

# Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro to Have Joint Environmental Park

TIRANA - The Environment Ministry and SNV (The Netherlands Development Organization) have signed a memorandum of understanding on a joint cross border Alps Park among Albania and neighboring Kosovo and Montenegro. The agreement was signed on Tuesday by Environment Minister Lufter Xhuveli and the SNV Albania director, Jacobus Cortenraad. The Environment Ministry said the goal of this deal is to strengthen cross-border cooperation and sustainable rural economic development in the region of the "Bjeshket e Namuna" (Accursed Highlands) between Albania and Montenegro.

The cooperation will create stable rural communities and a cross-border landscape through the strengthening of environment policies in the



protected areas of the Dinaric Alps, preserving biodiversity.

The programme is financed by the Finnish Foreign Ministry and implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in partnership with the World

Wildlife Fund, SNV and local organizations. Several economic development projects, including infrastructure, organic agriculture and tourism will be implemented under the project in the Bjeshket e Namuna.

Around 3 percent of Albania's surface, 80-100,000 hectares is expected to be part of this park, a senior Environment Ministry official said earlier.

The "Bjeshket e Namuna" are a continuation of the Albanian Alps with height up to 2,500 meters and 5-7 kilometers wide. The Albanian Environment Ministry has already identified what will be included in the joint park project expected to be implemented by 2010. According to the ministry, the joint park will have an area of 200,000 hectares including Kosovo's "Bjeshket e Namuna" and Albania's northernmost point of Vermosh.