



National Federation of  
Communal Forests and  
Pastures of Albania

Tirane, 16 June 2017

## POSITION PAPER

**To: The President of Albania, the Parliament of Albania, the Prime Minister of Albania, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture**

**From: Association for Local Autonomy and National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures of Albania**

**Together, let's bring life back to our mountains!**

Forests and pastures are “the cradle of life” in our mountains as they account over 50% of the Albanian land. They give clean air and water, protect land and produce wood and non-wood products, as well as provide many valuable services for the environment and society. For centuries wood from the Albanian forest has been used for heating of the population (over 80% of total energy needed for heating). Every product and service that comes from forest is a gift of nature, does not require return and compensation but only care and good treatment.

Due to long transition, Albanian forest cover is going through difficult times, has diminished, and it is difficult to play its protective role for land and water.

In this context and with the aim to discuss forest management with municipalities, the **Association for Local Autonomy (ALA)**, together with the **National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures of Albania (NFCFPA)** and in cooperation with the **Ministry of Environment**, organized during December 2016 - April 2017 three consultative meetings with leaders and representatives from all municipalities in Albania, Forest Inspectorate, Protected Areas Administration and Forest User Associations. These meetings were organized with the support of "**Connecting Nature Values and People**" **Foundation (CNVP)**, in the framework of “Forests for Local Economic Development” project, supported by the **Swedish Embassy in Albania**. The objectives of the meetings were to: support municipalities for sustainable forest management; identify challenges and opportunities by municipalities as owners of forests and pastures; share experiences among them and promote good management practices as well as to promote the participation of local stakeholders in forest management. We are engaged to share with you the issues and proposals, as inputs of these consultative meetings.

**The urgent issues identified were as follows:**

- Many decisions and responsibilities, outside the monitoring and policing function, are still with the Ministry of Environment, preventing municipalities to manage their forests.
- Municipalities have no clear legal framework and bylaws to implement forest management.
- The current forest law does not specify the rights and roles of stakeholders, especially the rights of traditional users.

- The experience of 20 years with communal forests highlighted the role of families in maintaining and managing the forest in a sustainable way. It is time for rural families to become legitimate owners and guardians of the forests.
- The forest moratorium but also the transfers of forests in the municipality without appropriate management plans have become an obstacle to fulfill the needs for firewood for communities.
- Since several years there have been little investments in forests. The transferred funds from the Ministry of Finance to Municipalities for forest and pastures are insufficient to set up technical staff, build necessary infrastructure and investments in forests, fire protection etc.
- The needs of communities for firewood are many times greater than the opportunities offered by forests.
- Often, there is a lack of co-operation between Municipalities, Protected Areas Administration, State Environmental Inspectorates and Associations.
- Many forests and pastures have been transferred to protected areas without consultation with local stakeholders.

**The proposals identified by the participants were as follows:**

- Drafting as soon as possible new laws on forests and pastures with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (Municipalities, Inspectorate, Protected Areas Administration and local communities represented by User Associations).
- Drafting a new forest strategy as expectations and objectives of the existing strategy are overcome.
- Making a proper study or analysis at national level about the need for firewood and opportunities for overcoming the crisis.
- Encouraging the import of firewood for the needs of rural households.
- Creating the possibility of interventions in protected areas with improvement works to meet the needs of communities, particularly in Korça, Dibër and Elbasan regions.
- The payment agency should support the planting of forests by farmers for energy. Forest experts in the municipalities together with the Forest Associations should develop forestry projects with fast-growing species along the canals and rivers beds as well as for the cultivation of medicinal and aromatic herbs throughout Albania.
- Designing and reviewing of management plans.

As representatives of the Albanian Municipalities and Forests and Pastures Users, we think it is time for all of us to seek and find the way to bring back life to our mountains!

Yours sincerely,

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