

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Commission on Sustainable Development
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Statement
by
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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman as well as the members of the Bureau on your election and express our appreciation of the efforts to organize this session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Although Serbia and Montenegro fully aligned itself with the statement made by Austria on behalf of the European Union, I would like to stress several points from our national perspective.

At this year's session we are analyzing the existing gaps and the challenges that lie ahead. Our deliberations will lay the foundations for the CSD-15 where we shall make decisions on the policy recommendations for improved implementation of the international energy, industrial, air pollution and climate change targets. Serbia and Montenegro is keen on seeing concrete steps which will incorporate measurable and trackable short- and mid-term targets, with clearly identified responsibilities and progress reports.

Mr. Chairman,

The negotiating process between Serbia and Montenegro and the EU on signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement is one of the most important factors that affect the overall development of Serbia and Montenegro as well the processes that will be conducive to the necessary preconditions for sustainable development of our country. The signing of this agreement is a priority for Serbia and Montenegro and we trust that it will lay the foundations for the country's further development.

The main activities of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro are focused on maintaining macro-economic stability and increasing employment and investments. The key document that defines the Government policies is the *Agenda of Economic Reforms 2002 - 2007*. The overall objectives for the forthcoming period are the acceleration of economic growth and development and promotion of living standards and the quality of life. The economic priorities include the development of small- and medium-size enterprises, with tourism, agriculture and forestry as priority sectors. The document also recognizes major importance of infrastructure and energy sectors for the overall economic development, and devotes significant attention to human development dimension including social protection, health and education sectors.

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The Republic of Montenegro is in the final stages of drafting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. The NSSD – Montenegro is leaning on the UN and EU documents and recommendations. The basic cycle for monitoring the implementation is a two-year period, while it has been envisaged to undertake a detailed assessment of the Strategy implementation every five years. The Action Plan to the NSSD will contain a set of goals and measures for each of them to be defined in order to enable effective implementation.

Finally, following the establishment of the National Council for Sustainable Development in 2002, the Office for Sustainable Development was set up in January 2006. The MDG progress report in Montenegro has been prepared in 2005.

On 11 April 2006, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed with a purpose of building joint premises for all UN agencies operating in the Republic of Montenegro as the first UN premises of this kind to embrace ecological concerns.

The Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Serbia should be completed by October this year. It is expected that three crucial elements of the Strategy would include economic and social issues and environment. The drafting of the Strategy is coupled with difficulties due to the lack of multi-disciplinary investigative approach and cross-sector cooperation. Mutually dependent or inter-related problems are being addressed separately, whereby the problems resolved in one sector reappear in another in a different shape and form.

The other aggravating circumstance concerns the unavailability of data which is indeed disconcerting. Even when data are available, they are often out-dated and more often than not of general nature at the level of the republic. For this reason, it is still not easy to follow the trends or make analyses at the level of smaller geographic units/regions or according to various demographic or socio-economic characteristics of the population.

As for air pollution, there is neither the national register of green-house effect gases nor the national register of air pollutants or the air monitoring network. Moreover, there are still no economic measures to encourage reduction of gas emissions.

According to the latest indicators, economic losses from air pollution in the Republic of Serbia on an annual basis range from 447 – 1,370 million euro, while overall losses to environment are evaluated at 860 – 2,500 million euro, which is extremely worrisome. However, the fact that funds allocated for the protection of environment amounting to 0.1 per cent of the GNP in 2005, will in 2009 reach 1.2 per cent and in 2014 even raise to 2.4 per cent of GNP, gives hope. It is estimated that in the 2005-2010 period, expenditures to off-set losses caused by air pollution will amount to 135 million euro and that total expenditures for environment in the next ten-year period will reach 4 billion euro.

In view of the above, it should be emphasized that the Republic of Serbia is facing the resolution of a number of general issues which would, among other things include, harmonization of domestic specific requirements with those set by EU in the association process; working out a system of indicators and monitoring system for sustainable development indicators and their harmonization with the Millennium Development Goals; establishment of links at all institutional levels with a view to achieving set strategic goals, etc.

It is important to note that Serbia and Montenegro has been supported by international funding, particularly by EU, in the area of capacity-building. We need this assistance in order to continue and to focus on the local communities. I would also like to emphasize that Serbia and Montenegro plans to invest significant resources in the field of education as well.

In the end, it should be pointed out that the preparations for the 6th Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" to be held in 2007 in Belgrade, is of extreme importance for all of us.

Thank you.