

# THE KEY ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY IN UKRAINE

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In Ukraine, the anthropogenic and human impacts on the environment in Ukraine are several times higher than in developed countries. Thus, life expectancy in Ukraine is on average about 66 years (e.g. in Sweden - 80, in Poland - 74) which is largely due to the environmental pollution as a result of the production activities of mining, metallurgy, chemical industry, fuel and energy complex.

In 2012, the total carcinogenic risk reached 6.4-13.7 cancer cases per 1 thousand people, which is far exceeding international risk indices. Water use in Ukraine is largely irrational, unproductive water flow increases, the volume of usable water resources decreases due to pollution and depletion. According to UNESCO, Ukraine ranks the 95<sup>th</sup> among 122 countries on water management and water quality.

The condition of land resources is close to critical in Ukraine. The land reform has escalated numerous problems in land relations. Forests cover more than 15.7 percent in Ukraine. According to the European recommendations, the optimal index of forestation is 20 percent, thus more than 2 million hectares of new forests are to be developed in Ukraine.

There is also a high risk of natural and manmade emergency situations. In Ukraine, there are 23.767 potentially hazardous enterprises which potential accidents can lead to emergency situations of natural and industrial nature of national, regional, local and facility level.

By the end of 2012, more than 20 tons of obsolete pesticides, more than half which are unknown mixtures of highly toxic pesticides that belong to the UN list of persistent organic pollutants have been accumulated at 2384 warehouses in Ukraine.

The root causes of environmental issues in Ukraine are:

- inherited economic structure of the predominant share of resource- and energy-intensive industries enhanced by the transition to market conditions;
- depreciation of fixed assets of the industrial and transport infrastructure;
- the current system of governance in health environment, natural resource management, the lack of a clear distinction environmental and economic functions;

- lack of formation of the civil society;
- lack of understanding of environment conservation priorities and sustainable development in the society;
- failure to comply with environmental legislation.

Consideration of future environmental impacts while planning state policies, plans and programs of development is not legally binding in Ukraine, unlike the EU legislation.

Herewith, the programs of socio-economic development in Ukraine are to be aimed at solving the following problems:

1. To raise awareness and the level of environmental education in the context of the National Environmental Policy of Ukraine till 2020 (Ukraine's Law "On Basic Principles of the State Environmental Policy of Ukraine for the Period until 2020" (hereinafter - *the Strategy*) to:

- develop strategies of continuous environmental education for sustainable development for the Ukrainian society and Ukraine's economy;
- create mechanisms that ensure public access to environmental information and participation in decision-making in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the access of the population to the ecological information based on the principles of Aarhus Convention (1998);

2. To increase the role of local governments in addressing environmental problems of urban society in the context of *the Strategy* to:

- strengthen local government executives' responsibility of the availability, timeliness and accuracy of environmental information, the introduction of the ecosystem approach in management activities and adaptation of Ukraine's legislation on environmental preservation in accordance with the EU directives;
- develop environmental education and training of civil servants whose competence includes environmental protection issues;

3. To develop comprehensive environmental education and training of future generations to understand the priorities of environmental conservation and sustainable development by disseminating international relations for the joint solution of environmental problems, sharing information, knowledge and experience, and therefore the formation of the conscious civil society based on the principles of sustainable development.

To perform at an adequate level of international cooperation in environmental protection and environmental safety the following essentials should take into account: increase of the role and responsibility of local government in providing solutions to ecological issues of the urbanized society as well as elaboration of ecological system approach in accordance with directives of the European Union (United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP, 1972), Aalborg Charter: Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign in (1994), the Millennium Declaration (2000), Hannover *Principles* of a planning policy for *sustainable development* in Europe (2000), Leipzig Charter for Sustainable European Cities (2007).