

**Unofficial translation**

**The Report of Republic of Armenia on the Results  
of Implementation of EPR Recommendations**

EPR represents a broad analysis of the environmental activity in the country, and this report has contributed to the cooperation between various national sectors of economy. The review has also provided the external international expertise (i.e. analysis given by the international experts) and had allowed to examine their approaches to the environmental assessment. It is important to emphasize in this connection, that along with the valuable recommendations, which were implemented, there are however some recommendations, acceptable in principle, which faced obstacles for the implementation due to various, including economic, reasons.

It is important to note, that EPR publication was sent to all related organizations, and first of all to all those who worked on the Review in cooperation with the ECE experts. Copies of the Review are available in the Library of the Ministry of Nature Protection and in the «Aarhus Centre » (Information Centre established within the Ministry of Nature Protection with the donors' financial and technical support). Unfortunately, the book is published in English only, and this has seriously affected its practical application.

Some recommendations have been carried out within the framework of work programmes of the relevant State bodies. Implementation of some recommendations became possible thanks to financial and technical support from the international bodies (GEF, WB, UNDP, UNEP, UNECE, UNIDO, EU, WHO, and donor countries). However it is regretfully to note, that the concrete mechanism of cooperation with donors on the basis of EPR recommendations has not been established. We are going to work in this direction.

**More details on the implementation of recommendations**

It is important to note, that the implementation of some recommendations require gradual institutional and organizational transformation. It concerns, in particular, the proposals on the policy-making in ecology, on improving the environmental legislation and its harmonization with the norms of European legislation, on the necessity to improve the environmental management and to increase the public participation in the environmental decision-making and public access to information. In this connection it is important to note, that similar proposals correspond to the on-going processes in the country and they are gradually been carried out.

A number of recommendations, especially in the area of increasing public access to information, in particular in the far-away regions of the country, are implemented either by non-governmental organizations, or in close cooperation with non-governmental and academic sectors. The creation of the web site of the Ministry of Nature Protection, publication of information materials (Rio+10, Kiev report, National Environment Report), publications within the framework of the implementation of conventions, various workshops, articles, etc. contributed to better public awareness. In 2002, the Information Centre called "Aarhus Centre" was established within the Ministry of Nature Protection with the financial support of donors.

Public participation and public awareness in environmental matters continuously grow. Development of a draft of a new law of the Republic of Armenia “On Ecological Expertise”, which duly covers the role of public participation, is now at its final stage. There is a non-governmental organization in the country «Environmental Advocacy Centre” which provides within its programmes a relevant support to NGOs.

Political, legal and institutional framework

Certain elements of the environmental policy are formulated in the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) and in the Action Plans within the framework of the environmental conventions’ implementation and relevant strategies: «National Action Plan on Desertification in Armenia» (2002 r), «Biodiversity Strategy in Armenia and the National Programme of Action» (1999), «National Programme of Phase-Out of the Ozone-Depleting Substances”, «Integrated Water Resources Management Programme» (2001), «National Programme of Actions of the Republic of Armenia on Persistent Organic Pollutants (at a drafting stage), etc.

In general, all above listed political documents were developed after 2000. As to NEAP (in force since December 1998), it is important to note that in 2004 the National Environmental Action Plan has been revised and the monitoring of the implementation has been conducted. The Action Plan has been overall implemented, however it turned out that over the years after its adoption, some changes in priorities in environmental area took place, and there is a necessity of the re-orientation to more effective solutions of cross-sectoral issues. In view of the above, there is a need to develop a new National Environmental Action Plan based on the achieved results, new priorities and approaches.

During the years passed since the country Review and in conformity with its recommendations the following laws were adopted:

Land Code of the Republic of Armenia - 2001 (the first Land Code was adopted in 1991)

Water Code of the Republic of Armenia - 2002 (the first Water Code was adopted in 1992)

Mineral Resources Code of the Republic of Armenia - 2002 (the first Mineral Resources Code was adopted in 1992)

The following laws are currently at the drafting stage:

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Rates of Environmental Charges” - 2000

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Targeted Use of Environmental Charges Paid by Organizations” - 2001

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Environmental Education of Population» - 2001

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Licensing» - 2001,

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Seismic Safety» - 2002,

Law of the Republic of Armenia «On Making Available Mineral Resources for Research with the Purpose of Their Extraction and Concession” - 2002, etc.

The draft laws on Environmental Inspectorate and on Ecological Expertise are under preparation.

Management of pollution and of natural resources

Environmental activity in the country is carried out according to the international obligations and country’s legislation. International agreements ratified over the last years, in addition to those which the country had acceded to earlier, strategies developed within the framework of their implementation, programme, legal documents, and existing administrative structures, allowed to make this sector operational. Some examples are given below to illustrate the above.

The State Committee on Water Management, established under the Government of the Republic of Armenia, deals with the system **of water** supply.

New Water Code was adopted in 2002. According to international experts this Code is one of the most advanced in the EECCA region. Within the provisions of the Code, the National Water Council chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, was established in September 2002. The establishment of the Agency of Water Resources Management within the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia promotes the Water Code implementation. The Agency deals with water resources management according to the catchment areas principle (5 regional bodies on basin management have been created within the Agency's structure), with maintaining the State Water Cadastre, with the implementation of national water policy and development of the national water programme, as well as with issuing the permits for water use. The Water Code stipulates provisions ensuring the participation of public organizations in protection and use of water resources. The law regulating supply and use of drinking water will be developed after having improved the necessary legal base.

In the area of **air protection** it is planned, during 2004-2005, to improve the standards of air emissions of polluting substances based on the territorial principle approach and on technological standards approach according to the European practices. The improved methods on how to assess the damage to human health caused by the environmental pollutants and by the economic activities, including the "Concept of Reducing Air Pollution from Transport Emissions" have been developed and are proposed for consideration to the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

On **biodiversity** it is important to note that the Government of Armenia approved, by its decision in 2002, the «Strategy of Development of Specially Protected Areas of the Republic of Armenia and National Action Plan», which includes the improvement of the network of existing Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) and the establishment of new SPAs, as well as clarification of the Status of various SPAs.

#### Inter-sectoral integration

The National Council on Sustainable Development was established in the Republic of Armenia by the Government Decision dated 25 June 2002 and its structure was adopted, although steps on its more active role are still to be undertaken. The activities of the National Council will contribute to the effective inter-sectoral cooperation and to the integration of environmental requirements in a sectoral policy. Currently, new inter-institutional commissions with participation of all stakeholders, including public, are being established within the framework of the implementation of conventions and programmes. It is important to point out productive cooperation of the Ministry of Nature Protection with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Urban Development, etc.

#### Financial and economic instruments

The system of environmental charges on non-environmentally certified products has been established in the Republic of Armenia. By the adoption of the Law of Republic of Armenia "On Nature Protection and Nature Use Charges" and by-laws providing the application of this law, it became possible to reduce the negative environmental impact and to achieve more sustainable use of natural resources, as well as to ensure environmental investments and generating of financial resources aimed to increase revenues to the State budget. The system of economic instruments has been designed and its application in the fiscal area proved to be very efficient and contributed to the considerable growth of the revenues to the income part of the State budget.

To optimize the system of environmental charges and in accordance with the 2002 Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Rates of Environmental Charges", the number of substances which are subject to environmental charges, has been reduced from 50 to 10 per cent. It is planned to apply the same approach to emissions into the water basins (23 and 24).

The Ministry of Nature Protection carried out the policy on the implementation of economic instruments (in particular, in the area of environmental charges and charges for the nature use), which got a high assessment by the Working Group of NEAP/OECD. Armenia is the only country among the EECCA where:

- the system of environmental charges on non-environmentally certified products has been designed and now is in function;
- the reform of the environmental pollution charges system with the purpose of its improvement has been conducted and the work on creating relevant indicators is now under way.

Increased efficiency of the inspection control and a resumed economic growth increased the revenues to the State budget from environmental charges and nature use charges, and this has created favorable basis for financing programmes and activities aimed at solving environmental problems.

In 2001, in order to expand nature protection powers of local municipalities, the country adopted the Law “On Targeted Use of Environmental Charges Paid by Organizations”, according to which the environmental charges from major polluters, such as mining and other enterprises, should be applied to the implementation of environmental projects in the areas under the negative impact of these enterprises.

#### *International cooperation*

Activities in the area of international cooperation fully corresponded to the EPR recommendations: since 2000 Armenia ratified Aarhus, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and Cartagena Protocol. Bern and Bonn Conventions and the Protocol on Water and Health are currently at the stage of ratification. The accession to the CITES Convention is under consideration.

In the implementation of environmental activities, in particular as far as the international obligations are concerned, the Ministry of Nature Protection is fully accountable to the Government of the Republic of Armenia and cooperates with other ministries.

Within the region, the cooperation is carried out by participating in the regional programmes (on different aspects of biodiversity, on Specially Protected Natural Areas, on regional environmental policy, etc.), as well as by adopting bi- and multilateral agreements on selected environmental issues or on the full set of environmental issues.

Since 2000, when the ***Regional Environmental Centre (REC Caucasus)*** was established, Armenia has actively participated in the activities of REC. The National Coordinating Unit of REC Caucasus has been created in Armenia.

Armenia has submitted an initiative to design a legal document on the ecosystem conservation in Caucasus to UNEP. The first steps on the establishment of cooperation between the countries of the region in this direction have been already made with active support from UNEP.

#### *Conclusion*

It is important to note, that the recommendations are not implemented to the same extent in different sectors of economy, as well as on different issues in the same sector

As it was already noted, the reasons for that are long-term period for the implementation of some recommendations, the shifting of environmental priorities, and as the practice has shown, in some cases the necessity of creating pre-requisites for their implementation or of having the alternative solutions.

Lack of adequate financial resources is also an important factor. Thus, development, rehabilitation and renovation of the wastewater treatment system, collection, disposal and treatment of waste, and other issues are among the most acute problems (recommendations on these issues fully correspond to the national priorities and goals) and require huge financial investments, which the Republic of Armenia cannot provide nowadays.

Considering the Review to be useful in many respects, we are ready to discuss the terms and possibilities of preparing the next Review of Armenia. Over the years after the first Review, considerable work on improvement of sectoral activity was carried out in the country, including the activities within the framework of EPR analysis and recommendations. As it was already noted, a certain shift in priorities took place in the country, new forms of activities appeared, including in the area of inter-sectoral interaction, new administrative and working bodies were established, the scope of the international cooperation became broader and its new forms appeared. In this connection, analysis and new recommendations for the future would be valuable.