

Resolution of the Environmental NGO Forum

July 10-12 of 2009

Beresinsky Biosphere Reserve

We, the participants of the Environmental NGO Forum,

Sharing fundamental values and philosophy of action expressed in the Earth Charter,

Believing it is important for Belarus to participate in the international processes related to sustainable development and global climate change prevention,

Understanding that Belarus is facing a number of inner and outward problems that require interaction of many subjects in order to be solved successfully,

Acknowledging ecological movement as an important subject of Belarusian ecological policy formation and realization process,

Assuming that the key factor to the effectiveness of ecological problem-solving mechanisms of the country is an open and public discussion of strategic and program documents in the sphere of ecological policy,

Approving the presence of the Public Coordination Council at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection as an essential dialog platform, and considering it necessary to optimize its actions, with the purpose of providing participation in ecological decision-making for the community,

Drawing attention to the necessity of following the principals of Aarhus convention as a ground for elaboration and admission of all governmental documents related to environmental problems,

To the civil society representatives, to the state authorities and to all privy, we recommend to consider the consolidated position of environmental NGO Forum participants, submitted in the process of an open discussion and public dialogue, upon the following subjects:

- 1. Intersectoral collaboration for ecological problem-solving in Belarus.**
- 2. Education for sustainable development.**
- 3. Global climate change and alternative energy resources.**
- 4. Biodiversity protection.**
- 5. Sustainable production and consumption.**
- 6. Waste management.**

1. Intersectoral collaboration development for ecological problem-solving in Belarus.

Understanding the importance of intersectoral collaboration as a condition for effective ecological problem-solving in accordance with the principals of sustainable development,

Being convinced that in modern Belarus environment intersectoral collaboration is both a goal and a value,

We call upon the civil society representatives to use every means to establish communication and interaction with other sectors, taking into consideration their interests, needs, tasks and their work specificity.

To the NGO Forum Committee we propose to create a working team for developing the strategy and tactics of effective intersectoral collaboration, involving respective experts, as well as privy, to represent every sector.

In order to broaden and strengthen intersectoral collaboration, to organizations and other subjects of civil society of Belarus we recommend the following:

- Informing proper state authorities and business organizations of their activity regularly.
- Demonstrating and propagating positive examples of intersectoral collaboration and partnership in ecological problem-solving, both national and international. Convincing governing and business structures of the civil society capacity to ably participate in ecological problem-solving by showing examples in practice.
- Participating actively in drafting a normative legal basis of the Republic of Belarus in the sphere of ecology and environmental protection, using possibilities and potential of the existing normative legal basis. Participating in forming and contributing to the realization of respective governmental programs.
- Proposing and substantiating the economical benefits all interested parties will find, when interacting.
- When addressing to the state authorities, to provide grounded arguments of one's proposals: to give detailed analysis of causal effect relations, to systematically arrange views and opinions, examples, facts and experiences of all interested parties. Proposing specific steps to take in problem-solving (using the possibility of an expert group creation), when carrying on a dialog with decision-making bodies. Monitoring inclusion and execution of ecological organizations' proposals in governmental plans of action.
- Changing from spontaneous action practice to a professional approach, which suggests an accurate definition of goals and interests of all interested parties and implementation of medium-term and long-term strategic planning. Developing relations with interested parties, initially heading for systematic transfer from interaction to collaboration, and from collaboration to partnership.

2. Education for Sustainable Development

Supporting the participation of Belarus in the international processes related to the realization of sustainable development concept and carrying out obligations undertaken in the context of United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, also related to the realization of the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy of the UNO European Economical Committee;

Understanding, that education for sustainable development is an innovative educational practice aimed at the change of content of educational programs;

Pointing out the importance of cooperation between educational institutions and public ecological organizations in the sphere of education for sustainable development,

To public ecological organizations of Belarus we recommend:

- Analyzing the content of the Education Code projects and National Agenda 21 for 2011-2025 from the point of their agreement with the principals of sustainable development, and also with the goals and tasks of UNECE ESD Strategy.
- Participating in drafting the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy and National Action Plan of the Republic of Belarus for 2010-2014.
- Analyzing the content of educational and elective courses and programs, as well as responsive teaching and methodical materials in educational institutions of all levels of education, in respect to their accordance to the UNECE ESD Strategy indicators.

To the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, we recommend:

- Including the sustainable development concept into all education system specialists training programs for high schools and colleges.
- Summarizing the existing experience of practical realization of the sustainable development principals in educational institutions (particularly, schools and local agendas 21) and introducing mechanisms of its dissemination in educational institutions of all levels.
- Including a course on sustainable development into specialist training programs in different fields (for example, sustainable (organic) agriculture for agricultural specialties)
- Elaborating elective courses on following topics, related to the content and realization of the SD concept (Sustainable Development, Sustainable Consumption, Global Climate Change, Biodiversity Protection, etc.)
- Elaborating and inculcating professional skill improvement system and certification system in the sphere of sustainable development for government personnel and local authorities.
- To the ESD Public Coordination Council at the Ministry of Education – to study and to disseminate positive experience of NGOs in the sphere of ESD.

3. Climate change and alternative energy resources

Supporting the Belarusian government action on the climate change issue, including signing of UNO Climate Change Framework Convention, joining the Kyoto Protocol, and development of the National Strategy on emission reduction and increase of greenhouse gas absorption in the Republic of Belarus;

Noting the fact, that Belarus already suffers considerable negative consequences of global climate change such as increased drought frequency, intensification of natural disasters and ecosystem change which threatens the long term socio-economical development of the republic¹;

Being convinced, that the climate change is the most important issue in the modern world, it is a threat to the sustainable development of the humanity and biosphere in whole, and it demands taking urgent measures, we, the participants of the NGO Forum proclaim the following:

We agree with the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)² on the fact that human activity lead to one of the main reasons of the climate change³. We share the position of IPCC on the necessity of preventing the Earth surface mean temperature increase for more than 2 °C⁴, as well as the position on the fact that the carbonic acid concentration in the atmosphere has to be reduced to 350 ppm (particles per million)⁵.

We believe that the current level of commitments of the Republic of Belarus, stated in the Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol, does not meet the historical conditions and the potential of the greenhouse gas emission reduction. According to our estimates⁶, and to the estimates of foreign experts⁷, within the first commitments period (2008-2012) the Republic of Belarus has the potential of decreasing emissions by 30-35% compared to the year of 1990.

The level of possible commitments, declared by the Republic of Belarus for the post-Kyoto period (until 2012)⁸, does not meet the IPCC recommendations for Annex B countries, does not conform with the Presidential Directive #3 of the Republic of Belarus, and does not reflects our country's purpose to make serious efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emission.

We consider that the understated level of commitments of the Republic of Belarus on reducing CO2 emissions in the first period, as well as the one claimed as possible for the second period (until 2020), is the main reason of international disregard of the Belarusian amendment ratification, and it does not allow our country to attract significant investments within the flexibility mechanisms.

We believe that the minimal level of commitments of the Republic of Belarus in reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be no less than 30-35% for the first period of commitments and no less than 35-45% for the second period of commitments. One of the possible strategies for fulfilling these commitments may be adoption of 'Zero Waste'⁹

¹ www.minpriroda.by

² <http://www.ipcc.ch>

³ http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_ru.pdf

⁴ http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_SPM.pdf

⁵ http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc_tar/wg1/123.htm

⁶ http://reenergy.by/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=289&Itemid=88888955

⁷ <http://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/rapporten/500102019.pdf>

⁸ http://regserver.unfccc.int/seors/attachments/file_storage/74bh3ulr9bmf64d.pdf

⁹ See more at: <http://www.zerowarming.org> and <http://www.no-burn.org/article.php?id=451>

concept as a base strategy for struggling with the climate change. However, adaptive funds should not finance incinerators, junkyards and other waste processing projects at their expense.

We support the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Belarus and we think, that in order to make an adequate assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and to implement respective projects on reducing the emissions, it is mandatory to include emissions and sewage from degraded swamps, their restoration and protection into the requirements for the land-use, land-use change and forestry sector.

We support the Government of the Republic of Belarus in attempt to realize the possibility of participation in flexibility mechanisms of the Kyoto protocol. We consider that one can significantly increase the contribution of the Republic of Belarus into global reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by including the projects on restoration of degraded swamps into flexibility mechanisms.

We approve of the intention to use carbonic financing funds exclusively to implant new climate-friendly technologies and to restore the natural sources of carbon sequestration (degraded swamps and forestry)

We support the Belarusian government activity in the sphere of the degraded swamps restoration. However, we are concerned that, concurrently with the degraded swamps restoration, peat extraction intensifies; in fact, it grades the restoration effect.

We disagree with the idea that the use of peat, as well as woodworking salvage, is regarded as an alternative energy resource, and is encouraged in joint implementation projects¹⁰.

We are utterly against the inclusion of nuclear energy development activities into joint implementation projects and clean development mechanisms. Being expensive and long-term¹¹, nuclear energy makes no contribution into emissions reduction. Apart from that, there is a series of unresolved issues and serious risks connected to the nuclear energy¹². Use of funds from the republican budget for a NPP construction in Belarus does not conform to national interests and to the principles of sustainable development; it also significantly restrains our country's change-over to the low-carbon development.

We consider it essential to achieve harmonization of key state Programmes, Strategies and Action Plans elaborated by the Government of the Republic of Belarus in respect of climate change¹³. One should accompany all of these documents with concrete and transparent mechanisms of implementation and financial provision. The issue of global climate change should also be considered in the National Strategy of sustainable socio-economic development. The Government of the Republic of Belarus should coordinate work of the main sectors and bodies, especially in the sphere of environment protection, energy, economy, transport, agriculture, construction, communal services, regarding the global climate change issue.

¹⁰ Edict of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 575 of 15 November 2007

¹¹ Снижение потребления природного газа в Беларуси: ядерный и инновационный сценарии. Мн. 2009

¹² <http://antiatom.ru/ab/node/596>

¹³ The national program of measures for mitigating climate change for 2008 – 2012; National Action Plan on Rational Use of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus for 2006 – 2010; National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Belarus until year 2020; Special Program for Securing the Use of Local and Renewable Energy Sources at the Level of at least 25% of electric energy produced until 2012; Action Plan on Implementing Provisions of the Kyoto Protocol and UN FCCC for 2005-2012; National Action Plan for Rational Use of Natural Resources and Environment Protection in the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010; Program of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2006-2010; Strategy on Reducing Emissions and Increasing absorption of greenhouse gases sinks in the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2012; State Complex Program on Upgrading of Fixed Assets of Belarusian Energy System, of Energy Saving and Increasing the Share of Using Own Energy Resources till 2011; Republican program of energy conservation for 2006 – 2010.

We believe that the non-fulfillment of commitments on public participation in decision-making and implementation of state programmes, in accordance with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change¹⁴ and the Kyoto Protocol¹⁵, and on the informational campaign conduction significantly slows down our country's change-over to the low-carbon development, and negatively affects the image of the Republic of Belarus on the international scene. Regarding the fact, we reckon it important to develop concrete mechanisms of public participation in decision-making processes and in basic documents on climate change issues elaboration.

We also insist on public discussion and passing of the draft "On Unconventional and Renewable Power Sources" and "Wind-power Industry Development Program of the Republic of Belarus for 2008-2014"

We, the participants of the NGO Forum, are certain of the fact, that the Republic of Belarus is able to make its contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions. Our country, upon signing the UN Framework Convention on climate change and the Kyoto Protocol, should undertake further concrete steps in struggling with the climate change, demonstrating its devotion to the global strategic goal of preventing further warming and reducing greenhouse gases emissions by 50% by the year 2050 (compared to the level of the year 1990).

We express our readiness for developing further cooperation with state institutions, which are in charge of decision-making on climate change issue, and for active participating in the implementation of programmes on raising awareness and mitigating the consequences of adaptation to climatic changes.

¹⁴ UN Framework Convention of climate change, Article 6

¹⁵ Kyoto Protocol, Article 10

4. On the issue of Biodiversity Protection

Supporting the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus' productive work in the sphere of preservation and sustainable use of biological diversity,

We urge to broaden the international collaboration in the sphere of preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including Belarus joining the Berne Convention for the Protection of Wildlife in Europe, the Emerald Network, the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), and the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS).

We point out the need in active involvement of public organizations into discussion and action planning in the sphere of biodiversity protection; particularly in the development of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Protection and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity of the Republic of Belarus.

We consider it obligatory to include public ecological organizations representatives into scientific and technical councils of reserves and national parks, as well as to create similar coordinating councils for republican reserves with nature-conservative institutions, which would have management plans developed for them and have regular scientific researches and monitoring conducted on their territory.

We urge to prohibit introduction of any new species to the territory of the country without a close integrated expertise of their possible negative impact on native flora and fauna, in view of multiple negative examples of groundless introduction of number of species in the second half of the 20th century; we also consider it necessary to elaborate and execute action plans of struggle against alien invasive species and genetically modified organisms.

We believe it essential to expand the area of special protected nature territories (SPNT) up to 10% of the country's territory¹⁶, primarily at the account of SPNT ecosystem diversity enlargement (territories of inviolate old forests, upland especially, regions with precious local biodiversity objects - bird-friendly territories (BFT), as well as at the account of allotting the SPNT status to rivers, extant in their natural state (specifically, the ones that serve as crucial spawning grounds for salmonids) with their preferable territorial distribution in Mogilev area..

We consider it necessary to develop sustainable (organic, eco-friendly) agriculture, which is an important factor in the preservation and increase of biodiversity.

We note that, in order to effectively preserve our biodiversity, there is a need in complex measures on the territory of the Republic of Belarus in whole, not only within existing SPNT. That is why we believe it to be the most important task to elaborate and execute the Belarusian environmental network project integrated into the Pan-European ecological network.

We manifest our anxiety for increasing activity in spring fowling that takes place against the background of a considerable anseriformes population drop in Belarus, and we call upon the spring fowling moratorium introduction.

We express our deep concern about a NPP construction program in the Vilia river basin. Construction of such large project and its attendant infrastructure will reflect negatively on the unique biodiversity of the region.

² - in accordance with recommendations of UNEP/CBD/WS-CB/LAC/1/1 - Provisional Agenda

5. Sustainable production and consumption

Considering organic agriculture (OA) a priority for the Republic of Belarus agro-industrial complex (AIC) development, the participants of the NGO Forum recommend:

- To the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus - with the participation of interested public organizations, to elaborate a draft “On Organic Agriculture”, envisaging the Innovative Development mechanisms of the branch.
- To the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and to the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Belarus – to develop and to realize the mechanisms of OA development stimulation, including open pricing.
- To work out a normative legal basis for implementation of OA product certification, and to provide conditions for creation and functioning of independent certification centers.
- To the Ministry of Education and to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus – to study the favorable experience of the Belarusian Organization of Working Women (the BOWW public association) in creating organic nutrition ration for student youth in all educational institutions.
- To the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection - to examine a question of producing and financing television programs and social ad videos, covering the subject of sustainable development, and sustainable production and consumption.
- To the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, to the Ministry of Education and to the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus – to use and to propagate “The History of Things” movie by Annie Leonard with the purpose of popularizing the sustainable consumption idea.
- To the Center of Ecological Solutions, and to the Education for Sustainable Development working group of the Partnership of environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance” - to elaborate informational, educational and methodical materials in order to accompany “The History of things” movie with its further use in educational purposes.

6. Waste management

The participants of the NGOs of Belarus express their concern over the following circumstances:

- Vast production of PVC windows and doors, operation life of which makes 10-15 years in the lack of safe waste utilization technologies.
- Burning of domestic garbage in the countryside that leads to negative environmental outcomes.
- Unwillingness of the countryside population to place with and pay for the disposal of domestic garbage, which prevents separate collection and proper waste management.
- The population does not envisage the future outcomes of its dangerous environmental activity related to the daily waste management practices. All environmental problems are connected exclusively with the consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant Accident.
- Housing and communal services institutions have no incentive to reduce and to separately collect domestic waste.
- The problem of utilization and/or storage of certain dangerous industrial and domestic garbage (galvanic waste, petroleum byproducts, useless pesticides, accumulators, mercury lamps, etc.) is not yet resolved.
- Interested public representatives do not have access to the drafting of corresponding normative acts; there is no opportunity to influence their content at the stage of elaboration.
- There is no standard scheme of environmental problem-solving by location, when often such practices are to be executed with accordance to the local environment.

The participants of the NGO Forum underline the importance of expanding the role of interested public representatives, especially in the process of monitoring environmental legislation execution by location, as well as in increasing the level of ecological education among local decision-making individuals. In Belarus, such positive practices are already taking place.

Regarding all the above, the participants of the NGO Forum recommend the following:

Collaborating with the Public Council at the Ministry of Nature Resources and Environmental Protection, when discussing and searching for solutions on such environmental issues as PVC waste utilization and PVC use reduction.

On any issue regarding the environment, the community or independent expert associations' representatives should address in writing to the territorial bodies of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, providing, if possible, the data, based on the analysis of the situation. In case of absence of the result expected, they should join their efforts with other interested parties and they should address to the Ministry of Natural Resources directly. It is crucial to formulate official applications adequately, both from legal and ecological point of view, when describing the problem, it's possible solutions and it's possible outcomes, also when indicating the sphere of responsibility and competence of related governmental authorities.

It is necessary to form an expert data base of such specialists, willing to collaborate with NGOs and, in support, to provide consultation for environmental problem-solving by location.

The Government needs to be stimulated to elaborate lay-outs for danger waste management.

Interested parties of the community should have access to normative drafts at the stage of their elaboration to be able to introduce amendments.

The NGOs should actively incorporate mass media into the public discussion of ecological issues.