

It is a pleasure and a honour to be here today.

I came from Belarus – a country in Europe, which is known for its present challenges and post-Chernobyl consequences.

But I want my country to be rather known for its beautiful nature and environmental achievements, that's why I'm working for a green NGO called CES – in Belarus.

Just to get you an idea about my country – it has more 10 mil people, more than 10.000 lakes and rivers, and a third of the territory is covered with forests.

But when it comes to environment protection and national environmental policy, we have a long way to go.

Together with NNV we work in Belarus on promoting energy efficiency and RE, we work in schools to promote saving of energy and resouces, and what is very important we work to develop and strengthen the public environmental movement in Belarus.

Your organization is 97 years old, and is a natural part of the Norwegian society. In Belarus the oldest environmental organization is 15 years old, because during the Soviet union, of course we didn't have real public NGOs. And still we have to work hardly to explain what environmental NGOs are about and to overcome different challenges in our activity. It's much more difficult to get a public voice heard in Belarus, than you do in Norway. So many campaign instruments, which you widely use in your campaings here, are simply not possible in Belarus so far. But that means that we have to work even harder, if want to achieve a change.

NNV came to Belarus 8 years ago, and so far become an important partner, which is recognized not only by NGOs but by the environmental and educational ministries.

I should say that Scandinavian countries, and Norway in particular, are highly recognized in Belarus as European and world environmental champions. And it means that we see on what's going here as a kind of example. Last winter NNV organized a study tour for Belarussian decision-makers to Norway, to share your experience in energy efficiency and climate change mitigation activities.

Participants were really impressed and are trying to make innovations in Belarus.

That's why for us, as an environmental NGO is especially important to see what you, as the biggest green NGO in Norway is doing. We have also supported your campaign against oil-drilling in Lofoten by signing a petition to your Prime minister. And your victory is also important for us, because it has an impact in other countries, like ours – when our politicians and society see that nature has more value than oil.

So, finally, I want to say Thank you for all people in NNV who work with us, especially from the international department, Yngvild Lorentsen, Kay Schorlien, Anders Larsen, and the whole organization for working in Belarus.

And I wish you many great environmental victories in Norway, and these victories will be also victories for us, as there are no borders for the environment.

Thank you!