

Statement

of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia in Regards to the Possibly Devastating Effect on the Environment of the Illegal Extraction and Export of Natural Resources of Abkhazian Region of Georgia

Expressing commitment to further cooperation with OSCE on the environment, also in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (EnvSec), the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia is in a position to state the following:

We express deep concern in relation with the possible detrimental impact of illegal extraction and export of the natural resources of Abkhazian region of Georgia on the environment of the Black Sea coastal area.

In regard to the existing information of the Government of Georgia, 120 million cubic meters of construction materials such as stone and sand will be extracted from the deltas of coastal rivers of Abkhazian region of Georgia and exported to the Russian Federation to satisfy infrastructure needs of the Sochi Winter Olympics of 2014 alone.

This is in line with the statements of some government officials of the Russian Federation: in particular, Minister of Regional Development of the Russian Federation has confirmed in March that government will not object if Russia's construction companies use natural resources from Abkhazia for the Olympic infrastructural projects.

The legal aspect leaving aside, we are worried that if the events develop in such a way, in coming years the unique and fragile environment of the Black Sea coastal zone immediately south to the Georgian-Russian border may suffer a heavy and irreparable damage. Considering morpho-dynamical structure of the Black Sea coastal zone in the areas mentioned above, any extraction of inert materials in amounts of hundreds of thousands – not millions – cubic meters will inevitably cause irreversible consequences to the Black Sea coastal ecosystem. These actions can't be in any compliance with the declarations that Sochi Olympics will follow the principles of sustainable development.

We hope for the success of the cooperation of international organizations and host countries in promoting sustainable development principles into all Olympic events, and in particular, in case of 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. We also confirm our interest in assessing the current situation in Abkhazia with regard to the use of natural resources for Olympics or other cross-border purposes. We believe that existing bi- and multilateral cooperation frameworks, including the Environment and Security Initiative, represent a sound basis for further collaboration in this regard.