

Speaking notes at the first Preparatory Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

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Among the most acute environmental problems faced by the Ukrainian society, the following should be listed: pollution of water resources, soil erosion and destruction of black soils, logging, production and use of agricultural chemicals, pollution with industrial waste. Apart from that, in the recent time there is evidence of the so-called “black business” – an illegal import of different industrial waste products and of large quantities of poor-quality foodstuffs and consumer products, which is detrimental to the economic development, and poses threat to human health and the quality of life.

These are some factors that negatively influence the environment: the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe that are still felt even 26 years after; imperfect legislation; lack of incentives for business to protect the environment; lack of a proper state control on implementation of existing legislation in the sphere of environment; lack of a systemic approach to the issues of environment at a state level; a weak control over the ecological situation on part of the civil society. These problems are also common for many Eastern European states.

Today in Ukraine the environmental movement, except the NGOs, is actively supported by four political parties. On the initiative of one such party, the Ukrainian party “Green planet”, a “Ukrainian consultative council on environmental problems” was established which unites environmental organizations and representatives of science, politics and the civil society. The aim of this council is to promote a strong civil society, able to take a lead and to contribute to the forming of responsibility of the state sector in the issues of environmental security. Another task would be to develop concepts and models of harmonized relations between individuals, the society, the government and the environment.

Our environmental council deals with acute problems of the society, including water purification and the conditions of water resources in Ukraine, processing solid household and industrial waste, introduction of technologies of organic farming and production of organic foodstuffs.

In a very short timeframe on our initiative at a number of production facilities, the negative consequences from ineffective waste capacities and management were rectified. We have also successfully lobbied for ban on production of some toxic chemicals detrimental to the flora and fauna.

The environmental council has an active co-operation with many non-governmental organizations in the sphere of environmental protection and use of renewable energy resources, including the Ukrainian Academy of Science. Representatives of the Academy took part in alleviating the negative consequences of the accident at the Fukushima NPP; develop new technologies in using wind energy, including low velocity wind; develop projects in the sphere of renewable energy and using alternative energy sources.

We identify following potential priorities for co-operation in the framework of the OSCE, as well as other international organizations, private and public sectors:

- Monitoring of the environment in the basins of rivers Danube, Dnipro, Dniester and of the Black Sea;
- Development and implementation of joint projects in processing solid household and industrial waste;
- Development and implementation of an energy project on the use of mountain water and floodwater to produce “green” energy;
- Development of new and reconstruction of the existing transport corridors in connection with creating a necessary infrastructure and ecosystem;
- Development of technologies on reducing the burden of emissions of hazardous and harmful substances into the atmosphere.

An important sphere where the OSCE can and should play one of the leading roles is assistance in finding partners and in securing necessary support from the international organizations and institutions which have a relevant experience and an adequate potential. Capacity and political importance of the OSCE is also useful in increasing awareness of governments and of the civil society about contemporary environmental challenges. Support of the efforts of national NGOs in this sphere and sharing international experience are, without any doubt, important tasks for the OSCE.

The main priorities for co-operation are the following:

- The sphere of renewable energy sources and production of alternative energy;
- Raising awareness about the environmental issues, as well as education activities and publishing information materials;
- Co-operation at the level of local self-government and municipalities in developing joint projects and programs.

The “green” civil society of Ukraine welcomes the accession of Ukraine to a renowned organization “Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe” that gives a new impetus to work done by the Ukrainian state and civil society structures in the sphere of environment.

The Ukrainian consultative council on environmental problems fully supports the initiatives on creating a World environmental organization on the basis of UNEP, as well as on elaborating a draft Environmental Constitution of the Earth as a single concept of a global protection of environment.