



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES
SKOPJE - MACEDONIA

Remarks by Ambassador Milovanovic

Earth Day Event
April 20, 1100-1215, Veles

Mr. Minister, Mr. Mayor, our gracious hosts, EKO-ERAS, dear guests:

I am pleased to join you here today at EKO-ERAS as we mark Earth Day. Earth Day – which is formally celebrated on April 22-- is the annual celebration of the environment. It gives each of us a chance to think about what we can do as individuals, citizens and consumers to protect the environment.

That is why I am so pleased to be here for Earth Day. We obviously need to work on protecting our environment every day, not just one day a year. Everyday, not just on Earth Day, there are real economic incentives for people to collect these plastic bottles, process them at companies such as this one, and recycle the plastic into new products.

If they were not recycled, these bottles would end up as litter, marring Macedonia's beautiful landscape, or in a landfill. Instead, these bottles are providing jobs, income, and exports for Macedonia, and reducing the environmental burden on the land. Furthermore, a cleaner environment will make the country a more attractive destination for visitors and tourists.

This recycling project, along with other recycling efforts in Macedonia, is making a real difference. Last year, this project recycled approximately 1,800 tons of plastic bottles. Recycling in Macedonia is taking off, which benefits everyone.

This project is a success because it is a partnership – a partnership between the United States Government, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, recycling companies, and individual citizens - all of you who are gathered here today for this event. Financial support for this project is also a partnership. The project money comes from an alliance between USAID and companies and non-governmental organizations that saw the value of recycling from the economic, environmental and social point of view.

I am pleased to announce that this recycling project will soon expand. There is now considerable unused recycling capacity. I've heard bottles are currently imported from Kosovo. I am sure there are enough bottles around Macedonia to keep this place busy 24 hours a day! USAID and its partners will work with participating municipalities to increase the collection of plastic bottles. In those municipalities, recycling containers will be provided in public areas and businesses in order to make recycling more convenient. USAID recently held a contest to select the design for the most useful and attractive containers. Some of those designs are displayed here today.

At our Embassy, we have installed containers to collect plastic bottles and paper for recycling - though I have to admit that our containers are not as attractive as these designs. I encourage all of you to also put aside your plastic bottles to be collected and recycled. By doing this you can make every day Earth Day as you protect Macedonia's environment for future generations to enjoy.

Thank you.

Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic