

Conference Reports

Sustainable Development in the Information Society*

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This international conference was held on the initiative of the Club of Politics of Nature Protection on 2-4 October, 2000 in the Palace of Verkiai, 49 alij Eer, Vilnius, Lithuania. The conference was organised by the Institutes of Botany, Ecology, Geography, Geology, Hygiene, Mathematics and Informatics, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, the Palace of Scientists of the Academy of Sciences of Lithuania and other organisations. The Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Baltic Ecological Information System (BEIDS) supported the conference. This aid enabled us to arrange the conference properly.

Over 90 scientists and representatives from the federal governmental institutions of Lithuania, Germany, Latvia and Russia took part in the conference. Over 80 reports were made which were related to the analysis of the problems of a long-term and stable economical, ecological and social development in the 21st century information society.

Having listened to the reports and opinions stated during the discussions, the members of the conference noted that a highly authorised **National Commission on Sustainable Development**, headed by the Prime Minister, has already been established in Lithuania. However, it hasn't yet made any practical steps and individual institutions or single enthusiasts most often provide decisions at a national level based on their own initiatives, while the Lithuanian scientific potential related to this sphere has almost been neglected. Taking into consideration the fact that the implementation of the demands of sustainable development and creation of the information society in Lithuania are **strategic goals of the national consolidation**, corresponding to the direction of modern world development, the members of the conference have decided:

1. To address the Lithuanian National Commission on Sustainable Development and suggest:
 - To start the practical activities of the commission without delay, to ascertain priorities, the order of work and regulations.
 - To consider **the preparation and implementation of the national strategy** on sustainable development as the most important practical goal of the commission. This strategy should form the basis of the Lithuanian Agenda XXI.
 - To the Sejm (Lithuanian Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania to take into account the ne-

cessity to balance economical, environmental, social and cultural needs of the society as well as to preserve natural resources.

- To co-ordinate the national interests on sustainable development with the co-operative institutions of the Baltic countries – **the Baltic Assembly and the Council of Ministers of the Baltic Countries**.
 - To acknowledge, that the efficient use of the national science potential is an indispensable condition for the preparation and implementation of the strategy on sustainable development.
2. It is impossible to create theoretical conditions, decreasing a negative impact of the economic activity upon nature, and to try to realise them without a thorough information about society, economy and nature, i.e. **an integrated knowledge of the processes** occurring in nature and society, enabling one to perceive the environment as an integral system. At the conference in Rio de Janeiro (1992) it was already recommended to **direct the scientists' attention to the spatial environmental alterations, in particular** to those taking place under the interaction of natural processes, climactic changes, as well as economical and social factors. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise that neither the Lithuanian territory and its waters, nor individual regions, were evaluated scientifically in detail as integral natural, social and economic systems up to now. In order to increase **the significance of science in the planning and management of sustainable development**, such evaluation must be carried out on a basis of an aggregate principle, under close co-operation of the representatives of **physical and biomedical** as well as the **social sciences**. The task in Lithuania which has been mentioned above could be solved by realising the national scientific programme (several regional programmes) carried out to perceive the environment integrally and to motivate the politics on the sustainable development in Lithuania scientifically.
 3. To evaluate the state of the environment in the country it is obligatory to successively establish and implement its **monitoring** supplemented by **the balances of material and energy flow**. We suggest that the Lithuanian State environment monitoring be implemented to work more actively (it has recently weakened) as an indispensable element of the environment protection in our country, as well as an ob-

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ligation for joining the EU. The monitoring data must be propagated publicly. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to standardise the terminology on sustainable development and environment protection as soon as possible.

4. Lithuania signs and ratifies many international conventions on environment protection; however, their requirements are not carried out consecutively enough. Under rapid transformation of the society, it is **compulsory to renew the Lithuanian environment protection strategy and action plan**, and by means of the financial legal and administrative measures, to ensure its efficient implementation.
5. Reliable elements of ecological agriculture have already been formed in Lithuania and they can take priority in **the developmental direction of agriculture**. For this purpose, a strategy for the ecological development of agriculture with the proper means and executors should be prepared and accomplished.
6. Lithuanian industry and business enterprises have started to implant the ISO 14000 series standards for environment management to improve the state of environment protection in our country and the competitiveness of products in the international market. The use of the most modern information technolo-

gies would promote and reduce the prices of this progressive economy development.

7. **Relating social, economic and environment protection aspects must precede education and training.** One must learn, understand and know that everything one is doing must be done **well and safely** without any harm to oneself or the environment. Young families and women, nursery school children, secondary school pupils, students, pupils of vocational schools, soldiers and policemen have to acquire habits reflecting a healthy mode of living, as well as strong and harmonious environment fit for life.

The members of the information society participate freely and voluntarily in the informational processes, because sustainable development is possible only in a community of members acting safely and consuming consciously. The members of the conference invite all citizens of Lithuania to ensure the best possible ecological results, efficiency of economy, social stability and cultural integrity, first of all in the most urgent problem regions.

Dr. Romas Pakalnis
Chairman of the Organising Committee
(on behalf of the conference members)