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Discussion- Intervention from floor by Ms. Kaja Sukova, Ministry of environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia¹

Environmental Policies and multilateral agreements as a challenge

Environmental policies represent one of the mechanisms which ensure establishment of an efficient system for protection of the environment. Unfortunately, the functioning of this system in the Republic of Macedonia in the past years was decelerated due to a few reasons: lack of integral approach in solving environmental problems, particularly in the management of water resources and waste; lack of comprehensive and reliable data on pollutants and polluters, as well as lack of capital investment in necessary superstructure of environmental infrastructure.

In the forthcoming period, the Republic of Macedonia will continue to encounter the challenges of EU membership requirements fulfilment, strongly stressing the need of overall strengthening of the national environmental management system and strengthening of the capacity of the administration at central and local level. In this regard, considerable efforts will be needed aimed to provide a strategic basis for implementation of the legislation, as well as to upgrade the absorption capacities through strengthening of institutional structures.

The current process of decentralization imposed identification of numerous priorities and actions towards facilitation of the process of delegation of responsibilities from central to local level, enhancement of the capacity of the local self-government to implement the new responsibilities, and establishment of firm liaison between the central and local government. The importance of these issues is additionally underlined by the significant role the local self-government is playing in the creation and implementation of environmental policies.

It is important to emphasize that the mechanisms of integration of environment protection issues into other sectoral policies in the Republic of Macedonia are increasingly applied, and the policies in this area and the requirements laid down in

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the national legislation are more often given higher importance. In the coming period, these trends will have to be intensified towards integral environmental management in compliance with the principles of sustainable development.

The Republic of Macedonia puts great effort into the domain of legislation approximation and achievement of compliance with regional and global conventions, but even greater commitment is needed towards the implementation of EU regulations. This is the highest priority in this area. With regard to the specific international agreements, i.e. conventions or protocols, the problems and the related actions are at different level, depending on the received donor assistance for carrying out the obligations, and on the institutional capacity of the country to implement them. Macedonia is gradually solving the problems and is active partner in the international cooperation in the area of environment, fulfilling the requirements of the international community and of the international agreements.

What are our priorities? To solve as many national environmental problems in different areas as possible through continuous strategic planning and cross-sectoral approach; to start negotiations with the European Union, and continue to use international aid in the most efficient manner. I would like to emphasize that this is especially important for the provision of adequate implementation of developed national strategies and action plans, preparation and realization of projects - areas in which Macedonia should strengthen its capacity and intensify the efforts.