

## MONITORING OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TOOL

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Dear Sir/ Madam Chair,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have come to understanding that strategic issues of sustainable development and provision of environmental security cannot be tackled without an efficient system of monitoring and environment assessment. Monitoring data are indispensable not only for policy makers but also for the public concerned about conservation and improvement of the environment. The system of environmental monitoring is our "eyes and ears".

Mainly for that reason at the beginning of the nineties of the previous century – which was a rather hard period for our country – the National Environment Monitoring System was established.

Today in the Republic of Belarus there is not a single governmental, sectoral, or regional programme in the sphere of environmental protection or nature management, which would not take into account the monitoring data. Without analyzing them not a single installation, which can be a potential source of negative impact on the environment, is ever constructed. Mainly due to this we observe stabilization of ecological situation in the country in the context of dynamic economic development.

All this needs considerable investments **to modernization and re-equipment of monitoring networks and improvement of informational systems.** In this regard it is very important to focus on the priorities and not disperse financial resources on minor issues. Therefore in Belarus the development of monitoring system occurs in the framework of a special five-year government programme, which has successfully incorporated the international experience in the sphere of environmental monitoring.

The implementation of the programme presupposes financing equivalent to 12 million Euros, including the allocations from the republican budget of more than 9 million Euros.

For example, in 2005 we had only one automatic station of air monitoring but by the year 2010 it is planned to set up 20 such stations; in all big industrial centers we will organize identification of the content of fine particles PM-10, surface ozone, and benzo(a)pyrene.

Monitoring development is not feasible without **close cooperation of environmental government authorities with enterprises.**

Involvement of enterprises into environment monitoring favors obtaining more precise and qualitative environmental information and, what is very important, increase of responsibility of enterprises in environmental sphere.

Nowadays in the Republic of Belarus about five hundred enterprises implement environment monitoring. They produce more than 90 % of releases to surface water sources and more than 70 % of emissions to air.

A special attention is paid to application of economic incitement measures for enterprises to implement self-monitoring.

For example, the enterprises, which have installed automated systems of air emissions monitoring, have a reduced tax on pollutant emissions to air. Tax

preferences are also granted to enterprises introducing a system of environmental certification by the standard ISO 14000. Buildings and installations for environmental protection and monitoring are freed from real-estate tax.

All this brings considerable results. As an example, in 2001 only three enterprises had environmental certificates but by 2007 their quantity grew by 40 times.

And finally the most important thing. One of the principles of monitoring organization in the Republic of Belarus is **harmonization of approaches to obtaining environmental and assessment data with the international ones, primarily with European ones**. For the formation of the national policy it is very important that our environmental assessment data should be comparable with the data of other countries.

For this we have to use agreed national toolkits of environmental indicators. A good methodological base for their development will be made by the submitted for consideration of our conference *Recommendations to Governments of East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries for the application of environmental indicators and the preparation of indicator-based environment assessment reports* elaborated by the Working Group of Senior Officials on Monitoring and Assessment of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

We are interested in further strengthening of international cooperation aimed at building capacity of East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries in the sphere of monitoring and environmental assessment in order to use positive experience of other countries to the utmost.

I appeal to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, European Environment Agency with the proposal to continue their consolidation activity in the development of this important tool of environmental policy.

Thank you for your attention.