



WEEKLY NEWS

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News Conference of Premier Berisha on World Bank report about economic reforms in Albania

After the presentation of World Bank report that ranked Albania second for economic reforms undertaken, Premier Berisha held today a news conference, where listed all the factors that enabled these results.

(continues page 3)

Premier Berisha receives Premier of Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker

Premier Sali Berisha welcomed the Premier of Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker. Following the tete a tete meeting between the Premiers, the delegations held official talks. In conclusion, the Premiers made the following statements:

(continues page 3)

EU accords 200 million Euro for Albania in next three years in support for reforms

Premier Berisha received the Director of Western Balkans in the European Commission Enlargement Directorate, Pierre Mirel. Attending the meeting was also Ambassador of EC delegation to Albania, Helmuth Lohan. At the joint press conference, PM Berisha and Mr. Mirel informed of the main issues discussed at the meeting.

(continues page 3)

Albania, model for other Mediterranean countries

The Chamber of Deputies of Italy Gianfranco Fini; I have had the opportunity to know and estimate highly Premier Berisha as one of the main protagonists of the Albanian people battle for more freedom and democracy following emerge of the country from a brutal regime. He has gone up higher in my estimation today as following achievement of freedom and democracy he is committed to modernization of the Albanian life even further toward integration of the country into the large European family.

(continues page 4)

In next three years, investments in rural areas to amount to 2.4 billion dollars

Rural development in Albania remains one of the priorities of democratic government, which in the last three years has invested in this direction about 104 billion lek, or over 1.2 billion dollars”.

In this issue you will find;

- Premier Berisha: 2009 budget amounts to 5.2 billion dollars, 1 billion dollars more than 2007 budget
- Premier Berisha attends ceremony for departure of 12 peacekeeping contingent of troops to Iraq
- Premier Berisha receives Foreign Minister of Kosova, Skender Hyseni
- Premier Berisha: From January 1, 2009, only e-public procurements
- Premier Berisha takes part in decoration ceremony of Jean Paul Carteron
- Premier Berisha: International reports list government of Albania as champion of reforms

Premier Berisha addresses conference “Science at service of Albanian society”

Prime Minister Sali Berisha addressed the proceedings of the scientific conference under topic “Science of service to Albanian society” which was organized under the auspices of the Alb-science Institute at the venues of Hotel Tirana International.

Premier Berisha emphasized that education and science have constantly been the most major priority of the government and that several sweeping reforms have been implemented in this direction. The prime minister said that reform of higher education was followed by reform of the Academy of Sciences. Speaking about reforms, the prime minister highlighted that the government has quadrupled investments in the higher education over these three years.

The prime minister spoke further about Brain Gain program and draw the attention to the government decision about an increase of 400 employees, young scientists and researchers in the staff of the universities.

Premier Berisha: 2008 parliamentary year provided Albania with great reforms

Premier Berisha chaired the Democratic Party parliamentary group meeting. He invited the lawmakers to testify maximum commitment and devotion in this session of discussion of several important laws for the country. While emphasizing government commitment to guarantee a free and fair electoral process, Premier Berisha informed that a considerable job is done at completion of the indispensable infrastructure to achieve this goal. Among other things, the premier considered of extreme importance the law on lifting of immunity as it equals the Albanian politicians and officials with the common citizens when it is a question of crime and corruption.

According to the prime minister only a country that does not accept to have such barriers absolutely testifies the iron will to efficiently fight corruption. In his address, the premier considered of extreme importance the law on purity of the figure of public officials and considered it a step through which Albania will separate itself from the dictatorship past.

Premier Berisha participates in the meeting of Albanian Students Abroad Network

Premier Berisha took part in the meeting of Albanian Students Abroad Network, organized in Tirana in the framework of the project “Return and Employment”. The Premier congratulated the organizers of the meeting, stressing that “brain gain” is a great potential for the development at rapid pace of Albania. The

Premier invited the students to come back home after the conclusion of their studies, assuring full commitment of the government in the brain gain process. He also urged the Albanian institutions, Public Administration Department, universities to be open for the students who wish to return home and work in Albania.

The Premier briefed the students on the main directions where are focused the priorities of the government, listing the guarantee of citizens security by fighting criminality, encouragement of integration processes, SAA signing, receipt of NATO invitation, as well as the continuous work for the realization of reforms in these directions, turning Albania into the countries with the lowest fiscal burden and most attractive countries for investments and business, etc.

Premier Berisha receives ambassador of the Netherlands H.E. Sweder Van Voorst Tot Voorst

Prime Minister Sali Berisha received the ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands H.E Sweder Van Voorst Tot Voorst, on occasion of the conclusion of his diplomatic mission to Albania. During the meeting, ambassador Voorst expressed positive assessment of the very good level of relations between the two countries and the satisfaction at his modest contribution towards this achievement. Premier Berisha appreciated the mission of ambassador Voorst as successful and thanked him for the contribution he has made as well as for the support and assistance the Netherlands has provided Albania with in all the fields.

Premier Berisha receives AAK chairman, Ramush Haradinaj

Premier Berisha received the chairman of Alliance for the Future of Kosova (AAK), Ramush Haradinaj and congratulated him for the dignified stand toward his people and all Albanians. Haradinaj extended thanks for the precious contribution of Albania to recognition of Kosova Independence process.

Premier Berisha: 2009 budget amounts to 5.2 billion dollars, 1 billion dollars more than 2007 budget

During Strategic Planning Committee meeting, Premier Berisha said that the 2009 budget amounts to 5.2 billion dollars. The Premier said that this budget has doubled, if compared to the last budget of socialist government, whereas compared to 2007 budget, this budget is one billion dollars bigger. The Premier considered it the budget of major investments and highest pensions and salary rise.

Premier Berisha: Pensions and salaries for about 800 thousand Albanian families to rise in May 1, 2009

During Strategic Planning Committee, which focused on 2009 state budget, Premier Berisha said that based on the increase of this budget the government will make the newest increase of pensions and salaries for about 800 thousand Albanian families in May 1, 2009. Premier Berisha said that 2009 budget increase by one billion lek more than 2008 enables the government the doubling of salaries for teachers, nurses and doctors. Focusing on the importance of pensions' rise, the Premier underlined, "next year the pensions in the city and village would increase by 10 and 20 per cent not 5 per cent or 10 percent."

Council of Ministers approves privatization of 85% of ARMO shares

The Council of Ministers approved the privatization plan of 85% of the shares of the state-run ARMO oil company. Considering it as the main item in the agenda of the meeting of the Council of Ministers, Prime Minister Sali Berisha said that the contract to privatize ARMO was concluded following the successful negotiation process and the buyers are the consortium comprising Texas-based Refinery Associates of Texas, and Geneva, Switzerland-based Mercuria Energy Group Ltd. and Anika Enterprises and "Amra Oil" company. Premier Berisha assessed the privatization procedure as the best and the most transparent model carried out during the recent 18 years of the privatization process of a state asset.

Premier Berisha receives Foreign Minister of Kosova, Skender Hyseni

Premier Berisha met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosova, Skender Hyseni. Premier Berisha praised the work for the recognition of Independence of Kosova, which has been recognized from almost all the Western countries. The Premier voiced the commitment of Albanian government and diplomacy to support all the efforts for acceleration of independence recognition process.

On his part, cordially thanking Premier Berisha for the reception, Minister Hyseni stressed that for him it was an extraordinary pleasure to meet with Premier Berisha and thanked him for the commitment and the personal and institutional support for Independence of Kosova.

The Kosovar minister thanked the Albanian government and diplomacy for the facilitations offered by Albanian diplomatic mission to Kosova diplomacy all over the world.

Premier Berisha participates in presentation of Zumax Company

Prime Minister Sali Berisha took part in the presentation of plans for development and construction of a large containers terminal (free port) and construction of a free industrial zone in Vlora, a project of the Anglo-Swiss consortium Zumax.

Congratulating the company directors for implementation of the proposed project, the premier highlighted that this project will transform Vlora into one of the most powerful maritime areas of the Mediterranean as well as a free industrial zone that will be one of the largest generators of development of Albania.

Guaranteeing the directors of the company they will find it easy to work, the premier said they have made the right choice not only about the site but also the time of the realization of this project. In this context, the premier said that the company has decided to make this great investment at a time when the countries of this region are deeply committed to a close and comprehensive cooperation, creating a free trade space situated from Croatia to Moldova and working together for realization of the European integration project.

Premier Berisha attends ceremony for departure of 12 peacekeeping contingent of troops to Iraq

Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended the seeing off ceremony of the 12 contingent of commando troops to Iraqi Freedom Operation, as well as an additional contingent to peacekeeping mission in Baghdad. Premier Berisha assessed that this new mission consolidates the greatest tradition of the Albanian Army, that of contribution to peace and stability in Europe and in the world.

Albania, - emphasized the prime minister, - is proud of its peacekeepers and of the brilliant cooperation with the USA and the American Army. The prime minister expressed the deepest gratitude to President Bush and his administration for the great assistance. Whereas, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Stephen Cristina assessed that the Albanian forces have shown they know how to serve with bravery and professionalism during all the missions sent to Iraq. The 12 commando contingent sent on mission to Iraq is composed by 120 professional servicemen. They have successfully served up to now to peace and security in Iraq with about 1124 commandos. Whereas the additional contingent is composed by 95 servicemen and it will be stationed in the heart of Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

Premier Berisha attends ceremony for arrival of Iliria Coast Guard ship

Prime Minister Sali Berisha participated in the ceremony for arrival of Iliria Coast Guard vessel in Durres port. In his greeting speech delivered on this occasion, PM Berisha considered the arrival of this ship as the beginning of a great effort at modernization of the Naval Forces and the Albanian military forces in general.

The prime minister ensured the Naval Forces and the Albanian Armed Forces in general that the government is determined to make all efforts at their modernization. While assessing their rather important role and mission, the prime minister emphasized that, The old technologies will be things of the past because they are useless, but also punish the ones who use them. We are determined to separate ourselves from them and make every effort to introduce modern means into the Naval Forces, ground troops but even the Air Force

Further on, Premier Berisha, accompanied by the Executive Manager of the Damen Shipyard company, Defense Minister Gazmend Oketa, Interior Minister Bujar Nishani, Minister for Foreign Affairs Lulzim Basha, diplomats attending the ceremony and others, visited the Iliria vessel and sailed a short distance in the sea.

EU accords 200 million Euro for Albania in next three years in support for reforms

Premier Berisha received the Director of Western Balkans in the European Commission Enlargement Directorate, Pierre Mirel. Attending the meeting was also Ambassador of EC delegation to Albania, Helmuth Lohan. At the joint press conference, PM Berisha and Mr. Mirel informed of the main issues discussed at the meeting.

Mr. Mirel: It was a great pleasure to with Mr. Premier. We discussed EU-Albania relations, and considered them excellent. Of course, the SAA consists of a solid basis for EU integration process. We are very pleased that SAA implementation has played a role in the increase of direct foreign investments, which has been also noticed in several European countries. The implementation of Interim Agreement, part of SAA, is on satisfactory levels. As we have already mentioned, Albania should continue the solid and convincing reforms in SAA implementation and key political reforms. I want to mention in particular the necessity of continuation of efforts for electoral reform, judiciary reform and fight against corruption, where there have already been taken a series of reforms. Likewise, regarding business climate, I would like to put an emphasis on the necessity of solution of

property issue, aiming at further increase of investments.

But, my main message was political consensus for key political reforms. In this context, we welcome and praise the excellent inter-party relations during the last years. We believe that Albania and other region countries can undertake and realize consensual reforms only through dialogue and cooperation. Likewise, we discussed visa liberalization issue, and I share the same opinion with the Premier that this is an extremely important issue for all the Albanian citizens. In this respect, we want the help of Albanian government, in order to work more for meeting the requirements of the visa liberalization roadmap. We guarantee the necessary funds for these matters with the help of Pre-Adherence instrument. About 200 million Euro will be accorded in course of next three years and I am very pleased to stress that these funds will be considered grants from EU countries. In conclusion, I want to avail myself of the occasion to praise the moderated role of Albania in the region, particularly its constructive role in Kosova issue solution.

Premier Berisha: We have just concluded a detailed discussion on developments in Albania, realized in the framework of the SAA agreement obligations, with the high official of European Commission, Director for Enlargement, Mr. Mirel. I think that the so far developments prove that Albanians are determined to consolidating democracy, rule of law and market economy. In this context, the Copenhagen criteria, European standards, European partnership consist of the most excellent principles to build in Albania a functioning democracy and market economy. On the other side, I availed myself of the occasion to express my deepest gratitude to European Commission, which has given an extraordinary help to Albania and Albanians in the course of the last 18 years. The EC aid for Albania and Albanians amount to over one billion Euro and about 200 million are under process. Without this aid, solidarity and generosity, Albania could have not been what it is today.

I assured Mr. Mirel and the Commission that government is determined to continue the fight against corruption and organized crime, as well as solve property problems, continue the dialogue with the opposition on important reforms, such as electoral reforms, judiciary reforms and other reforms. We think that government backs this concept. We express also our estimation for the will shown by the opposition in this aspect.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude and thank Mr. Mirel for the visit. I also thank the European Commission, ambassador Lohan and his staff for the great support and excellent cooperation.

Premier Berisha: Brain Gain remains top priority of government

During the meeting of the Council of Ministers, in the framework of the implementation of reforms, Premier Berisha urged the acceleration of Brain Gain process, which is and remains top priority of the government. The Premier required the opening of the competitions for 221 vacancies in public administration, where post-graduated persons are preferred.

The Premier urged the establishment of the most transparent commissions, which based on the procedures, should publish the announcements in order to give this contingent the possibility to contribute in public administration.

Premier guaranteed that the government is ready to create extra jobs, through the reduction of some sectors, in order to involve in public administration the persons graduated not only abroad but also in Albania.

Premier Berisha hails WB report “Doing Business”

At the Council of Ministers meeting, Premier Berisha welcomed the results of WB report “Doing Business” for Albania, considering it an assessment for the process of reforms and business climate in Albania. “Today, it is a special day for Albania and Albanians. In the analysis of the most serious institution of the planet, which has assessed the economic reforms undertaken in Albania between spring 2007 and spring 2008, Albania ranks second for the implementation of the undertaken reforms. In the overall ranking, Albania leaves behind about 50 countries from its position. Reforms of this year have enabled Albania to climb to 86th place from previous 136th, whereas regarding certain indicators Albania is progressing toward the top. I want to inform you that the WB assessment does not include a series of reforms that mean dozens of government decisions, amendments and laws approved after the report was concluded”.

Premier Berisha stressed that the report will be analyzed in details from all the ministries and agencies in order to determine the obligations deriving from it, in order to undertake other steps in this direction and continue with the reforms.

The results of the report “Doing business” for Albania was presented today in Tirana by World Bank representatives.

Premier Berisha attends ceremony of extending “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu” Order to Azem Hajdari

Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended today ceremony of extending “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu” Order to Azem Hajdari (after death). This Order was accorded

by the President of the Republic Prof. Dr. Bamir Topi during a ceremony held at the Palace of Brigades, under motivation: "For distinguished contribution to democratic movement, collapse of communist dictatorship, introduction of political pluralism in Albania and it joining the road of democratic development and as one of the main leaders of the Student Movement."

Attending the official ceremony were Speaker of the Assembly Jozefina Topalli, the Cabinet members, heads of political parties in the country, friends and relations of the martyr of democracy Azem Hajdari.

Premier Berisha: From January 1, 2009, only e-public procurements

At the Council of Ministers meeting, Premier Berisha informed that from January 1, 2009 there will be exist only electronic public procurements. Dedicating this meeting to the extension of online service in all public procurements, the Premier considered it the most transparent process, which increases by 15 percent the state budget savings from procurements limitation fund. Urging the understanding of the citizens, the Premier said that this measure will be taken to protect their money and does not intend to make any limitation, but make full transparency for the citizens' taxpayers.

Premier Berisha called on all the contracting, especially municipalities and communes, to take measures for the application of e-procurement.

Premier Berisha receives Japanese ambassador, Mr.Yūji Nakamura, on occasion of the termination of his mission in Albania

Premier Berisha received the ambassador of Japan, Mr. Yūji Nakamura, on occasion of the termination of his mission in Albania. During the meeting, ambassador Nakamura expressed his assessment for the excellent level of relations, successful realization of reforms and contribution to peace and stability in the region. The ambassador thanked the Premier for the support of Albanian government during the period of his mission in Albania. Premier Berisha expressed Ambassador Nakamura gratitude for his contribution in development of relations between two countries.

Premier Berisha takes part in decoration ceremony of Jean Paul Carteron

Premier Berisha participated in the decoration ceremony of Jean Paul Carteron. President of the Republic, Bamir Topi awarded Carteron the "Medal of Gratitude" for precious activity in protection and promotion of Albania's interests, as well as promotion of its image in the world.

In his address, Carteron said he was honored to receive this medal and underlined that has been involved in the democratization process and establishment of market economy in Albania since the election of the first President, Sali Berisha in 1992. Further on, Carteron said that this ceremony is being held at a moment of great achievements for Albania. Regarding 2009 WB report "Doing business", Carteron said that World Bank highly recognizes the achievements of Albanian government. Albania will join NATO very soon and this is the key of the highest level of success for every country in world, added Carteron.

He expressed his conviction that Albania European integration process is on the right track, whereas stressed that after 16 years of great efforts the green light for Albania is switched on and the future seems clear and bright.

Premier Berisha receives representatives of "Adelchi" company

Prime Minister Sali Berisha received in his office the President of the "Adelchi" company, Mr. Sergio Adelchi. The representative of the well-known "Adelchi" footwear company in Shkodra town acquainted Premier Berisha with his plan to increase investment. To implement this investment plan, the "Adelchi" company demanded to be included in the package of Albania 1 Euro initiative. The company will project additional premises of the factory located in the former state stores in Shkodra.

Premier Berisha welcomed the decision of the "Adelchi" company to increase investment activity and said that the government will consider its proposal.

Press statement

The Prime Minister and chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania Sali Berisha sends his most sincere condolences to the family, friends and relatives of the late Kosta Trebicka for the loss of their beloved one and prays together with them for his spirit to rest in peace. Being fully aware of his quality as witness in a very important investigation process, the prime minister and the chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania has ordered the Ministry of Interior to engage its best experts and in case of need to ask foreign

experts to investigate thoroughly, professionally and in a transparent way the circumstances and causes of this event and make them public.

But, yesterday the citizens faced the primitive hysteria of the man whose voice and body was trembling in front of the cameras as he was making monstrous accusations about death of Kosta Trebicka, without waiting for any investigation result, even without waiting for the identification of the corpse by his family members. They saw on the media screens the moral ugliness of the opposition leaders, stripped of leaves and peppery of new policy, while cheering the same as in March of the current year Long live death, down with government. Yesterday, Mr. Edi Rama on the media, didn't find any greeting word for the historical hearing session of the US Senate for Albania and Croatia displaying its support for Albania NATO membership, but blackened like on the day when EU Stabilization Association Agreement was signed, or the protest rally- on the day when the country was receiving NATO membership invitation, he proved to the Albanians that he has no other interest except for his black career.

Premier Berisha wishes good luck to pupils beginning new school year 2008-2009

Prime Minister Sali Berisha wished the pupils of all the 9-grade schools and secondary schools of the country for the beginning of the new school year 2008-2009. During a visit to the secondary school Myslim Keta in Kombinat quarter in Tirana, the prime minister said that the pupils and teachers countrywide begin today the new school year under far more modern conditions than three years ago. The premier pointed to the 14 billion lek investment over the recent three years in construction of school premises as compared with the period of the eight years of the previous government when were invested just 7 billion lek. Speaking about situation on education in Tirana, the premier emphasized that the government has accorded to Tirana Municipality 2.2. billion lek for construction of new school premises and the reconstruction of the existing ones. This project, said the prime minister, targeted to create the most modern conditions and reduction of the number of pupils per class in Tirana schools. But, from 7 new school premises that should have been built, there are built only 2 or 3 and from 12 that should have been reconstructed only half are reconstructed, thus, putting at risk even funds expire. The premier said that if this accorded amount to Tirana municipality would have been invested the capital would have double modern equipments and schools. Further on, Premier Berisha visited the school venues, the library, informatics lab and gym. The premier congratulated the teaching staff for creating a special place for the school library and encouraged them for providing more and more new books.

Premier Berisha receives Deputy Premier of Macedonia, Abdilaqim Ademi

Premier Berisha received the Deputy Premier of Macedonia, Mr. Abdilaqim Ademi.

Premier Berisha and Deputy Premier Ademi discussed cooperation problems between two countries, particularly coordination of activities for commemoration of 100th anniversary of Congress of Monastery.

Mr. Ademi, in the quality of head of Organizer Committee for Commemoration of Congress of Monastery from the Macedonia part, informed Premier Berisha of the measures carried out by the Macedonian government on this occasion and conveyed PM Berisha the invitation of Premier Gruevski to participate in the solemn academy on 100th anniversary of Congress of Monastery. The Premier accepted the invitation with great pleasure. Premier Berisha assured Deputy Premier Ademi of the full and overall support of Albanian government for successful organization of 100th anniversary of Congress of Monastery celebrations, as an important event in the history of Albanian nation. Both personalities discussed also developments in the region.

Albania, model for other Mediterranean countries

News conference of Premier Berisha and President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy Gianfranco Fini

Premier Berisha: "We have just concluded a very cordial and friendly meeting with my distinguished friend and friend of Albania and the Albanian nation as well, the President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy Gianfranco Fini. It was a golden opportunity to express to President Fini my deep gratitude for the government of Italy, Italian nation for the great assistance and solidarity expressed, the great generosity shown towards Albania and the Albanians since the fall of the Berlin Wall until today.

I believe the most frequent visitors to Albania are from friendly Italy. And they have the opportunity to notice the big changes this country has made. I say, that Italy and their nation has participated and made a significant contribution.

We discussed all-round relations with President Fini and concluded they are very good. Mr. Fini informed me that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is due to visit Albania soon. Speaking about the political relations between the two countries, they are of high level and better than ever before.

During the meeting we discussed with pleasure and concluded that the economic relations between the two countries are intensified.

Today, the presence of the big Italian entrepreneurs is greater than ever before in Albania. They are interested in all the fields beginning from energy, mines, cement, manufacture and this is made concrete through investments of hundreds and millions of euros annually. I assured President Fini that the Italian investors will have great support of the government of Albania. We cooperate closely with the Italian embassy to provide the best possible help to them. Energy is among the fields of the greatest interest for both countries. Major energy projects are undertaken in Albania. Several Italian companies have already obtained licenses for Eolithic energy. ENEL has expressed a great interest in a thermal power plant in Porto Romano. I discussed with President Fini and I have discussed even before with PM Berlusconi the potential of cooperation on construction of a nuclear power station in Albania. In general, the investment chapter is progressing smoothly, except for some incidents of several anti-globalists whom I described to President Fini as the final version of Marxist-Leninist extremism. Further on, we discussed security issues, order and common fight against criminality. Albania is quite willing to create along with friendly Italy the model of fight with zero tolerance against criminality. Albania is determined to sign all the agreements, to complete the entire legal framework for the closest and greatest cooperation in this fight. This is the way we can fulfil the obligations we have toward the citizens about their security. The cooperation in this direction is intensive and daily.

President Fini assured me that the Italian Parliament will ratify soon Albania membership protocol into NATO and that Italy will be the greatest advocate of Albania efforts and achievements in its European integration process.

I thank once again my distinguished friend and friend of Albania, President Fini for this flying but intensive visit he paid today".

President Fini: I have had the opportunity to know and estimate highly Premier Berisha as one of the main protagonists of the Albanian people battle for more freedom and democracy following emerge of the country from a brutal regime. He has gone up higher in my estimation today as following achievement of freedom and democracy he is committed to modernization of the Albanian life even further toward integration of the country into the large European family.

Italy is in the front line of support for a modern and integrated Albania into the European family because first of all this is in our interest. What is noticed is the fact that during the recent years Albania is progressing on the right track.

As the premier also said, during our meeting we considered several arguments over which cooperation between our two countries is in high level, first of all in

regard to economic relations- trade relations as well. These relations can be improved especially in certain sectors as well as matters related to energy which are really strategic issues. Albania has great resources in this field and Italy, even because of geographic vicinity to Albania, has an objective interest in finding forms of the closest cooperation in this sector.

Likewise, I highlight a very meaningful aspect. There can be no modernization and Europeanization of the country without security and guarantee in this country. Law and order and security implies fight against any form of criminality, implies full cooperation with the neighboring countries. What Albania has made in these sectors during the recent years, with full cooperation and support of Italy, represents a very good example to be pursued in the relations between our country, Italy and the other neighboring countries. If the number of Italian investors in Albania today is growing, this happens because Albania is a country where law and order and security are guaranteed. At a time when the emigration topic in our country is assuming more and more importance, what the Albanian authorities have made to ensure a legal and regular emigration sets an example that does the Albanian authorities the honor of doing that. On their part, the Italian authorities give it careful consideration. Also I expressed the wish for PM Berisha to pay a visit to Italy, to receive him with the deserved honors and to reiterate not just my personal estimation but also the positive assessment of all the Italian people. Thank you!

News Conference of Premier Berisha on World Bank report about economic reforms in Albania

After the presentation of World Bank report that ranked Albania second for economic reforms undertaken, Premier Berisha held today a news conference, where listed all the factors that enabled these results.

Following is the address of Premier Berisha at the news conference:

“These days, World Bank, in its evaluation of business climate provides objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement in 181 countries, which includes market freedom indicators, fast economic growth, welfare and prosperity of a country, ranks Albania second regarding reforms during May 2007 and May 2008.

World Bank, Doing Business, declared in its report that this year Albania is considered a runner up, and it said that Albania is listed among top 10 reforms in the roof of the world. The report says that in the world ranking, Albania within a year climber 50 countries, and managed to rank 86 from 136. Throughout its

centennial old history, this is the first time that Albania is ranked second in the world. And the news is not only happy, but it is also historic for Albania and the Albanians. The battle of market freedom is the battle for prosperity.

It is historic because this country had the misfortune not to recognize development of real capitalism, but it passed from feudalism under barbarous communism. The real capitalism in Albania was introduced with the sweeping market reforms we undertook following March 22, 1992.

Being the runner-up in the world about free market reforms is a great fact of the iron will of this government and the Albanian citizens to build the real capitalism in Albania.

This is historic for the country as throughout its history Albania has never had such a record, a similar success in the world stage regarding reforms.

This is historic for me and my government not simply because we are the architects, but we were also the ones who following overthrow of socialism, inhuman hyper-collectivism, introduced in 1992 the free market economy and capitalism. We transformed Albania of the deepest economic collapse, three-digit inflation, extreme hyper-collectivism into the country of the rapid two-digit economic growth in Europe, one-digit inflation, the country where 80% of the GDP is produced by the private sector. And all this within a record period of time through liberalization, shock therapy and massive privatization.

Albania was named “Next Taiwan of Europe” owing to its indicators, the fast development of capitalism and the two-digit growth. Whereas, my ultimate goal was: “Albania- Eagle of Europe”. But, the communist rebellion of 1997 hampered this unprecedented rapid development of the country.

The 1997 communist rebellion installed in Albania the kleptocratic rule, it replaced the free market with clientele freedom, the Mafia and monopolies of the officials, domination of the criminal gangs that got under control the customs and tax offices of the country. Thousands of foreign entrepreneurs left Albania. Therefore, we, again in power and with our mission, in 2005 declared the reforms as the alpha and omega of our program, reforms and only the reforms. We did this when the country was ruled by the most risky Mafia gangs and clans, the partners of the people who nowadays shout for order and tranquility only because they have to face justice. We did this at a time when in Albania over 1.4 billion USD went into the pockets of smugglers and corrupted officials. Following 2005 general elections, I set up a Task Force on the market reforms and its deregulation, i.e. its freedom, headed by the prime minister and composed by ministers of economy, finance and other relevant ministers. The target of the Task Force was to immediately take the Albanian economy out of kleptocracy swamp, Mafia claws, smuggling,

informality and guarantee the market freedom, introduce the best standards for the business and place Albania into the orbit of the rapid economic growth. Albania- the country attracting the foreign direct investments- was our main goal in the framework of the economic reform.

The Task Force began its work with great devotion and determination. It organized tens of meetings with the interested groups. The Task Force cooperated closely with distinguished international experts, the World Bank, IMF, USAID etc. The Task Force initiated and implemented hundreds of decisions and laws that make the legal and solid basis of the reforms and qualified Albania the runner-up country in the world about their success over the period 2007-2008. The World Bank assessment announced that Albania – through the reforms implemented and their success- not just moved, but it rushed ahead and overcame hurdles; it passed many countries and was ranked the second in the world about the reforms it implemented last year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albania of the foreign investments – 18 years ago they were banned by Constitution- and the country when three years ago Mafia, criminality and kleptocracy had blocked the investments, the country that for eight consecutive years had absorbed less than half of the amount of Macedonia investments, or a total of 28 million USD annually, according to the recent World Bank report, as a result of the deep and sweeping reforms, regarding protection of investments indicator, in its rapid progress, has left behind 167 countries and is ranked the 14-th in the world, i.e. it almost reached into the roof of the world. To guarantee investments the government undertook complex reforms and introduced a new legal framework for the trade associations and merchants, on responsibility of the juridical subject on bankruptcy and several other laws and decisions. Investments in Albania got increased 4 times beginning from 2006 as compared with the average of the 8 year period of the kleptocratic regime. This current year investments are going toward triple as compared to 2006. The trust of the foreign and local investors in my government and me, in our reforms, has been rapidly increased. I would like to ensure the investors that the 14-th place in the world is just a station from where, through implementing several new reforms to guarantee, facilitate and bring about the success of their investments, Albania will be raised into an Everest of investment guarantee.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albania was ranked the second country in the world for the reforms implemented targeting to facilitate starting a business. In this international competition it has left behind 114 world countries and is positioned the 67-th.

Three years ago, Albania had the worst record of business registration, of about 42 days and the highest official and kleptocratic cost for this registration. During 2007, Albania established One-Stop-Shop for business registration by USAID assistance and it cut the registration time from 42 days into 30-60 minutes. During summer time, the Task Force has reduced 103 permits and licenses, i.e. 2/3 of the existing permits and licenses; we have begun work on establishment of the “One stop shop” on permits and licenses as well. The project will be supported and implemented by USAID assistance in the framework of the Millennium Threshold program. Albania reduced the business cost, which in addition to the prolonged time, with the official tariffs, capital deposit obligation, the registration tax in the city hall, reached to 350 thousand lek, among the highest in the world. Today, thanks to the reforms undertaken all these expenses have been reduced into Euro 1.

I emphasize that the great reduction of the business cost has been realized during the recent months thanks to the new law on trade associations and other laws, the cost of business registration, following lifting of the obligation on the initial 100000 lek capital, 1000 lek obligation to the Chamber of Commerce and 120 thousand lek at the registration moment in the city hall or commune. Thus, the business cost has been reduced hundreds of times as compared to the period about which the Report writes. However, I would like to assure that its reduction into the lowest cost in the world will be my goal and next year we shall see Albania in the top list of the world countries about the lowest cost of business registration in the world. According to another Doing Business regional study 2008 on 22 towns of 7 regional countries, Shkodra and Vlora are ranked the first in the region about facilitation of the business registration procedures. And they are also ranked the 9-th in the world along with Iceland and Canada in this direction.

However, if Shkodra and Vlora make that Albania (if it was the same as these towns) would be ranked the 9-th in the world about facilities to business registration, Tirana with its obstacles and corruption of the City hall is ranked the 12-th in the region, i.e. 12 times following Shkodra and Vlora and pushes the country behind in the world listing.

The same study ranks Shkodra the 7-th in the region about issuing of the licenses in the region whereas Tirana is ten steps behind, i.e. it is the 17-th. According to the Doing Business study, the situation in Tirana City hall is catastrophic when it is a question of construction permits. If according to the study, Shkodra is ranked the 7-th in the region, Tirana is ranked 11 times lower in the scale, i.e. it is ranked the 18-th and even the 22-nd or the last in the region for the high number of procedures to be applied in regard to construction permits and it is also placed the last in the world listing as the champion of corruption.

Therefore, I appeal to Mayor by correspondence of the municipality to do away with his poisonous blows, the corruptive practices on the business and to take urgent measures about its fundamental change. As we shall also take tough legal measures because in the law to be approved this current week on town-planning will be sanctioned the article according to which silence means approval, so that the construction permits do not end up in the calends of corruption and do not penalize Albania as it has happened up today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The property issues and property registration are major defining factors for the business and business environment.

While not ignoring or leaving aside the serious problems related to property and its registration, we have undertaken deep reforms that by improvement of the service have made that Albania be ranked in the 68-th place in the 181 world countries competition about property registration, thus leaving behind 113 countries of the world.

In spite of this great achievement, the property reform in Albania is one of the reforms that will experience the most major developments in the future. Therefore, I am convinced that next year this position will be far more advanced.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The bank crediting in Albania three years ago was among the lowest in the world. By the end of 2005, the level of crediting of the economy was only 11% of the GDP. Whereas, by the end of the current year, it is expected to be three times higher or 35%, i.e. a 300% increase. According to the WB report, in regard to speed of crediting indicator, it has left behind 169 world countries in the competition of 181 countries and has been ranked the 12-th in the world about this rather important indicator that is considered as the oxygen indicator of the economic growth. Also this is one of the basic indicators that have made Albania be ranked the second in the world about reforms and their success in the field of free market this current year.

This indicator confirms the very good performance of the banking system in Albania, the great facilities created after completion of the National Register of Credits by the Central Bank, the reforms the government has launched with several laws, like the new law on banking system, the law on business, the decisions on banking guarantees, improvement of the registration system of the real estate that has notably enhanced the space, possibilities and crediting guarantees. But, credit is first of all trust and economic enthusiasm. Its increase by three times in three years is evidence of manifold increase of trust of the banking system in the government, economic and financial stability of the country. They have trust and we have testified we fully deserve this trust.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tax payment is another key indicator for Albania second place ranking in the world about reforms and their success in functioning of the free market.

The reform or the fiscal revolution of Albania, that consists in the great reduction of the taxes, impose of the 10% flat tax and e-tax, approval of the new Code of tax procedure and reform of the tax system, the very good results in collection of taxes, facilitation of the tax system from 23 national taxes into 6 etc. has been among the most major reforms that rank my government and Albania at the head of the countries and governments that have implemented the deepest fiscal reforms.

Following NATO membership invitation to Albania and EU SAA, the reforms and the fiscal revolution had the greatest and most positive echo for Albania. This revolution, according to a rather serious study, made possible that Albania safely reaches the roof of the world about fiscal freedom. According to this Report, Albania gets 96 points from 100 possible about fiscal freedom. Whereas, in the WB report, Albania, as compared to all the countries that started fiscal reforms is declared as the fiscal reforms flag country. This is the greatest and international assessment of the fiscal revolution. Through this revolution we succeeded to be today as the country with the lowest tax level in Europe.

In the framework of this revolution we have reduced from 3,1% into 1,5 % the tax on small business, i.e. a 50% cut. We have reduced by 130% the tax on personal incomes, from 23% into 10%, over 150% the tax on profit from 25% into 10%, by 31% and from January 1, 2009 by 50% social insurances tax. We have reduced from 6% into 1 %, i.e. 600% customs tax. We have reduced into Euro 1 several tariffs. Thus, let us analyze the result of our tax revolution that over doubled the fiscal freedom?

The result is spectacular, almost unbelievable. Over the three years of fiscal revolution 2006-2008 taken together, irrespective of the greatest reduction of the taxes in Europe, we had the greatest increase of the incomes in Europe.

Over 2002-2004, in Albania of the highest taxes in the region and wider area, there were collected 439 billion lek from the taxes and tariffs into the state budget. While over the three year period 2006-2008, in Albania of the lowest level of taxes in Europe, there were collected 729 billion lek from taxes and tariffs or 290 billion lek or 3,2 billion USD more. Like in no other country over three years, the revenues from the taxes and tariffs got increased by about 70%. In the three years of my governance of low taxes and of fiscal revolution were collected 70 billion USD more than in the 5 years of the high-tax government.

From another viewpoint, over 2002-2004 government of high taxes, the tax revenues got increased only 30 billion lek. They were 122 billion in 2002 and became

165 billion in 2004. Whereas, over three years of fiscal revolution they got increased 2,3 times more. The revenues were 205 billion in 2006; they reached to 290 billion in 2008, i.e. an 85 billion or 2,3 times more than over the period 2002-2004, the years of kleptocracy. These were the main indicators that made Albania be qualified the runner-up in the world about the reforms implemented May 2007-May 2008. On this occasion, I also highlight the very significant assistance of the international institutions and of the friendly countries. I thank the WB and Doing Business with deep gratitude for the rather worthy assistance they have provided Albania undertaking reforms. Special thanks goes to the USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation for the important projects they financed and the very worthy assistance in their implementation like e-tax, e-business, e-procurements etc everything that brought about Albania rapid progress. I thank the other international financial institutions like the IMF and the friendly countries for the worthy assistance and contribution made. I also thank and positively assess the Task Force team, my colleagues, you honored ministers, your co-workers and all Task Force members and their co-workers who by determination realized drafting and implementation of these reforms as well as their echo of success.

Thanks and gratitude to all Albanian citizens that by their vote and trust gave me the opportunity to relive myself of a deep anxiety of my spirit. My deepest regret has never been me leaving the President's easy-chair because of the communist rebellion. But, my regret was that Albania of two-digit economic growth, of great development impetus, because of the rebellion, got unscrewed and fell into the abyss of kleptocracy and mafia. During the eight years, at hundreds of meetings, you, the common people while cheering "Sali galore", made my regret deeper because I was the man who gave not a single penny to any of you, whereas you, irrespective of this shouted "Sali galore". You did this only as trust and an assessment of the reforms we undertook together over 1992-1996. Therefore, it was my major obligation three years ago to place Albania into the orbit of rapid economic growth and make it the most attractive country for FDI. You inspired me, the strength of your working spirit. I did this so that by iron will the dormant great resources of the country, located in the coasts, waters, land and subsoil to be transformed into wealth values for you, your families and Albanian society. Following three years of reforms, together we brought Albania at the top list of the countries for the implemented reforms, we passed 114 world countries about start of business, 167 countries for protection of investments, 169 countries for crediting of economy, 113 countries for property registration etc and for tax payment we are declared the flag carrier country. But, today it is a great pleasure to inform that Albania economy is far more developed, more enthusiastic

than ever. "Made in Albania" exports are increased by 43% as compared to last year, 40% the construction pace, 30% the industrial output, 50% tourism, it has a two-digit growth of agricultural production and transport service, in the first 6-month period of this year were registered 13063 new businesses versus 6603 new businesses that were registered during the first months of last year, i.e. an over 100% increase. It is an honor to inform that this 6-month period Albania is the country with the two-digit growth among the highest in Europe. The first three month period shows that the real Albania GDP has been 10.4% and in the second three month period is about 11%. I didn't dare to pronounce Albania two digit growth. But, that has been my silent goal of my work and life. Today, this goal has become a reality. Therefore, I assure that through the other reforms we shall make Albania, as the report states it, a "runner-up" to fly, the eagle of this continent, like the God has made it and as we all love it.

God Bless Albania!

Premier Berisha participates in workshop "Albania and Barcelona Process"

Premier Berisha took part in the workshop "Albania and Barcelona Process", organized by European Institute for Mediterranean and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania.

In his address, Premier Berisha said that Union for Mediterranean Paris Summit gave a new dimension to European politics and wider. Albanian government is really interested in Barcelona Process and Union for Mediterranean, a process conditioned by an actual constant reality that should advance toward a future of cooperation.

The Premier also stressed that Albania, in proportion with its dimensions, brings about a real and clear contribution in Mediterranean cooperation, whereas expressed the willingness of Albanian government for taking into account concrete responsibilities in these cooperation.

The Premier considered of great importance the cultural and inter-religious cooperation. "A cradle of almost all the religious beliefs, the region has all the potential to give a precious contribution in inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

Premier Berisha receives British Parliament Deputy Speaker, Sylvia Heal

Premier Berisha received the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament of United Kingdom, Sylvia Heal, Premier Berisha thanked Heal for the support of British parliament and United Kingdom has given to Albania in the course of these years in different fields. In particular, Premier Berisha thanked Deputy Speaker

Heal for the support of Great Britain provided to Albania in receiving NATO membership invitation, as well as the quick recognition of Independence of Kosovo. Premier Berisha hailed the excellent political relations and excellent cooperation between two countries in all fields. On her part, Mrs. Heal thanked Premier Berisha for the hospitality and said that the assessments for the excellent level of relations are mutual. She commended great and positive transformations that have taken place in Albania and substantial reforms undertaken by the Albanian government over the last years. Likewise, Heal praised hailed also achievements of the Albanian government in the fight against organized crime, corruption, and noted successful economic reforms and favorable climate for foreign investors in Albania. She pointed out that during her stay in our country she had noted the energies and full commitment to consolidation of reforms and rapid economic development of Albania. Both personalities praised the importance of the participation of woman in politics, in this developing moment of Albanian society.

Premier Berisha receives CoE Monitoring Commission Rapporteurs

Prime Minister Sali Berisha met in Tirane with David Wilshire and Jaakko Laakso, who are in Albania in the capacity of the rapporteurs of the Council of Europe Monitoring Commission. Welcoming PM Berisha highly appreciated the assistance provided by the CoE for Albania for the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, stressing that the very good cooperation between Albania and the CoE have largely contributed to this direction. The Premier underlined that the all-round reforms of the Albanian government have been focused on the consolidation of a functional democracy in the country, the consolidation of the rule of law and promotion of free market. During the conversation, Premier Berisha made a presentation of the government's reforms in the fight against crime, corruption, reform in the economic and fiscal field, facilitation of procedures and their digitalization, electoral and judicial reforms. The Premier also stressed the great steps Albania had made in facilitating business climate in the country and reducing the fiscal burden, turning Albania into one of the countries with the lowest fiscal burden in Europe. Commending Albania's progress and reforms, Wilshire and Laakso particularly showed interest in the judicial and electoral reforms. They shared the same view with Berisha about the importance of restricting the immunity of officials, in case of investigation for corruption. The CoE representatives underlined that in such cases, immunity restriction is a significant factor in the fight against corruption. The interlocutors praised the cooperation between Albania, Council of Europe, Venice Committee in preparation of important

legal instruments, stressing that these relations should further deepen.

Premier Berisha attends presentation of World Bank "Doing Business" Report

Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended the presentation of the "Doing Business" report, drafted by WB experts. The presentation was attended by Ms. Jane Armitage, WB Country Director and Regional Coordinator for Southeast Europe and Ms. Camille Nuamah, Head of WB in Albania, Ms. Penelope Brook, the Head of the WB Expert Group, other representatives of the World Bank, and members of the Cabinet etc. Ms. Jane Armitage, WB Country Director and Regional Coordinator for Southeast Europe expressed her pleasure of being in Albania to congratulate the Albanian authorities and people for the results and economic performance. PM Berisha assessed the Report as evidence of the real achievements of the Albanian economy. Emphasizing there is still work to take forward these achievements; the premier expressed the conviction that next year Albania will make a flying leap in the listing of the countries in the WB Report. "I would like to assure that nothing can make me avoid and abandon this major objective. It will be, as always, a priority in my governance agenda. Hundreds of gatherings were needed, hundreds of laws and decisions, but a lot of work is needed to implement them," emphasized the premier. The premier expressed gratitude for WB, USAID, IMF, EBRD, KfW and other international organizations for their assistance and support.

Premier Berisha: Government has allocated \$160 million for Tirana

During the visit to Kamza municipality, Premier Berisha said that government has engaged about 160 million dollars for Tirana. Government has prepared investments for sewage systems, worth about 120 million dollars, investments for new ring of Tirana, worth about 50 million dollars. It has also allocated 2.5 billion lek for schools of Tirana, as well as, 1 billion lek for water supply system and sewage works.

Premier Berisha receives chairman of Kosova Social Democratic Party Agim Çeku

Prime Minister Sali Berisha held a cordial meeting with the former prime minister of Kosova and the current leader of the Social Democratic Party Agim Çeku. After they discussed the general developments in the region, PM Berisha acquainted Mr. Çeku with the reforms implemented in Albania and the results achieved up to now. Mr. Çeku congratulated PM Berisha for the achievements and Albania development pace.

Press Release of Premier's Spokeswoman, Juela Mecani

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Sali Berisha, condemns the terrorist attack, act of Al Qaeda, outside Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, as a heinous act, another testimony of the real face of Al Qaeda.

This act, which killed dozens of people and wounded many others, along with other recent attacks such as that in Yemen, on the U.S. embassy, show that the fight against terrorism is decisive to win the battle against the most savage enemy to free people. Prime Minister Berisha shares with the victims' families his pain and offers the most sincere condolences to and solidarity with the Pakistani government in its fight and efforts against terrorism.

Chairman of State Council of People's Republic of China Wen Jiabao sends message of thanks to Premier Berisha

Prime Minister Sali Berisha has received a message of thanks from the Chairman of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Mr. Wen Jiabao.

Through this message the Chairman of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Wen Jiabao conveys to Premier Berisha, the government and the Albanian people the most sincere thanks for the support and assistance provided for the successful organization of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Also Mr. Wen Jiabao expresses optimism for taking forward into a high level the cooperation between the two countries.

Premier Berisha: TI recognizes government of Albania a champion of efforts and fight against corruption

PM Berisha welcomed the Transparency International (TI) 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index, a survey launched yesterday and that ranks Albania at the top of regional countries in fight against corruption. Speaking during the meeting of the Council of Ministers about the TI survey launched yesterday, PM Berisha described it as the result of the success of the government efforts and "clean hands" platform in fight against corruption.

Premier Berisha receives new ambassador of the Netherlands to Albania H.E. Henk G.C van den Dool

Prime Minister Sali Berisha received the new ambassador of the Netherlands in Tirana H.E. Henk G.C van den Dool. After extending welcome, Premier

Berisha thanked the ambassador for the assistance that the Netherlands has provided Albania with during all this period in its efforts for further consolidation of democracy, development of the free market economy as well as in its way towards NATO and EU membership. Further on, Premier Berisha acquainted the ambassador of the Netherlands with the successful reforms implemented and achievements of the government of Albania in all the fields.

On his part, Ambassador Henk G.C van den Dool thanked the prime minister for the audience granted. He also took the opportunity to express his positive assessment of the fundamental transformation that Albania has undergone, the great economic development of the country as well as the optimism and enthusiasm that dominates among the citizens of Albania. The Dutch ambassador reiterated to Premier Berisha the support of his country for Albania NATO and EU integration.

Premier Berisha receives new ambassador of Egypt to Albania H.E. Amina Gomaa

Prime Minister Sali Berisha granted an audience today to the new ambassador of Egypt in Tirana H.E. Amina Gomaa. After extending welcome, Premier Berisha said that the ambassador is taking her new office in Albania which is a friendly country to Egypt.

Ambassador Amina Gomaa thanked Premier Berisha for the audience and pointed to the traditional relations between Albania and Egypt.

Premier Berisha and Ambassador Amina Gomaa reiterated the determination of both governments for the further improvement of economic-trade relations and stimulation of Egyptian entrepreneurs to invest in Albania.

Premier Berisha receives Premier of Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker

Premier Sali Berisha welcomed the Premier of Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker. Following the tete a tete meeting between the Premiers, the delegations held official talks. In conclusion, the Premiers made the following statements:

Premier Juncker: Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my first visit to Albania. In fact, this is a delayed visit because I have received an invitation from Premier Berisha long time ago, but I had planned this visit many times. I have met with PM Berisha in January 1995, then he was the President of the Republic of Albania and was attending a high-level meeting of United Nations in Copenhagen, and we have not been separated since.

I praise the friendship with the Premier because he gives a great importance to democratic freedoms. I have a great sympathy for him because he is a courageous man, who carries out difficult reforms. I also admire the Albanian people, a courageous people that require changes and accept the difficult realities that bring about these changes.

In the course of recent years, Albania has made great progress in fight against corruption and criminality. These successes have provided Albania with a good image in the world. Some economic success have not been accomplished and concluded, but they show that the country is pushing ahead. The reforms in the field of fiscal and social policy are impressive. These great successes consist of the future vision of Albania in the North Atlantic Alliance. This will happen before the next summit of the Alliance, which is expected to be held in April. In this summit, Albania will officially return to the great European family, to where it belongs. In the framework of bilateral relations, we have decided to deepen economic relations between two countries, as well as will be cooperate for the qualification of the judges. We will start the implementation of the program signed between two countries for the training of the new bankers, who can have qualifications in Luxemburg. We will sign an agreement for double taxation, a fundamental condition to deepen economic relations. Likewise, we will continue co-financing projects in the field of hydro energy, as well as, will consider all the possibilities to cooperate in fields of health, education, culture. In this respect, we will remain friends and our stand will be at the level of our ambitions.

Premier Berisha: Ladies and Gentlemen,
Today, we welcome the Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, a great and precious friend of mine, Albanians and Albania, in a historic visit for the friendly relations between two countries. For me, it was a pleasure to receive him and express the deepest gratitude for support Juncker and his country has provided for the Albanian democracy and Albanians in general. My country has been an inspiring country, a small country, but with a great name in Europe and world, a small country with a great role in the EU and NATO integration process. Thus, I will continue to pay particular attention to our relations with Luxemburg. I also express my pleasure that Premier Juncker and his country share the same feelings. Their support has been extraordinary important for the signing of EU- Albania SAA and receiving of the NATO membership invitation. The political relations between two countries are excellent, which is also testified by the visit of PM Juncker, as a crucial visit between two countries. This visit is preceded by important visits of other high level officials of Luxemburg. Our bilateral relations are under process of development. We agreed to work on a more

solid legal basis for the rapid development of these relations. Luxemburg has provided a special assistance for Albania in infrastructure. The projects of Luxemburg's government in Albania extend to Durres, Kukes, Mamurras, Lac and other regions of the country for water supply and sewage works, and other projects also cover the qualification of judges. We discussed and agreed on qualification of bankers, intensification of cooperation in the field of education and health. We agreed to make common efforts so that investors from Luxemburg to invest in Albania in the interested fields.

Likewise, Premier Juncker and I discussed the visa liberalization. I briefed my friend on all the efforts of my government to achieve the necessary standards because the Albanians merit moving freely in Europe. I also informed him of all the reforms we have undertaken for improvement of business climate and fight against corruption, zero tolerance against organized crime, as well as success of this fight. I made this panorama to Premier of Luxemburg, being convinced that PM Juncker is not only a great and precious friend but also an advocate with a high prestige and great credibility of our country and achievements. Once again, I would like to cordially thank you for this visit.

Premier Berisha receives representatives of EP Former Members Association

Premier Berisha received the representatives of the Association of European Parliament Former Lawmakers, from different countries such as European Union, Germany, Great Britain, France, etc. The representatives are visiting Albania in the framework of a project of the association to visit all the countries aspiring to join EU. The representatives of the Association of European Parliament Former Lawmakers expressed Premier Berisha the highest consideration for his work and personal contribution in the excellent achievements of Albania in the last years in different fields of development. These achievements have turned the face of Albania and have increased the prestige in the eyes of the European Community. Premier Berisha thanked the representatives for the high consideration expressed to Albania in its efforts to meet the Copenhagen criteria and join as soon as possible the family it belongs to, the European Community. In this context, Premier Berisha said that about 94 % of the Albanians aspire the EU membership and that the Albanian government has undertaken and is implementing with determination all the necessary reforms to turn their "draft-dream" into reality. The representatives of the association assured Premier Berisha of their support in Albania integration

process into European Union and further overall development of the country

Premier Berisha congratulates new Japanese Premier, His Excellency, Taro Aso on occasion of his appointment

Premier Berisha has sent a congratulatory telegram to His Excellency, Taro Aso, on occasion of his appointment in duty of the Premier of Japan. The telegram says:

“Excellency,
Your appointment in the office of the Premier of Japan gives me the special pleasure to convey the most cordial wishes and greeting for successes in Your noble job. On this occasion, allow me to express the most sincere gratitude for the support Japan has given to Albania in the course of the transition years, as well as express my gratitude for the special financial aid that Japanese government has offered in the realization of priority projects of my government. I express my conviction that excellent relations of friendship and cooperation between Albania and Japan will see further developments in the future. Reiterating my wishes for success in realization of your High responsibilities, please accept, Your Excellency, my high considerations”.

Statement of Premier Berisha on ratification of Albania's Accession Protocol to NATO by U.S Senate

“Yesterday was an historical day for Albania and Albanians, for their NATO integration process, as well as excellent relations between Albania and United States of America. Yesterday, the United States of America Senate, the leading country of North Atlantic Alliance unanimously voted and ratified the protocol on the accession of Croatia and Albania to North Atlantic Alliance. This vote was held on personal recommendation of U.S President, George W. Bush, just two days after the US Senate Foreign Commission unanimously voted the NATO Accession Protocol for Albania and Croatia. The yesterday vote is an extraordinary event for Albania and our nation, because the NATO membership is of extraordinary importance. President Bush, his government, US Senate with their support enabled the ratification at a record time, considering that the protocol has been signed on July 9 and the climax of electoral campaign in USA. On this occasion, in the name of the Albanian government, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to President George W. Bush, the greatest friends of Albania and Albanians, his government, State Department, Pentagon, US Senate Foreign Commission, distinguished friends of the Albanian nation in this commission, its chairman Joseph Biden and Senator Richard Lugar, as well as other members of this commissions, entire Senate, US senators, US

ambassador and embassy to Tirana, US ambassador and embassy to Brussels for the great support through which the euro-Atlantic dream of our nation is turning into reality.

Premier Berisha expresses deepest gratitude to US President, George W. Bush

Premier of the Republic of Albania, Sali Berisha sent a thanking telegram to President of the United States of America, George W. Bush on occasion of ratification by US Senate of the protocol on Albania's accession to NATO.

In the telegram Premier Berisha says:

“Dear Mr. President Bush,
I have the honor and special pleasure that on my behalf and on behalf of the Albanian government to convey to you, and through you, your administration and Senate, as well as entire American nation, the most heartfelt and deepest gratitude for ratification of protocol on Albanians accession to NATO, in particular for your extraordinary contribution, as the greatest friend of Albanian, and Albanian nation, so that this ratification process could end in a record time. For Albania and Albanians, this is a historical event, which brings closer the realization of long-awaited dream of return into common Euro-Atlantic family of freedom and its values. But, at the same time, this ratification is for my country and nation a re-confirmation of friendship, alliance, and close and excellent solidarity with your great nation. Albanian government and I personally remain entirely committed to continuing close cooperation with you Mr. President, your government and all the other US institutions to the best interest of our friendly countries. Conveying once again my deepest gratitude and most cordial greetings and best wishes in this remarkable day, please accept my dear friend my highest considerations.”

Premier Berisha: Industrial parks, generators of development and employment in Albania

Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended the signing ceremony of the contracts between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy and the winning companies in the competition procedure for giving the status of industrial parks developer in Vlora, Shngjin and Koplik. The ceremony was held at the venues of Tirana International Hotel. In his greeting speech delivered on this occasion, Premier Berisha said that building of industrial parks is a great moment as it opens a new chapter in the government efforts to create a friendly environment toward business.

Premier Berisha: International reports list government of Albania as champion of reforms

Prime Minister Sali Berisha stated during meeting of the Democratic Party Parliamentary group that apart from the evident results of enhance of economic freedom and fight against corruption, internationally certified, the government will make great efforts to position the country into a better ranking.

While considering the economic freedom and fight against corruption as inseparable, Premier Berisha said that WB recent reports, "Doing Business" and TI report are unprecedented in the history of the country. WB report qualifies Albania as the runner up in the economic reforms competition, whereas TI ranks the country among the 10 countries of the greatest success in the world and the first in the region about fight against corruption. The premier said further there would be a greater improvement if all the institutions would have been involved in fight against corruption and in implementation of these reforms. The merit goes to the government, said the premier pointing to the report. "GoA has fulfilled its obligation. The anti-corruption criterion has been at the core of all the reforms," said the premier.

In this context, the premier invited all the subordinate and independent institutions to direct all procedures in function of fight against corruption targeting a place among the 20 cleanest countries of corruption.

Premier Berisha receives U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Gordon England

Premier Sali Berisha received the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Gordon England. Following the meeting, the dignitaries made the following statements:

Premier Berisha: We have just concluded a meeting and talks with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Gordon England, a distinguished friend of Albania. I availed myself of the occasion to express the deepest gratitude to President George W. Bush, his government and American nation for the extraordinary and precious help given to Albania and Albanians. Albania has had an extraordinary need to change and none more than USA has helped us in these changes. I think that the most important moments of this help were the visit of U.S. George W. Bush to Albania, which brought the Albania's integration to NATO, as well Independence of Kosovo.

United States of America have given an extraordinary help in changes in the country, as well as reforms in Albanian Armed Forces, fight against organized crime and corruption. I also want to put an emphasis on three major projects which were undertaken in the framework of Millennium Challenge Corporation

Threshold Program: e-business registration, e-taxes, and e-procurements. These practices were a great encouragement to changes in business climate and fight against corruption.

Our relations with United States are excellent and we are proud of these relations and this support.

I informed England of the political reforms, economic reforms and overall reforms, focusing particularly on next elections, where I expressed the determination of my government to do the utmost for holding fair and free election. I also asked for the presence of observers from U.S. institutions during the elections. Once again, I would like to cordially thank Mr. England for the personal help and commitment, support of Pentagon and Secretary Gates, as well as Secretary Rumsfeld, in our efforts to meeting NATO standards. I would like to thank you for this important visit in the relations between our two countries.

Thank you very much, Mr. England!

Secretary England: Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you for your hospitality. It is absolutely delightful to be here in Albania with my wife. We are enjoying the hospitality of the country and I thank you very much for the invitation to spend some time with you this morning. The Prime Minister and I had an opportunity to discuss a number of topics, important to both of our countries. We talked about the stability of the region, military modernization in Albania, the business climate, the reforms underway, and also the issue of unexploded ordnance. The U.S. and Albania share a strong partnership and a warm friendship. The Albanian military is serving shoulder to shoulder with the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan. Albania's Armed Forces are also playing an important role in supporting peace-keeping operations around the world. The U.S. is very grateful for your continued strong support of these critical missions. Albania is a key contributor in securing cooperation and security across the Balkans and our countries share the goal of furthering peace and prosperity in the region. I am particularly delighted to be here this week, after the U.S. Senate approved the accession of Albania into NATO. Over the past almost two decades Albania and the U.S. have worked together to help the Albanian people overcome the long-term effects of communism and war. I congratulate the Albanian leadership and the Albanian people and the significant progress they have made in instituting many reforms. I encourage both the government and the people to continue those reforms and to respect independent institutions that will help your country build a strong democracy and economy. So, I am delighted to be here to further the strong relationships between our countries and between our military departments and I look forward to continuing to work with the Albanian government and military as we strengthen those relationships in the future. And again, I want to thank the Prime Minister for his very good hospitality, but also for all of his help in

working with the United States in furthering the relationship and in furthering the stability both of Albania and the region. I congratulate the PM for his very very strong leadership and the progress to date and it is a pleasure to be with you. Premier Berisha: I would like to thank you once again for the visit. This is an excellent visit at an excellent time.

Premier Berisha: Ashta hydroelectric power station contract shows growing interest of foreign investments

Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended the signing ceremony of the agreement on giving by concession Ashta hydroelectric power station between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy and Austria VERBUND Company. Attending the ceremony were Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy Genc Ruli, VERBUND leading executives, representatives of the energy sector, specialists of the field etc. Premier Berisha congratulated the Economy government department and VERBUND Corporation for the bilateral agreement concluded. Also the premier thanked IFC for the worthy assistance and consultancy about this project, which, as the premier put it, because of certain specifics of the region, it was highly sensitive. Likewise, the premier said that signing of today contract marks an important moment as the winning company is from Austria, a friendly country to Albania with which it is already established a very great tradition of cooperation and investments in Albania. Premier Berisha promised to the company representatives that the government will fully support them in implementation of this project.

About 850 million lek investments in Kamez Municipality

Premier Sali Berisha inaugurated investments worth some 859 million leks in Kamez Municipality informing local inhabitants of 1 billion and a half leks underway to the benefit of this area. In the framework of "Albania is changing" tour, Premier Berisha inaugurated a series of infrastructure works in Kamza municipality, as well as held an enthusiastic meeting with Bathore inhabitants, in Kamza municipality. In his address to citizens of this municipality, Premier Berisha emphasized: "These inaugurations are kept promises made to inhabitants of this area in the election campaign 2005." "Only investments carried out for the time being in Kames Municipality amount to 850 million leks. We inaugurated roads, beginning of construction work of nine-year school in Laknas, water supply system and I guarantee that government will carry out every investment in order to transform Bathore into one of the most modern quarters of Tirana," Berisha said. Likewise, Premier Berisha considered as an

important inauguration, an USD 5 million investment in the power grid. According to the head of government, "all these investments are possible not only because Albania in three years has become five times more developed, but also because the incomes have increased by 5 times, and do not end up in the pockets of corrupted officials".

Fight with zero tolerance against crime, Albania one of most secure countries

Premier Sali Berisha attended the inauguration of a series of public works in Mat district, a remote area with rich natural resources, situated in the central northern part of Albania. In the framework of 'Albania is changing' tour, the Premier inaugurated four public works in this district, as well as Private University 'Mother Queen Geraldina', a private initiative in Burrel city. During the meetings with inhabitants, the head of government stressed, stable rural development is a major priority of government". "In the course of these years, Albania has changed more than ever", said Berisha, during meeting with inhabitants of Burrel, underlining, "fight with zero tolerance against crime turns Albania into one of most secure countries". The Premier focused on numerous investments of government, aiming at improving the life of the community. "Government will never stop its efforts for providing better roads for Albanian citizens". Investments are the Archimedes lever for Albania's development", said Berisha.

In next three years, investments in rural areas to amount to 2.4 billion dollars

Rural development in Albania remains one of the priorities of democratic government, which in the last three years has invested in this direction about 104 billion lek, or over 1.2 billion dollars". "This investment is the biggest in Albanian village, and in next three years this investment will amount to 2.4 billion dollars", guaranteed the head of government during the 'Albania is changing' tour, held in Shkoder district. In the meetings with inhabitants, the Premier confirmed the attention of his government in urbanization of the village, underlining, "this process in progressing rapidly". The head of government took part in the inauguration of irrigation system in Bushat commune, an 2.6 million dollars investment, inauguration of water collector in Beltoj- Berdice village, a 34 million lek investment, inauguration of Beltoj- Mali Hebaj- Bërdicë e Madhe road, an 32 million lek investment, inauguration of kick off works on road in Trush village, an 9 million lek investment, inauguration of elementary school in Trush village, an 56 million lek investment. Premier concluded his tour in the north of the country with inauguration of two bridges connecting national road with Velipoja (Shkodër), a tourist area in the Adriatic Sea, which has become the center of government investments.