

Statement on the UPR Pre-session on Albania

August 2024, Geneva

This statement is delivered on behalf of Child led Groups “Voice 16+”, Children’s Governance and children’s representatives of Eco Clubs, established with the support of Save the Children in Albania, and strengthened over the years. The three children’s groups seek to uphold the children’s right to a safe, balanced and healthy environment, among other issues that have impact on children’s rights. Consultations were conducted by the three groups with their partners, networks and members in the development of the submission, and participated in the consultations of the Albania Commission of Human Rights.

The submission focuses on addressing issues of particular concern regarding the realization of the rights of the child within the context of Climate Change and Environment disasters. The issues highlighted here arise from extensive discussions among children’s groups concerned about the impact of the environment and climate on their lives. These groups, by majority vote, identified five critical issues, which are further elaborated below.

Children’s Concerns About Climate Change and Environmental Disasters

During the last years, Albania shows some level of preparation to combat Climate Change and its negative impact on people’s life¹, especially on children. The Strategy for Climate Change and Action Plan, 2020-2030, is approved. Albania pledged climate neutrality by 2050 at COP26², in line with the EU ambition. The country presented its Fourth National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2022. The Albania Progress Report on the second year of implementation of the Government of Albania (GoA)-United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026, highlights some progress in the SDGs 11³ and 13⁴, which addresses Climate Change. Nevertheless, among other issues, Waste Management, Air and water quality, Environment and Nature protection, remain critical. Limited progress was made in further aligning the policies and legislation with the EU acquis, in the above-mentioned areas. Significant efforts are still needed on implementation and law enforcement. The capacity of Albania’s public administration to interpret climate change impacts and integrate them into sectoral strategies and plans is currently very limited. There is a pressing need for capacity building in this area. Furthermore, an emissions register has yet to be established.

ISSUE 1: Waste collection.

Current Situation: Municipal solid waste generation in Albania is predicted to grow from 2.1 billion tonnes in 2023 to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050. Approximately 70% of the population is currently served by waste collection services, mainly in urban areas. Albania has quite a low recycling rate, resulting in informal waste pickers collecting waste from dumpsites and bins. The legal framework for waste management is only partially aligned and substantial efforts to

¹ EU Progress Report, Albania, 2023

² The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26)

³ Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

⁴ Goal 13: Combat climate change and its impacts

achieve full alignment are needed. This directly affects the realization of the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of health, according to Article 24(2)⁵.

Key Challenges: Establishment of an effective funding system to cover all expenses arising from waste management, including providing funding for setting up separate collection systems.

The report recommends:

- ✓ Prepare waste management plans for 12 districts, including tax collection systems.
- ✓ Engage media and civil society to strengthen public awareness related to waste generation.
- ✓ Intensify promotional actions for waste reduction.

ISSUE 3: Dioxide carbon

Current situation: Despite the NECP⁶ aim to decrease the level of emission for 2021-2030 decreased at 18.7%, even the implementation of the 2014 national air quality strategy is still pending, while the 2019 national plan on air quality management does not provide a functional monitoring system. Alignment with EU legislation on industrial pollution and risk management is still at an early stage. Air pollution and exposure to toxic substances lead to increased child mortality, particularly among children under five years old. These factors also contribute to the prevalence of diseases, impaired brain development, and subsequent cognitive deficits.

Key challenges: Corruption cases, lack of capacities and financial constraints are hampering progress to implement the EU acquis regarding respective measures versus air pollution.

The report recommends:

- ✓ Establish monitoring instruments of air quality in line with EU requirements, in every municipality of Albania.
- ✓ Implement mechanism to reduce atmospheric emissions from motor vehicles.
- ✓ Undertake actions to monitor and control air pollution caused by construction.
- ✓ Develop planning for air quality management at Local Government.

ISSUE 5: Citizens' awareness raising

Current situation: In November 2023⁷, Albania became the 42nd country to sign the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action with young people providing recommendations to Ministry of Tourism and Environment in the framework of COP28⁸. In addition, young people developed the "Youth Manifesto", which outlines key demands from youth affected by air pollution. A total of 279 youth was trained in air quality, enabling them to act as watchdogs for policy monitoring across nine municipalities.

Key challenges: The roadmap for creating an enabling environment for civil society should be implemented.

The report recommends:

- ✓ Conduct a national long-term awareness raising campaign for adults on the importance of protecting and sustainably using natural resources, through friendly practices such as ecotourism and Eco agriculture.

⁵ "States parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures to combat disease and malnutrition, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution".

⁶ National Energy and Climate Plans

⁷ Albania Progress Report 2023, UN

⁸ The COP28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, November-December 2023

- ✓ Strengthen the coordination of education, environment, climate, sustainable economy, and other pertinent development agendas at global, regional, and national levels.
- ✓ Enhance networking between different stakeholder groups to ensure that efforts are mutually supportive and complementary.

Final remarks

➤ *Issue 1: Waste collection.*

The rapid growth of waste generation in Albania, poses a serious threat to children's health. With only 70% of the population covered by waste collection and low recycling rates, a comprehensive legal framework is urgently needed. Key actions include establishing effective funding and implementing district-specific waste management plans to secure a healthier future.

➤ *Issue 3: Dioxide carbon*

Albania's efforts to reduce carbon emissions are hindered by delays in air quality strategies and inadequate alignment with EU pollution laws, posing significant public health risks, especially for children. Urgent actions include establishing air quality monitoring, reducing vehicle emissions, controlling construction pollution, and developing local air quality plans to protect public health.

➤ *Issue 5: Citizens' awareness raising*

Albania's recent steps, including empowering youth as air quality watchdogs, show promising youth engagement in environmental advocacy. However, challenges remain in fostering a supportive civil society environment. Aligning education, environment, and sustainable economy agendas, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration, are key to building a more environmentally conscious society.