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Speaking Points

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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here among you representing the Albanian Competition Authority (ACA). On behalf of the ACA, it is a great honor to speak today and to share insights from Albania's experience under the EBRD/UNCTAD project "Fostering Competition Law, Policy and Competition Culture in Albania", launched in 2024.

As the Vice Minister said the International Forum co-organized in January 2025 under this project, we were able to establish formal lines (signature of a Memorandum of Understanding) of cooperation with the Consumers Protection Commission to address overlaps in enforcement, especially in digital and e-commerce markets where consumer harm and competition distortions often intersect.

One of the most impactful components of this project has been the *training of judges*, which is essential for ensuring the consistent and effective application of competition law. Since most enforcement cases appealed to the court are faced by untrained judges, that lack the relevant knowledge of competition law infringements and economic analysis/evidence and affect their decision furthermore the success of the ACA's cases.

The UNCTAD organized with the Albanian School of Magistrates two training courses. The first one was on 25-26 November 2024 and provided specialized instruction to over 20 judges and magistrates, covering both substantive and procedural aspects of competition law. The training focused on the legal and economic analysis of anticompetitive practices, including anticompetitive

agreements, abuse of dominant position, investigations, and dawn raids, and decisional aspects like the calculation of fines, interim measures, commitments, leniency programs, and compliance mechanisms, horizontal and vertical agreements. The second training course took place on 20 -21 January 2025, focusing on merger control and competition in regulated sectors such as energy and telecommunications sectors. Both training sessions incorporated Albanian competition law and the challenges faced by the CAA. These sessions not only increased the judiciary's understanding of *economic evidence* and legal standards under competition law but also contributed to a more coherent and predictable enforcement environment.

In terms of *future expectations* from the project, this project focuses not only on strengthening our legal and enforcement frameworks but also on fostering a culture of compliance and advocacy within the business community. One of the central components of the project is the development and implementation of three targeted advocacy campaigns (in autumn) in priority sectors identified by the ACA: Telecommunications, Business associations, including the Albanian Bank Association and Chambers of Commerce operating in Albania and the health market, encompassing both pharmaceuticals and hospitalization services. The core objectives of these campaigns will be to foster the competition advocacy and culture particularly emphasizing the importance for businesses to increase voluntary compliance program and encourage the use of leniency program, as it is in place since 2009 but not yet used, through well-targeted information campaigns directed at the private sector and the publish and advertising a *video production of “Leniency program”*. The target audience for these campaigns

includes business leaders, managers, legal advisors, compliance officers within these sectors, as well as key stakeholders from the Market Regulator institutions.

Another important aspect of the project will be the *training of the ACA staff*. The training and capacity building of the staff of the ACA is of critical importance in ensuring effective enforcement of competition law, particularly in the context of Albania's path toward European Union integration, since April 2025 the opening of negotiation process for cluster 2: "Internal Market" where chapter 8: Competition Policy is part, requires from ACA strengthening institutional expertise through continuous professional development equips staff with the analytical, legal, and economic tools needed to detect and assess complex anticompetitive practices. This is essential for aligning with EU standards, particularly the *acquis* in competition. As competition cases increasingly involve digital markets, abuse of dominance, and sophisticated merger control, it is vital that ACA personnel remain up to date with EU jurisprudence, methodologies adopted by the European Commission, and best practices shared through international cooperation, such as those promoted by UNCTAD/TAIEX and the OECD. Investing in human capital not only enhances the authority's credibility and independence but also ensures fair and consistent decision-making that supports market efficiency, consumer welfare, and legal certainty in Albania's developing economy.

Beyond the operational aspects, the project has also supported a much-needed cultural shift within the Albanian enforcement ecosystem. Competition is now

increasingly seen not only as a regulatory function, but also as a pillar of good governance and sustainable economic development. UNCTAD's advocacy tools and training materials, adapted to our national context, will be instrumental in helping us reach judges, business community, market regulators, academia, journalists, and regional authorities who are now more aware of how competitive markets serve the public interest.