

## **Joint statement on Montenegro VNR 2022, delivered by a representative of the NGO Major Group**

Despite the progress made in the previous decade in Montenegro, in the last several years sustainable development was not a priority of the Government.

NGO Green Home, together with Association of Young Ecologists of Niksic were members of a working group which prepared the second Voluntary National Review that confirms that there is clear stagnation and Montenegro still has a lot to do to achieve SDGs.

There is strong complementarity between the process of EU accession and achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Nearly two thirds of the SDG targets are closely linked to the requirements of the *EU acquis*. These are especially linked with Chapter 27 of EU accession, which means that by meeting the targets set for Chapter 27, Montenegro will get closer to achieving the SDGs.

In one key area there are significant issues:

- Management of protected areas is at an unsatisfactory level;
- National parks have serious management problems;

In fact none of the five national parks has a valid management plan and stronger control is needed to prevent damage to habitats.

Illegal logging is a threat to forests of high ecological value; we have frequent wildfires; and poaching is a major concern, including shooting rare and protected species.

In addition, the process of building a sewage network and wastewater treatment plants has been delayed, and waste management is at an undesirable level.

Moreover, citizens are not encouraged to make a real contribution through public participation.

The National Strategy of Sustainable development was a good mechanism to demonstrate the constitutional commitment of Montenegro to be an ecological state.

Montenegro has to make an urgent effort towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that have already been defined within the government's strategic documents and strategies; it is time to harmonize the goals with the current needs of our society. We call on the government to fully implement its own plans and strategies and provide a sustainable future for its citizens.