



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM
ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Policy Paper

Position of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum on the Need to Jointly Address Systemic Environmental Issues

To the Summit of the
European Union and the Russian Federation
21 December in Brussels

Working Group „The Environment“

EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
St. Petersburg, 10 October 2012

Position of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum on the Need to Jointly Address Systemic Environmental Issues

Russia and the European Union are facing the enormous and urgent challenge to modernize their economic systems and public life towards sustainability. In this regard, the following issues require a systems level solution:

- Ecologization of the energy sector and limitation of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Environmental responsibility of EU registered companies and investing in projects in Russia and vice versa;
- Ensuring environmental safety of products;
- Conservation of biodiversity and climate-regulating functions of natural systems.

We, members of the Civil Society Forum EU-Russia, are convinced that Russia and the European Union can only be successful in solving the above problems only in cooperation with each other. This cooperation can significantly improve the environmental situation in the regions, as well as inter-regional relations as a whole.

1. Ecologization of the energy sector and limitation of greenhouse gas emissions

Both the EU and Russia are facing a systemic environmental and economic problems – a carbon energy crisis. Burning fossil fuels to produce electricity and heat energy not only leads to a rapid reduction of natural resources stocks, but also contributes to climate change, and creates additional negative economic and personal consequences, exasperating the poor quality of life in mining and energy-producing regions. At a time when Russia's economy depends on oil and gas exports, including export to the EU, and the EU is not yet able to fully meet its energy security needs in the absence of Russian energy supplies; we think it is essential that both sides discuss possible common solutions to these impending problems.

In this regard, we consider it necessary to discuss and synchronize the environmental and energy strategies of Russia and the EU. Concerning specific measures, we call on the governments of Russia and the EU:

- To facilitate measures which can accelerate the development of renewable energy for the local and national needs and for export through the adoption and implementation of relevant national laws and policies to support joint projects in this field;
- To halt the development of nuclear power, to prevent cross country transportation of nuclear waste;
- To facilitate the implementation of energy conservation programs, including environmentally friendly and energy efficient technologies in industry, transport and residential sectors through economic incentives and application of the "polluter pays" principle;
- To prevent the production and exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the Arctic, the most environmentally sensitive area, which significantly affects weather and climate on the planet;
- To reform the tax system and promote financial and economic mechanisms to limit greenhouse gas emissions by targeting environmental investments, promoting Green Investment Scheme, emissions trading etc.;
- To accelerate the development of the Partnership for Modernisation on these issues.

2. Environmental responsibility of EU registered companies and investing in projects in Russia, and vice versa

Serious problems are created by environmentally and socially irresponsible companies registered in the EU and operating in foreign countries. We call upon the governments of the EU member states and EU regulators to require companies registered in the European Union to unconditionally comply with the

principles of environmentally responsible investments while implementing their projects on the territory of the Russian Federation, and while implementing joint projects with Russian companies in third countries and in the World Ocean. In particular, we call for paying close attention to the work of Cypriot companies in Russia - their activity is often far from the standards of socially and environmentally responsible business. The same applies to the Russian companies operating in the EU.

We also urge the EU to extend the practice of imposing restrictions on the purchase of products and raw materials from other countries, when they have been manufactured by violating the environmental rights of citizens and without adequate protection of biodiversity and natural systems.

3. Ensuring environmental safety of products

In the consumer goods sector, there is much concern about the high content of phosphates in detergents offered in Russia and some EU countries, the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and the irradiation of food and agricultural products. In the EU, the list of permitted products for irradiation is expanding. In Russia, in connection with its entry into the WTO, a regulatory framework for general authorization of this technology and GMOs is in the process of approval.

We are convinced that neither the technology of food irradiation, nor GMOs are the solution to the problems of food security. Existing studies indicate that the potential and actual damages from the use of these technologies are much higher than their theoretical advantages.

We urge the abolishment of irradiation technology for food and other agricultural products, and also banning the usage of GMOs in food and animal feed, as well as the cultivation of GMOs in open systems.

We also believe it is important to develop a common approach in the EU and Russia to limit the content of phosphates in detergents to protect water resources.

At the system level, we support the development of "cyclic economy" technologies in which material production restores natural capital, using cycles of organic or biological materials that can go back into the biosphere without harming the environment, and technical materials developed with a quality of preservation and minimal loss of material.

4. Conservation of biodiversity and climate-regulating functions of natural systems

The conservation of biodiversity and natural systems on the territory of Russia and the EU can be solved only by joint efforts. In this regard, we support the establishment of a single pan-European ecological protection network within the EU and Russia. This would include high priority areas for the conservation of biodiversity, including key ornithological, botanical and other similar areas, forests of a high conservation value, agricultural areas of high natural value etc. Cooperation is also needed for the development of common approaches to protect EU and Russian water sources, and tools for basin management, including trans-boundary waters, taking into account climate-regulating functions of the rivers of the Arctic Basin, boreal forests and wetlands.

We also request the inclusion of the "Green Belt of Fennoscandia" in the World Heritage List of natural objects as a top priority, which requires a coordinated effort of the authorities and NGOs in Russia, Finland and Sweden.

Additionally, we would like to stress the importance of sharing the EU's experience protecting biodiversity of land used in agriculture and forestry with Russia, particularly through mechanisms actively involving the owners and users of land and biological resources in the processes.

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This publication has been supported by



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