Excellency,

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations, jointly with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, and UNDP have the honour to invite you or your representative, to the high-level side event “Sustainable Development Goals acceleration and European Union integration in accession countries: the cases of Albania, Montenegro and Serbia,” organized in the margins of the High-Level Political Forum 2018.

The 2030 Agenda presents a vision to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of development into a sustainable global society. In the specific context of the accession countries, this agenda interacts with the EU integration process.

The Government of Albania will present its Voluntary National Report to the High Level Political Forum in July 2018, Montenegro reported in 2016 and Serbia will be reporting in 2019. Drawing on the examples of these three countries, the discussion will focus on the questions of how to maximize the mutual reinforcement of SDGs and EU integration, how can SDGs help bring the sub-region together, offering a common vision toward sustainable peace and prosperity while advancing reforms to accelerate accession and the SDGs.

The event will take place on Wednesday, 18 July, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Conference Room 12, UN Secretariat Building.

Confirmation of attendance should be sent to Ms. Karlleen Lawrence, at UNDP (karllen.lawrence@undp.org; 212-906-5864).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations
Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, United Nations Development Programme

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations

All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York
SIDE EVENT:

Sustainable Development Goals acceleration and European Union integration in accession countries:
the cases of Albania, Montenegro and Serbia

Organizers: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the UN, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN and UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS

Time, date and venue: 18 July 2018, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters

Context and objectives

The 2030 Agenda and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a vision to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of development into a sustainable global society. It encourages leaders and citizens to envision what kind of society they would like to live in over the long term and reflect on how to adjust their actions to realize this vision. In the specific context of enlargement countries, this agenda closely interacts with the EU integration process.

The EU is a strong supporter of the 2030 Agenda and has developed its own strategies for its implementation and promotion. EU accession is a common strategic priority for Albania, Serbia and Montenegro for a range of critical reasons, such as sustainable peace and rule of law, increased economic integration leading to growth, improved competitiveness of the sub-region and Europe as a whole, and many others.

In addition, these countries and their development partners in general, share the common interest about the stability and prosperity of the sub-region alongside the SDGs and are engaged in supporting innovation on their path towards European integration. For example, Switzerland invests in fostering regional integration, democracy and inclusive market economies, reinforcing regional and national initiatives and policies.

Together with its partners, UNDP has actively supported socio-economic reforms and transformations in the Western Balkans, including through the integration of the SDGs into the development policies and plans, using the multi-sectoral MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support) approach. These efforts aim to closer align the SDGs with the EU accession priorities thus ensuring a comprehensive and long-term approach to sustainable development.

It is recognized that measuring progress and working on a common future path goes beyond country responsibilities. Against this background, the central point of the side event will be identifying how to maximize the mutual reinforcement of these two historic initiatives: how can SDGs help draw sub-regions together, offering a common vision toward sustainable
peace and prosperity while advancing reforms to accelerate accession, and how can EU accession accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The discussion will draw on the examples from three countries that have so far presented or plan to present Voluntary National Reports at the High Level Political Forum: Montenegro (2016), Albania (2018) and Serbia (2019). Given the array of supportive regional initiatives, similar development challenges as well common perspectives, this side event will also provide an opportunity to consider the SDGs through a regional and global lens.

**The panel:**

**Moderator:** Ms. Cihan Sultanoğlu, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Senida Mesi, Deputy Prime Minister, Government of Albania
- Ms. Slavica Djukic, Minister without Portfolio, Serbia
- H.E. Mrs. Milica Pejanović Đurišić, Permanent Representative of Montenegro
- Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator
- Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Director for Global Sustainable Development, DG Environment, EC
- Ambassador Mr. Michael Gerber, Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development, Switzerland
- Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary
- Mr. Brian Williams, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Albania

**Discussion and Q&A**