

RESULTS
Of NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM
«Society, Environment and Sustainable Development»
convening representatives of Kazakhstan's civil society
Almaty, Kazakhstan, 16-17 January 2006

While developing the activities of civil society (CS) in the field of environmental conservation and for implementation of initiatives declared by Kazakhstan at international and national forums and events, we have approached to a crucial moment, at which one needs to analyze the development of CS over recent 2-3 years, draw conclusions and adjust the activities in the near future.

One of the tasks of national meeting was to inform CS on how Kazakhstan met its commitments at the national and international level. Another important task was related to an issue on how to involve representatives of CS in national projects. The projects are a tool for public participation in environmental issues. Equally important that the meeting addressed how to make the youth more active, promote and develop young leader movement, involve the youth in national and international environmental activities.

A National Environmental Forum dedicated to “Society, Environment, and Sustainable Development” was held in the city of Almaty on 16-17 January 2006. More than 75 people took part in the meeting. The Forum brought together managers of environmental NGOs, outstanding scientists, researchers, representatives of public institutions and academia, international and other concerned organizations.

The National Environmental Forum reached an understanding and agreement on the general partnership principles, laid the foundation for cooperation between the civil society and NGO, paved the way for uniting the public at sub-regional level, and identified priority issues to be included in the agenda of the sub-regional public forum of Central Asian countries in 2006.

The participants were informed on national, regional, and international activities of Kazakhstan in the field of environmental conservation and sustainable development. The following presentations were heard: «Assessment of national capacity for implementation of the international environmental conventions» (A.Beliy, UNDP/GEF Project manager), «National plan for integrated water resources management in Kazakhstan» (A.Nikolayenko, UNDP Project manager), «Public participation in the way towards energy-effective, low-carbon, competitive economy of Kazakhstan through implementation of Kyoto mechanisms» (K.Baigarin, Director, Coordination Center for Climate Change), «Civil society participation in making decisions on environmental conservation and sustainable development» (S.Aknazarov, CA NGOs RG at ICSD), «Youth environmental and sustainable development program in Kazakhstan: achievements, tendencies, prospects (I.Ignatovich, NGO «Eco-obraz», Karaganda).

While recognizing the importance of goal-seeking, public environmental movement, the participants consider it necessary to develop partnerships between environmental organizations, governmental agencies, scientists, mass media and citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan for joint actions, with involvement of the youth, in solving the priority environmental issues.

Taking into account topicality of climate change issues, the participants have adopted “Address to the President, the Parliament, and the Government of Kazakhstan”.

Among the numerous obstacles to the effective solution of environmental issues, undoubtedly, one major and priority problem is how to involve the public in this process, including: preservation of ecosystem; provision of population with safe drinking water; conservation of flora and fauna; protection of wildlife areas and eco-tourism; control of

industrial and radiation pollution; fighting with poaching, etc. However, despite wide scope of environmental issues dealt with by Kazakh NGOs, public participation and initiatives in these projects are minor.

Particular attention was paid to such aspects as how to make the youth more active, promote establishment of young leaders network, and involve the youth in national and international environmental activities.

Among those largely involved in environmental activities in Kazakhstan are children from 10 to 15 years old and the youth at the age of 15-25. Meanwhile, still insufficient attention is paid to attraction of teenagers, youth and students to environmental project activities. There are many respective social organizations but they act separately and do not have the common network support.

Today, Kazakhstan has many public and private academies, with more than 500.000 students, and the total number of youth at the age of 15 to 25 is about 1.000.000. However, this powerful and strategic resource of environmental youth movement has still remained unclaimed and useless.

Is it possible now to attract the Kazakh youth to environmental activity? What should be done to solve this problem? The problem was addressed by all sections and plenary sessions.

One of the most effective models for youth involvement in environmental activities in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries is to establish and support a network of young leader-environmentalists, involve the youth in day-to-day activities at high professional level in the field of ecosystem preservation and sustainable development.

Spontaneous youth groups arising in various areas of Kazakhstan still cannot clearly and competently formulate their aims and objectives, do not have skills for planning their environmental activities and are ideologically and professionally isolated. Therefore, the program for establishment of the environmental youth network in Kazakhstan and support of its development in Central Asian countries is one of priority lines in public environmental movement development and an integral part of short-term strategic activity of the national NGO Enviro-Forum and sub-regional NGO forum in 2006.

Given this fact, the participants of National Environmental Forum proposed a separate, priority program for establishment of the environmental youth network and selected the program coordinator. The program would be aimed at widening movement of young leader-environmentalists in Kazakh academia as a principle tool for involvement of students in environmental activity, developing professional and stable environmental youth movement, and training for non-governmental and public environmental institutions in Kazakhstan.

The participants acknowledged that the main condition for cooperation and partnership is mobilization of efforts in all sectors of Kazakh society in order to achieve major goals, such as preservation of ecosystems, protection and restoration of natural and cultural wealth ensuring sustainable life of present and future generations. While recognizing the importance of given direction, the participants divided by sessions dedicated to different environmental priorities, that are biodiversity and desertification, eco-tourism, environmental education, water resources, and set short-term objectives and priority issues.

Proceeding from discussion of the most acute environmental problems in Kazakhstan, the participants think that their activities should be focused on the following priority directions:

- Secure sustainable functioning of vital ecosystems;
- Provide population, industries and ecosystems with water of required quality and quantity by implementing the National Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management and promoting Basic Councils;
- Secure intersectoral partnership and capacity building;
- Promote development of youth network;

- Improve environmental education, starting from preschool age, by developing environmental culture;
- Develop environmental tourism as a tool for preservation of ecosystems and involvement of local communities in environmental activities.

The participants expressed their concern about inactive environmental movement in the Republic. They pointed to a need for organization of national environmental movement forum and preparation to the next forum of environmental NGOs at sub-regional level in order to join efforts of civil society in solving the transboundary environmental problems. Proposals were made regarding agenda of the next sub-regional forum of CS and NGOs in 2006. Given the importance of promoting sub-regional public environmental movement, the participants consider it necessary to consolidate efforts of CS, NGOs, mass media and the youth in Central Asia for joint actions in overcoming regional environmental problems.

The participants think that elaboration of common opinion and approaches by environmental NGOs is well-timed and will help to outline general coordinated actions in the near future.

In order to improve representation of CS and environmental NGOs in decision making and ensure rotation in various councils of international organizations, the participants proposed their candidates to Public Council at ICSD, Board of Governors and Coordinating Committee of REC CA, Technical Committee of GWP for Central Asia and Caucasus.

During the Forum, a meeting of the coordinating committee was held, summary report of the Resource Center of Kazakh NGOs Ecoforum was presented and organizational matters were discussed for preparation to 5th Ecoforum.

Finally, the Forum participants addressed to all environmental organizations with calls for joint efforts and concrete actions towards healthier environment, preserved wildlife, sustainable development, and protected civil rights.

The participants expressed their thanks to UNEP, GWP CACENA and REC CA for assistance and support to the National Environmental Forum of civil society in Kazakhstan.

Organization Committee
17. 01.06.