1ST SOCIAL FORUM OF THE ENERGY COMMUNITY

CONCLUSIONS
Tirana, 18-19 November 2008

1. The Prime Minister of Albania and the Head of the EC Delegation in Albania welcomed the participants at the 1st Social Forum and wished them success.

2. The Forum welcomed participants from Observer Countries, Georgia, Moldova, Norway, Ukraine and Turkey.

3. The Forum’s aim was to review the progress made with respect to the Memorandum of Understanding on Social Issues in the context of the Energy Community. It took also into consideration the improvements necessary to be made at national level with regards to strengthening the cooperation between the stakeholders.

4. The Forum welcomed the presentation made by the Energy Community Secretariat on the Social Action Plans (SAPs) preparation, as well as the views expressed by the Social Partners, both at European and national level on the role of social dialogue in this process. The high level representatives of the Contracting Parties presented working documents describing the state of preparation of the SAPs.

5. The European Social Partners underlined the importance of social dialogue when managing change, in particular that related to the restructuring of the energy sector. Likewise, the necessity of improving working conditions and involving Social Partners in the whole process of the design and implementation of the Social Action Plans was pointed out. Social Partners from the region also called for better recognition of social dialogue’s contribution to the social dimension of the Energy Community. It was also stressed that in regards to the major process of change resulting from the development of the Energy Community, the working groups at national level should pay particular attention to the restructuring process of the energy sector.

6. The Forum called for the national authorities to further develop social dialogue and information of Social Partners in accordance with the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding on Social Issues in the context of the Energy Community.

7. The Forum expressed its concerns about the access of all citizens to affordable energy. It welcomed the work undertaken by the ECRB Customer Working Group for the monitoring of the implementation of the Best Practice Guidelines on Protection of Vulnerable Household Customers, and recommended that this is pursued further. It also thanked the World Bank for making available the report.
“For Protection & Promotion: The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets”. The Forum shared experiences on these issues and invited Contracting Parties to build on existing best practices as well as on the EU Acquis on social protection and inclusion.

8. The Forum welcomed the presentations on the approach to the social dimension, and especially to health and safety at work in the EU Member States and Norway, and recommended the Contracting Parties to pay due attention to these issues when developing their social policies under the Social Action Plans.

9. The Forum agreed that Social Action Plans should be completed as soon as possible, by latest June 1, 2009 with a view to implementation and reporting on them at the next Forum in 2009.

10. The Forum also agreed that further cooperation at regional level as well as with EU Social Partners and other stakeholders is needed for strengthening the social dimension. The European Commission is expected to contribute to this cooperation.

11. The Forum calls for the Ministerial Council Meeting to give a further impetus to the social dimension of the Energy Community.

12. The Energy Community thanked the European Commission for its support in the organization of the 1st Social Forum, as well as for its financial contribution through the TAIEX programme. It also thanked the Presidency in Office, Albania for hosting the Social Forum and for the valuable contribution to the Forum’s success.