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1. Introduction

Through this position document, the civil society is addressing the following institutions:

- o Decision-making bodies (parliament, central and local government),
- o National Council of Water and Water Administration Boards,
- Research-scientific institutions
- Water supply and sanitation administrators,
- Water users,
- Media.

We can not continue anymore like this. Water is the challenge of the future and we should work to win this challenge

to take the responsibility to improve the management of water sources. Even though water legislation is consolidating, its acknowledgement and implementation, especially by the local governments, still remains a concern. European statistics put Albania among the first in the list in terms of the number of water sources and their flow, at a time when the mismanagement of these rich sources has created serious problems as of a while in the water supply of the population and has created water contamination.

A comprehensive strategic assessment of this national asset and its contemporary monitoring are still missing. Furthermore, the current economic and social developments in the country, which are often not matched by the adequate technologies such as water processing plants has caused the water to be more and more contaminated by the urban, industrial and agricultural activities. The water use culture and the degree of community awareness still remain at quite low levels.

The uncontrolled utilization of the river beds has turned into a sharp ecological problem.

During the meeting organized in December 2006 among environmental NGO-s was identified as a priority of this sector the support for the government in fulfilling the legal obligations in relation to management of water sources (in expertise and funds). Water becomes even more important when we consider the increasing needs for consumption, conditioned by the economic and social development of the country.

As a follow-up to this initiative, the NGO-s during the meeting of 2008, mandated a working group compounded by specialists of the field, which plays the role of the Secretariat of the environmental NGOs. This Secretariat by taking into consideration the ideas of the NGO-s, though this document offers alternative ideas for water management and at the same time serves as an action platform for the compilations of campaigns.

The meetings of the Secretariat have been facilitated by Milieukontakt and information on best European practices has been utilized, information which has been obtained through contacts with the respective national and international networks of NGOs

2. Actual situation

The water basins of 44,000 km2 and the high levels of precipitation make Albania a country rich in hydric supplies in Europe.

6" National Meeting of the Albanian Environmental NGOs

But the global climate changes are expected to worsen the water source indicators in the country. In the coming decade, the exploitable water sources are foreseen to diminish. Studies of the last years show a decrease in the level of precipitation in Albania by 5%-15% and a changed annual precipitation schedule. At the same time a considerable part of water reserves (20-25%) destined for power production is infiltrated in the basins of underground waters.

The level of water needs is not the same throughout the country.

The demographic changes and the concentration of the population in the big urban areas is accompanied by an increase of water usage in these areas and lack of supply to meet the needs. Moreover in these areas the level of pollution is increased. The amount and quality of water remain a fundamental problem and have a direct impact on the population health. The water supply and sanitation infrastructure leaves much to be desired, especially in the rural areas.

The up-to-date investments do not meet the increasing needs of the population.

The up-to-date investments do not meet the increasing needs of the population for water supplies. Some of these investments are not effective due to lack of coordination among them.

The Albanian society does not have a friendly attitude towards water usage. Great amounts of water are wasted, interferences in the system are a common occurrence and the rooftops of buildings are covered in water tanks. Water use culture is a concept and knowledge and it is achieved by involving simultaneously in implementation, a series of measures to different levels and ages of society.

The process requires time, it is difficult and laborious and education is of paramount importance In order to meet the water needs of the population, only technologies and investments are not enough.

Water sources are a national natural asset, but oftentimes they are not valued as such. The adequate network for monitoring their state and quality is lacking. The assistance with experts, funds and the necessary technical base for scientific and research institutes that study these issues is at unsatisfactory levels. There is confusion in regard to water resources administration and utilization, which significantly decreases effectiveness of their use. A visible degradation of land irrigation and drainage system is observed and that is accompanied by flooding of great areas every year. The maintenance of small dam systems and barriers for the mountainous creeks is lack. Their failure to function brings about a high level of erosion both in the mountain and hill slopes and the plains.

3. The Analyses of the Situation

Even though Albania is a country rich in underground and ground water, when discussing the Human Development Risk Index, Albania is listed as a country with a medium-risk level for water supply in urban areas, and with a high-risk level for water supply in the rural areas. The factors impacting the situation are:

• Orientation of investments towards increase of water supplies in the

inhabited centers instead of their regular distribution and monitoring in all the inhabited areas:

- State of disorganization of the hydro systems in the cities as a result of the household water tanks and individual pumps installed, which take the water directly from the water supply pipes;
- Lack of awareness of the users on the adequate usage of water;
- Failure by the citizens to consider the water as an important national asset;
- Lack of sufficiency and adequacy of water monitoring systems.

Lack of proper service on the part of water supply workers and distinguished gaps in legislation and the rigorous implementation of legislation in force are additional factors.

Up to now several efforts made by the central government, such as the decentralization of the water supply systems to the local government have not brought about any changes.

Water supply systems are complex systems that require the training of workers, supplying of all the systems with control and commending equipment and an adequate legislative support. By now, there is no water database in place, which can be updated periodically. The water source situation assessment is partial, while no monitoring is taking place. The rational use of funds to address water problems is still far from meeting the above needs and requires the active participation of the civil society by definition, in order to put pressure on the responsible bodies. Starting with businesses, the water usage culture is far away from being a friendly one.

Many businesses use drinking water for irrigation and carwash, while water in households is not used economically as per the requirements or goals of a harmonious coexistence with the environment. The water administration and particularly the improvement of the water supply for inhabitants should be carried out through integrated legal, economical, social and technical programs.

4. Recommendations

In order to meet the water needs of inhabitants, businesses, agriculture industrial activities, tourism and in order to improve the ecological standards and the supporting natural capacities, we the members of civil society propose the following recommendations:

- Improvement of water management legal framework and its rigorous implementation; In addition to improvements made in the water legal framework, the new situation requires the review of this legislation and its adaptation and implementation to the European framework.
 - > Specific legal acts should define the lowest ecological flow index of the rivers
 - Scientific revision of value and how they comply with the cross governmental by laws for Albanian water management in compliance with the international conventions.
- Water processes of reforms require active public contribution.

- For this fundamental reason the public should be involved in all the stages and because of this the decision taking at central and local level should be preceded by information and public participation.
- Strengthening of local capacities with the involvement of all main actors for a sustainable usage of water sources.
- Strengthening and improvement of water monitoring and assessment system technologies according to WFD, WMO;
- Legal obligation on construction of water treatment facilities for the used waters and especially the stimulation of investments in the infrastructures for the processing of industrial waters.
- Improvement of technical and operational abilities of the operators dealing with distribution and water management.
- Promotion of integrated water use practices and technologies;
- Inclusion of water issues in educational curricula; Education of new generation with new concepts and behavior towards water should be included in the school curricula, along with numerous measures for increasing water use culture.
- Increase of media sensitivity to addressing water issues. The role of the media in the water sector, just like in any other sector is very great, with regards to raising the awareness, identifying gaps and addressing them
- Increase and rational use of funds for water administration, preservation and use;

