulation ensures equal distribution of parental responsibility in the family.

- Ratio of women in Croatian Parliament (in the total number of MPs) currently stands at 21%. In judiciary, women amount to 71% in courts and to 68% in public prosecutor's office.

President of the Republic of Croatia is a woman: H.E Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (she also chairs the Council of Women World Leaders). MFA of Croatia is also a woman: Marija Pejčinović Burić (holding also a rank of Deputy Prime Minister).

Water and sanitation

With average 27,333 cubic meters of water per person per year, Croatia has the largest stock of freshwater resources in the European Union. More than 94% of Croatia's citizens use safe water.

Key areas in our NDS 2030 are: i) improving public water supply; ii) enhancing public drainage systems; iii) wastewater purification; iv) improving sustainability of water use and management.

Energy

At the peak of demand, Croatia imports around 40% electricity, 40% gas and 80% of oil.

Due to the hydropower capacities and increasing use of solar and wind power, Croatia has reached the goal of 20% energy from renewable sources in the total energy consumption. We are also developing other renewable energy sources – geothermal and bioenergy.

Energy efficiency index is steadily improving (largest contributions coming for industry, with improved efficiency index by 25,5%).

Economic Growth

Average GDP growth in the period 2015 – 2018 was 2.9%. In the Q1 2019 GDP growth was 3.9%.

Croatia has recorded a budget surplus two years in a row; public and external debt are rapidly decreasing.

Unemployment rate has decreased to 8.4% in 2018.

Special attention is attached to youth employment, with number of measures and programmes being introduced (including Youth Guarantees programme). Unemployment rate of persons under 25 has significantly decreased and in 2018 stood at 23.7%.

Climate

According to the European Environment Agency (EEA) report, Croatia is among three EU countries with the highest cumulative share of the damage from extreme weather and climate events in relation to Gross Domestic Product.

Stemming from the obligations under the Paris Agreement, Croatia will soon adopt Low-Carbon Development Strategy (for the period up to 2030), and afterwards Climate Change Adjustment Strategy 2040.

Biodiversity

Croatia's vulnerability to climate change is also related to the specific geographical configuration, which results with three biogeographical regions (out of nine recognized in the

European Union). Being both the Mediterranean and Central European country Croatia encompasses 1.244 islands, islets, reefs and cliffs (49 of them with permanent settlements), as well as 2.75 million hectares of forests and forest land (47, 7% of total land area).

One third of Croatia territory is part of the European network of nature protection areas (Natura 2000). Our goal is to complete, by the end of 2022, a monitoring system for the conservation status of species and habitat types.

Preservation of national and cultural heritage

Croatia has 417 protected natural areas (classified into nine categories), comprising 8.6% of the national territory.

Out of 8.000 protected cultural heritage sites, 10 are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and additional 17 are inscribed on the intangible cultural heritage list.

SDG 16

In its Constitution, Croatia has embedded the institution of the **Ombudsperson**. Currently we have; 1) Ombudswoman for the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms; 2) Ombudswoman for Children; 3) Gender Equality Ombudswoman; 4) and Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities.

The Ombudsperson submits a yearly report to the Croatian Parliament. In addition to analyzing and assessing the human rights situation and the phenomenon of discrimination, a report also contains recommendations for removing systemic problems in the areas of the Ombudsperson mandate. The institution of ombudsperson is an independent body and cannot be called to account, put into custody or be punished for the expression of an opinion or performed activities within the competence of his/her work.

In the field of law enforcement Croatia has centralized the **fight against corruption** under one organization, the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime (USKOK), with a broad political mandate to investigate, prosecute and prevent corruption based on its establishing legislation. In addition, there is a specialized unit within the police, the National Police Office for Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime (PNUSKOK).

Other anti-corruption bodies include the Anti-Money Laundering Department; the State Audit Office; the Tax Administration and the Customs Department within the Ministry of Finance; Office for Public Procurements; the Commission for Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Performing Public Duties; and the Independent Anti-Corruption Sector in the Ministry of Justice.

The National Council for Monitoring the Anti-Corruption Strategy is a special parliamentary committee with the purpose of coordinating the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan. It is charged with evaluating corruption risks and proposing and designing preventative measures.

Civil Society

Croatian civil society plays an important role in the SDGs implementation, through a dialogue, raising awareness and disseminating information, developing innovative approaches, initiating partner projects and playing a key role of a “watchdog”.

Government of Croatia provided around 170 million dollars (from the European Social Fund) for civil society development projects.

A particular emphasis is being put on improving skills and knowledge of children and young people in sustainable development area – 36 specific projects will include 10.000 children by the end of 2020, as well as 185 training programmes.

Business Community

We pay special attention to the role of business community, with the emphasis on companies that lead in corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practices.

Croatian Chamber of Economy acts as the umbrella organization for Corporate Social Responsibility Community and Croatian National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Croatian Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Croatian Employers' Association play their role in promoting partnership between the business sector, government institutions and civil society to achieve SDGs.

In July 2018 the Croatian Business Council for Sustainable Development has been established. Management Guide to SDGs, issued by the World Business Council, is translated into Croatian language.

You will find in our NVR detailed examples of Croatia's business community contribution, ranging from using digital technologies to improve the quality of life of people sensitive to ragweed, to project for shaping young leaders to implement SDGs through an educational entertainment platform, to developing STEM skills among young and preparing them for jobs of the future, to reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions through the electrification of transport.

Regarding **follow up** activities, Croatia will focus in particular on

- Further improvement of the institutional architecture and coordinating frameworks;
- Connection between strategic goals, planned implementation mechanism, structural reforms and planned projects under National Development Strategy;
- Strengthening national statistical capacities;
- Raising awareness, educational activities and widening outreach on a national and global level.