

*70<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION*

**Digital and Green Transformations For Sustainable Development in the Region of the  
Economic Commission for Europe**

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Address by

**Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment  
Republic of Albania  
Mrs. Almira Xhembulla**

*Thank you madam chair*

*Distinguished delegates*

It is my pleasure to be here with you today and share the vision and development strategies and objectives that the Albanian government has committed to reach, jointly with EU and with the global partners, that present a new economic model based on green transformation of the Albanian society and in the Western Balkan region.

Green transformation is inevitable for ensuring sustainable development. There is no part of the economy and society that will not be affected by and will have impact on almost each stakeholder and social group in Albania and in Europe.

As signature of the Sofia Declaration and considering the Green Agenda of the Western Balkan requirements, MTE immediately took action to accelerate the green transformation in Albania.

Green growth, for Albanian Government means fostering economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies.

To do this, we must catalyze investment and innovation, which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities for business and Albanian citizens.

With EU funding through IPA III, soon will start a new project for Circular Economy and Green Growth. One of the objectives in the project will be to prepare and implement guidance to accelerate the green growth in Albania and provide direct support to the private sector by introducing circular economy measures thus creating more jobs and ensure protection of the natural resources.

We wanted to set new standards in biodiversity by protecting the whole Vjosa river as the last wild river in Europe. Being proud of this, Albania has declared 2023 as a YEAR of VJOSA emphasizing that holistic approach is needed in biodiversity protection.

The Digital Agenda is an initiative developed by the European Union, which has also been extended and adopted for 6 countries in the Western Balkan and it aims to support the transition of the region into a digital economy and bring the benefits of digital transformation, such as faster economic growth, more jobs, and better services.

Our digital system E-Albania offers almost 95 % of all services delivered by Albanian administration online.

Indeed, in the Albanian government program for 2012-2025, one of the main 5 pillars is “*modernization for development – of the production sector, tourism, energy, agriculture, digital economy, transports and services*”. Connecting and facilitating the business in Western Balkan and in Europe through digital tools is one of the outcomes regionally agreed in 2020 in Tirana. Albania today is the country with the most digitalized services in the region. 1207 public services for the citizens.

For green and digital transformation to happen we need right legislative framework for creating stable and predictable environment for the private sector as to take measures in line with the sustainable development. Some of our recent step is, developing the new Law on Extended Producers Responsibility that will build an opportunity for waste to become resource and facilitate the circular economy.

The Albanian economy is aiming for a new economic model which in its essence imposes involvement in the potentials of growth and social cohesion of factors and sectors that make it more productive and more competitive. In the challenges of medium and long-term developments of the Albanian economy, tourism is considered one of the most potential sectors to achieve higher economic growth and with positive effects on increasing employment and real income.

Tourism development will be based on and supported by environmental protection, including natural resources, ecosystems, landscapes, biodiversity, etc. and, in some areas, it will also be supported by the improvement of the existing environment.

However, much more is needed to establish solid base for green and digital transformation. We cannot act solely but regionally, and Albania is committed to increase regional cooperation and addressing some of the most vulnerable areas and challenges in the Western Balkan countries but as well in Europe and beyond.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

I would like to stress that without global solidarity we cannot become climate neutral society, achieve sustainable development, and have green and digital transformation. This is a goal that all our governments have agreed on and now we have to put all into practice. Commitment is needed from all funding sources, international, national and including the private one.

I hope by the end of this session we will solidify our engagement and find right instruments to support green transformation through digitalization.

I would like to thank to UNECE and the secretariat for organizing this session and that it brought all of us together to discuss and make joint conclusions of such an important topic that affects the future of the Europe.

Thank you for your attention!