



High-level Political Forum 2019  
Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)  
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Statement delivered by Aleksandra Mladenovic from Environmental  
Ambassadors for Sustainable Development, Serbia

Serbia, in the VNR there are plenty of references to the Strategies, Laws and other legal documents for single areas, but not enough is done to apply the legal regulations. Here are two examples:

ONE- Regarding gender equality, there is an immense re-traditionalization of gender roles and oppressive structures towards women. There is also an increase in various forms of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence and attacks on women who are activists and publicly active. We would like to know what will the government do to prevent gender-based violence? Also, two other groups that we are very worried about are youth, at high risk of unemployment, and older people, who can't afford quality and timely health care and are at serious risk of poverty.

TWO- As for the environmental goals, we are very worried about the lack of implementation of the existing regulation related to environmental protection and climate change: air pollution, biodiversity loss and investor-driven spatial planning

that turns the land into the construction slots, destroying the natural environment and green areas. Further, the fast expansion of small hydropower plants, without community consultations and environmental assessment, is causing permanent damage; we would like to know what will be done to stop this?

In the end, we would like to add that the nexus women-human rights-environment is to be considered as a horizontal issue, intersected within all aspects of society and all SDGs. Therefore, interlinkages among SDGs are important for reaching gender equality, human rights and environmental protection.

## **Statement #2 (can be delivered in case time permits)**

The VNR of Serbia includes a clear youth perspective. However, this group faces serious challenges resulting in massive emigration of young people. Furthermore, youth, women and other vulnerable groups are at risk of unemployment, poverty and exclusion, because of politisation and partisan employment. Given these challenges, we consider the optimism present throughout the VNR not justified and would like to know what the government is planning to do to address these challenges?

We are also very worried about increased centralization of education, commercialization and privatization of education, increased plagiarism as well as a decrease in the quality of education at all levels. The dual system of education puts especially young people at risk, since it drives them to less qualified and less paid jobs.

In the economic area, big number of subsidized foreign companies did not lead to the improvement of quality of life; on the contrary, they increased the number of precarious workers and denied workers' right to decent work and right to trade unionism, while causing environmental damage. On the other hand, the big number of state owned companies is hindering healthy economic growth. It seems that not enough space was given to the economic problems, having in mind their importance for sustainable development.

Finally, we are worried about the lack of voices and engagement of various actors and stakeholders, including journalists, independent media and representatives of civil society and academia. In addition it is critical that local government retain autonomy, and freedom of speech is guaranteed. Are there any strategies planned to ensure full participation of all stakeholders?