

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PRE-SESSION ON ALBANIA

This statement is delivered on behalf of Child led Groups



“Voice 16+”

Children’s Governance

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.

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 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.

ISSUE 2: Re-creational, development and entertainment facilities, Green Spaces, Sports facilities, and Schools Infrastructure

Current situation: The 2019 earthquake in Albania caused significant damage to 321 educational institutions, including kindergartens and schools, in 11 affected municipalities. Responding to the devastating impact of the earthquake, as of October 2023, 44 education facilities have been completed, out of 63 planned. During 2023⁶, significant achievements were made with improving school practices and resilience to 16 education facilities, providing better services to 5,713 pupils and students, 364 teachers and 463,403 members of the communities.

Key challenges: Local Government financial capacities have to increase to exercise their competences to ensure the realization of the right to education according to article 28 and 29 (1) (e)⁷.

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, remain critical:



Waste Management,



Air and water quality,



Environment and Nature protection.

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.

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.

The report recommends

- ✓ Increase municipal funds for infrastructure investments into schools.
- ✓ Establish dedicated funds to back Environmental Policy at Local Government

ISSUE 3: Dioxide carbon

Current situation: Despite the NECP⁸ 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.

ISSUE 4: SCHOOL CURRICULA

Current situation: New adapted curricula on Clean Air and Environment for the lower secondary education system were introduced in partnership with MoES, creating space for learning green skills and actions on climate and efficient management of ecosystem resources. Additional resource materials were prepared and adopted into the system, as part of extracurricular school program, such as Education Kit “Climate Change Learning material”⁹ for 9-14-years old children and “Education for climate changes versus sustainable development”¹⁰, a resource book for teachers of secondary and high schools.

Key challenges: Despite investments, education through formal and informal system is still weak, while school curricula are not yet tailored to children’s specific environmental, social, economic and cultural contexts to promote understanding of the contexts of other children affected by environmental degradation, therefore denying the right to education as per article 29 (1) of the Convention.

ISSUE 5: Citizens’ awareness raising

Current situation: In November 2023¹¹, 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 COP28¹². 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

- ✓ 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.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Enhance measures to harmonize school curricula and extra-curricular activities, centred at environment protection and care, alongside the process of Quality Learning.
- ✓ Strengthen cooperation of school with parents as well as business sector, to support the organization of activities, aimed at the promotion of Environmental education, which at the same time will impact on citizens’ awareness raising.
- ✓ Adopt “Education for Sustainable Development”, at all levels of education as a core component, by 2025, based on UNESCO ESD World Conference.

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.
- ✓ 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.

REFERENCE

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
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. Albania Progress Report, 2023, supported by the UN
7. Article 29 (1) (e) of the Convention, requiring that the education of a child be directed to the development of respect for the natural environment, should be read in conjunction with article 28, to ensure that every child has the right to receive an education that reflects environmental values
8. National Energy and Climate Plans
9. Supported by Save the Children, 2022 and 2024
10. Supported by UNICEF, 2024
11. Albania Progress Report 2023, UN
12. The COP28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, November-December 2023