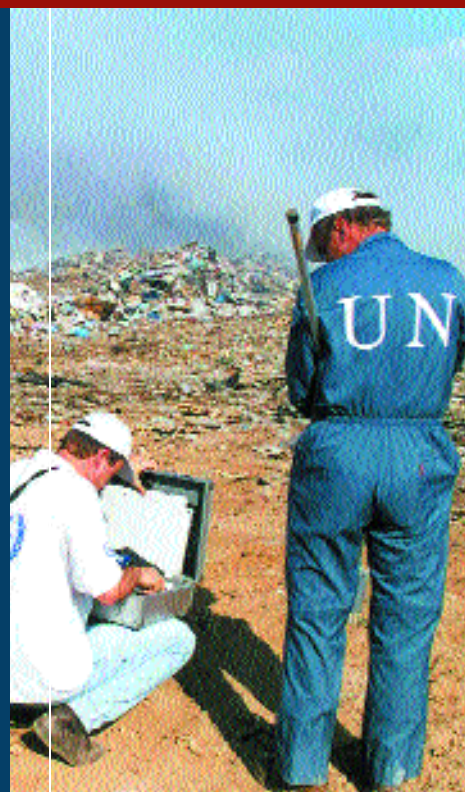




# Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment— Albania



*First published in Switzerland in 2000 by the United Nations Environment Programme.*

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*Production and Cover Design: Kim & Cie S.A.*

*Maps by GRID Arendal.*

*Front cover pictures: UNEP and Robert Goddys; other photographs: UNEP*

*Printed by: SADAG, France*

*Printed on Chlorine-free paper*



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## Foreword



**A**lbania has been undergoing a profound transition during the past decade. Economic and civil reforms have been accompanied by rising environmental awareness and the creation of a National Environmental Agency. The Kosovo conflict added a new and urgent dimension to humanitarian challenges and efforts.

This report continues the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) investigation of the impacts of the Kosovo conflict. It extends the body of knowledge about the environmental impacts of the conflict, and about the urgent environmental challenges facing Albania. The report should provide a useful tool for international community members seeking to assess Albania's needs and assist the country. It also underscores the importance of environmental management during humanitarian assistance efforts.

To conduct the assessment, UNEP drew on the skills of international experts from various scientific and environmental policy disciplines. During a field mission to Albania, the team visited refugee camps and environmental 'hot spots', including neglected industrial sites. The team also took samples and analyzed various environmental and human settlement data. I would like to thank this dedicated and highly skilled team for their hard work.

UNEP is committed to assessing areas of the world suffering from acute environmental degradation caused by human conflicts or natural disasters. This work began following last year's Kosovo conflict, when the Joint UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) Balkans Task Force (BTF) was established. The BTF conducted a rapid assessment that culminated in the publication of *The Kosovo Conflict: Consequences for the Environment and Human Settlements*. Since that time, UNEP has implemented humanitarian projects to mitigate pollution at environmental 'hot spots' identified by the report.

This UNEP report, *Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment—Albania*, was made possible through generous support provided by The Netherlands, and with the close cooperation of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. My thanks go to the Dutch government and these partner organizations for their contributions and invaluable in-kind support.

Klaus Toepfer  
Under-Secretary General of the United Nations  
Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

## Introduction

In the aftermath of conflict lie opportunities for regeneration. During the past ten years, South Eastern Europe has experienced upheaval and instability. Conflicts were fought, and communities divided. Many fled their homes and their countries to escape danger. As attention focused on other issues, the region's rich natural environment became increasingly degraded.

Fortunately, the momentum in the Balkans has shifted. Peace, democracy and stability are taking hold. Cooperation is growing within the region and across Europe. Reconstruction efforts are underway, and protection of the environment is an emerging priority.

This assessment focuses on Albania's environmental needs in the context of these broad regional developments. Like its Balkan neighbors, Albania is home to some of Europe's most diverse and treasured natural resources. These resources have suffered, however, from decades of unregulated industrial activity.

Today, the country is undergoing a transformation of its democratic institutions. Environmental protection is evolving alongside economic development. There is now an opportunity for Albania to stop the destruction of its precious environment and, at the same time, create a strong economy and prosperity for its citizens.

This report is not intended to be a comprehensive environmental survey. It is, instead, a rapid, strategic assessment aimed at identifying the most urgent environmental needs of Albania in order to prioritize rehabilitation funding. Accordingly, the report focuses on the country's severely polluted, 'hot spot' sites requiring immediate attention; the environmental consequences of refugee influxes from the Kosovo conflict; and the actions that can strengthen Albania's environmental institutions and policies.

Ultimately, the responsibility for improving Albania's environment rests with the people of Albania. The international community can play a valuable role in helping Albania to fulfill its agenda. Albania, however, must set the agenda.

UNEP hopes that the recommendations contained in this report will catalyze action. In particular, UNEP urges the international community to immediately assist local authorities in remediating the 'hot spot' sites identified.

This assessment was developed at the request of the government of Albania (the Government) and under the framework of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe. It complements *The Kosovo Conflict: Consequences for the Environment & Human Settlements (1999)* and *Post-Conflict Environmental Assessments—FYR of Macedonia (2000)*.

► Map 1 : The Balkan region



## The Assessment Method

Traditional responses to emergencies tend to focus on humanitarian action. UNEP's post-conflict environmental assessments answer a global need for rapid, independent assessments of environments affected by conflicts and other emergencies. As a focal point for the world environmental community, UNEP is well positioned to coordinate international partners and bring together the expertise necessary to analyze complex post-emergency dynamics. The goal is to provide focused, strategic analyses that help countries set environmental agendas and reintegrate themselves into the regional and world community. Just as importantly, UNEP seeks to assist donor nations in identifying priority areas for environmental cooperation.

UNEP post-conflict assessments analyze environmental conditions with a view toward emergency prevention and preparedness as much as emergency mitigation and response. This requires understanding the broader context of a country's pre-existing environmental conditions and capacities. Assessments, therefore, entail extensive analyses of relevant environmental issues, meetings with key shareholders, field missions, the publication of reports, and efforts to catalyze concrete environmental remediation action.

UNEP's environmental assessment of Albania was made with the close cooperation and support of Albania's National Environment Agency (NEA). The assessment process began with a systematic review of the available literature and data concerning Albania's environment. A preliminary UNEP field mission met with environmental leaders from government, the non-governmental community and academia. Based on this research, UNEP decided to focus this assessment on three core areas of concern:

- sites of urgent environmental concern, i.e., 'hot spots';
- refugee impacts on Albania's environment; and
- albania's institutional capacity for environmental protection.

During the week of 17-24 September 2000, a UNEP mission hosted by the NEA investigated conditions in Albania. The mission team was comprised of specialists in chemical and technological processes, solid waste management, biodiversity, drinking water, waste water, air quality, soil, land use planning, law, government, humanitarian assistance, emergency management, environmental economics, environmental information, and communications. National experts from Albania accompanied the team and provided valuable information.

The mission team divided into three subgroups that focused on 'hot spots', refugee impacts and institutional capacity, respectively. Throughout the week, the teams held dozens of meetings with key stakeholders from government, non-governmental organizations, donors, academia, and the media.

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