

DECLARATION

The General Assembly of the Albanian Network for Rural Development convened on April 7, 2023.

We, the thirty-four member organizations of the General Assembly of the Albanian Network for Rural Development, convened on April 7, 2023 **are pleased to announce the start of preparations for the third National Rural Parliament to be held on October 11-13, 2023.**

The National Rural Parliament seeks to bring together a vast array of stakeholders, including local communities, local organizations, the private sector and policymakers, and Albania's 61 municipalities, to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities confronting rural development in our communities. The third Albanian Rural Parliament fully complies with the vision of the Crosscutting Strategy on Agricultural and Rural Development and Fisheries 2021-2027 and, particularly, with Policy 1 - Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas - and the third overall goal of this policy.

The National Rural Parliament's platform draws attention to some other essential specifics of this goal: *Strengthening the (ecological), social and economic structure of rural areas; Promoting local development (by improving the livelihoods in remote and mountainous areas and adequately integrating local communities, supporting the development of extensive pastoralism), through employment and business development opportunities on and off the agricultural (and livestock) farm, as well as through community-led initiatives.*

The platform of this third edition will offer innovative ways and new approaches to reach a broad consensus on rural development priorities at the national level, which are related at higher levels, and to strengthen the civil and private sector's voice to benefit sustainable rural development.

We are convinced that rural development is critical for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth and improving the rural population's livelihoods. However, rural development faces many challenges, including poverty, limited access to essential services, lack of infrastructure, and the impact of climate change. Moreover, mass tourism that fails to respect the local population's cultural life and lifestyle is not providing the right energy for sustainable rural development.

We believe that this platform will be an opportunity to exchange experiences, share knowledge and ideas on how we can overcome these challenges, and promote sustainable rural development. By bringing stakeholders together, we hope to foster partnerships and collaborations that will enable

us to develop and implement innovative and local solutions to promote sustainable rural development.

We commit to working together to create an inclusive and participatory Parliament, where the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable groups, are heeded and taken into account.

We strive to sustain this platform for dialogue, exchange of best practices, and learning from each other's experiences to develop concrete proposals for sustainable rural development initiatives.

We call upon all stakeholders to join us in this sustainable rural advocacy effort and actively participate in this dialogue, networking, and advocacy platform.

Improving the quality of life of rural communities is the only option to make the Albanian countryside attractive to live, work, and build the future.

Life springs from the village!