

**Intervention by Ms. Lianna Asoyan, Coordinator of Gavar Aarhus Center, Armenia**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you and thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity of representing the activities of the Armenian Aarhus Centers.

The Republic of Armenia has ratified a number of environmental conventions, particularly the Aarhus and Espoo Conventions, which committed to the compliance of the national legislation with the international standards.

The OSCE has established the Aarhus Centers in Armenia in order to support the authorities in this issue, to raise the level of public awareness, to involve public participation in the decision making processes.

Now their number is 15. This is an effectively functioning network, which covers almost all the provinces of Armenia, and which actively promotes with its daily work to

- raise public awareness on the environmental issues
- raise public legal awareness
- law enforcement practice in the fields of environmental violations.

So, only in 2013 were held 702 seminars, public hearings and discussions, have been filed almost 200 (two hundred) requests on a number of issues, including decision-making, the fixed number of our site users is nearly 300,000, grew nearly 30% over the past year.

Aarhus Centers have essentially undertaken the function of the public oversight which is under the state obligations.

The role of the centers in terms of their activities is unique for the formation of the atmosphere of trust, providing the platform of dialogue and discussions for all the interested parties, cooperation with municipalities and governmental bodies, coordinated activities with public and civic sector.

By providing the information as a democracy oxygen, the centers contribute to the solution of environmental problems through accessibility, expert analyzes and assessments, videos, consultations, debates, as well as coverage and notifications the increasing volume of which gives rise to a serious concern.

It is no secret that every year in the republic is increasing the extent of mining and processing of minerals and, in particular, metallic minerals. The most ore deposits are being developed in open pit method and the ores are subjected to concentration. Consequently generates large amounts of waste and tailings. As a result, constantly is increasing the number of degraded lands. Due to the human activity the latter have lost their economic value, became a source of negative impact on

the environment. In connection with formation of technogenic relief, pollution and quality change of soil and vegetation, air, water hydrological regime undoubtedly are complicated human living conditions, and thus jeopardizing the human right to live in a healthy environment. It should be noted that all these negative developments are the result of an insufficient legal basis ensuring rational use of natural resources and legal guarantees of social, environmental, health rights of citizens.

Correspondingly, as a necessity, the priority on the agenda of the Centers is set to prevent and manage technogenic and anthropogenic risks.

- The centers each year, in October, on a mandatory basis mark the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction to raise public awareness on the potential danger threats to the environment and the undertaken activities.
- Since 2011, we actively participate in the initiative of the National Rescue Service and the Regional Environmental Center entitled “Views from the front lines”, which main goal is the effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, as well as within the context of this program, based on the analysis of reduction and disaster risk management, we support and assist the Armenian communities in the physical protection and security risks.
- At centers are established task groups working on the strategic documents at the regional and municipal levels, in cooperation with international organizations, in particular with the UNDP. The basis for these task groups were the joint projects of the Aarhus Centers with local community organizations under the Small Grants within the frames of the Initiatives on Ecology and security in 2010.

So, jointly with us, with the specialists of the project has been developed seismic risk map for each region, in the centers were organized and carried out by experts a series of trainings for officials and civil society representatives.

- In another project, of the Small Grants, has been performed identification of potential man-made disasters.

I would like also to note that,

- Have been evaluated and developed recommendations on Sustainability of the arsenic tailing dump within the city boundaries of Alaverdi.
- As well as had been also assessed the possible development of the metal mine’s technogenic risk near the town of Hrazdan. The danger was prevented.

All these projects were executed by the Aarhus Centers jointly, under the small grants projects.

In the focus of our attention is the impact of landslides and small hydropower plants in the communities.

Much works on landslides have been implemented by Dilijan, Gavar, Ijevan and Yeghegnadzor Centers - making efforts to prevent the escalation of construction of small hydropower plants that threaten the unique eco-system and the fundamental human right to water.

Another direction of our activities, as it was noted, is the ore mining industry. On the state balance of the RA are listed more than 700 / seven hundred / mineral deposits, among which the most valuable are the metallic ones, of which about 22 / twenty two / are processed. In the country has already accumulated about 1/one/milliard tons waste of concentrating mills located in 20 / twenty / tailing dumps, of which 7 are conserved.

By the efforts of Aparan Aarhus Center was prevented the construction of the third tailing dump in the vicinity of the village. The two formers are containing high levels of pollution, and in which as a result of the failure to comply with building codes by the company, have repeatedly occurred landslides and avalanches, and to this day are hanging as the sword of Damocles over the village and the large catchment basin feeding the entire region and the capital.

To solve these problems the Centers interact with local governments, NGOs, independent experts, academia, the media, and that is important, with the government /the ministries of the Environment and Emergency Situations, Agriculture / and Parliament, communicates with the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention.

With the assistance of the OSCE at the Faculty of Geography and Geology of Yerevan State University has been created the Center for Sustainable Development, for the development of scientific studies on the use of natural resources and environmental security. This knowledge is distributed through the network of Aarhus Centers, knocking on every house, reaching every person.

Of course, the fundamental solutions are in the legislative field.

Law on “ Environmental impact assessment “is the main tool in the prevention of risks, including economic. In order to conform the national legislation to the international standards, the OSCE Office in Yerevan together with the coordinator of the OSCE Economic

and Environmental Affairs, has initiated the involvement of experts in the processes of the legislation review.

We are putting tasks that can be overcome; we are looking for ways of their implementation, trying to raise to their prevention levels instead of giving them mirroring reaction.

In particular:

- **Dissemination of information through the local and republican network of the Aarhus Centers**
- **Studying international practices to prevent dangerous threats to the environment, dissemination and localization of best practices and positive examples.**
- **Promoting the development and evaluation of strategies to prevent dangerous threats of possible risks to the environment.**
- **Formation of public opinion about the most dangerous threats to the environment**
- **Assistance to state authorities, local government and civil society in the design and implementation of projects aimed at preventing dangerous threats to the environment**
- **And support the development of social opportunities to take measures in difficult, complex situations caused by environmental threats.**

Thank you for your attention.