**Belarus, Ukraine to hold ecological monitoring of Khotislav chalk pit.**

Belarus and Ukraine have successfully implemented the first pilot project on post-project analysis within the UNECE Espoo Convention, BelTA learnt from the UN Department of Public Information in Belarus.

A subregional conference in Minsk on 15 April will highlight the results of the first pilot project on post-project analysis within the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo).

The UNECE jointly with the UN Development Programme provided support to the two countries in conducting monitoring and analysis of environmental transboundary impact from the use of the Khotislav chalk pit in Belarus located in 250m from the Belarusian-Ukrainian border.

One of the main achievements of the project is the setting up of the bilateral working group on ecological monitoring of the Khotislav chalk pit (Malory District, Brest Oblast). The countries also agreed to continue an annual exchange of the monitoring data and make this information available on the websites of the environment ministries.

Recommendations for both the countries were elaborated during the implementation of the pilot project regarding further improvement of transboundary environmental impact assessment with an emphasis on the post-project analysis. The project also envisaged the inclusion of additions on the post-project analysis into the bilateral agreement on the implementation of Espoo Convention, which signing is currently negotiated by Belarus and Ukraine.

At today’s conference Belarus and Ukraine will share experience on the application of the post-project analysis with other countries of the subregion (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova) and neighboring countries (Poland in particular). Besides, the results of the project will be presented at the meeting of the Espoo Convention parties which is to take place in Geneva on 2-5 June 2014.

The project was implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine in association with the UNECE, UNDP and UNEP. The project was financed by the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative.

The project has also made its contribution to a bigger regional project of the European Commission, Greening economies in the European Union’s Eastern Partnership countries EaP Green, implemented by the OECD in cooperation with UNECE, UNEP, and UNIDO.

The convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context was developed under the aegis of UNECE in the city of Espoo, Finland in 1991. The Convention entered into force on 10 September 1997. The Espoo Convention which has been so far joined by 45 countries stipulates the assessment of environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning.

The convention also obliges states to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that might have adverse environmental impact across borders.

**EU-FAO PROJECT TO DISPOSE OF OBsolete PESTICides IN BELARUS**

The Ministry noted that the measures carried out as part of the project are expected to improve the national system of obsolete pesticides Ministry management. The project is designed to ensure the security and environmentally sound elimination of stockpiles of obsolete pesticides. Plans have also been made to conduct a detailed analysis of the life cycle of obsolete pesticides for subsequent actions to project are Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The total budget is €7 million.

"The project is expected to result in the reduction of risk of pesticides damaging human health and the environment in the former Soviet Union, in particular through the deconstruction of obsolete pesticide stocks,” stressed the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry.

FAO will implement the project in Belarus. The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry and the Agriculture and Food Ministry will be the national coordinators of the project.

Taking part in the project are FAO, BelTA, and the former Soviet Union’s states. A total of 45 countries have so far joined the Espoo Convention which has been developed under the aegis of UNECE in the city of Espoo, Finland in 1991. The Convention entered into force on 10 September 1997. The Espoo Convention which has been so far joined by 45 countries stipulates the assessment of environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning.

"The convention also obliges states to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that might have adverse environmental impact across borders."

**EU-FAO project to dispose of obsolete pesticides in Belarus.**

The project of the European Union and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) on the reduction of risk to the environment and public health posed by obsolete pesticides has started in Belarus. BelTA learnt from the press service of the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry.

This is a technical assistance program named “Improving capacities to eliminate and prevent recurrence of obsolete pesticides as a model for tackling unused hazardous chemicals in the former Soviet Union.”

The project aims to enhance the development and application of a systematic approach to the problem of the elimination of obsolete pesticides, persistent organic pollutants and hazardous wastes in this country.
NOVOGRUDOK TO JOIN BELARUS GREEN CITIES PROJECT

Novogrudok will be one of the three Belarusian towns that will take part in the project Belarus Green Cities: Supporting Green Urban Development in Small and Medium Sized Cities in Belarus. The project is run by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Deputy Chairman of the Novogrudok District Executive Committee Sergei Falyk.

One of the cooperation areas will be implementation of the pilot sub-project on energy efficient street lighting. The town will get a $600,000 grant to implement the project. A feasibility study of using new energy efficient lighting technologies will be conducted and the existing street lighting infrastructure will be replaced. After the project is completed, green street lighting installations are projected to reduce by 1,000 tonnes. The project is going through the approval stage now. A working meeting to discuss the project took place in Novogrudok in April. The town was visited by GEF experts, the project coordinator and manager. The next meeting is scheduled for May.

Chief specialist of the economy department of the Novogrudok District Executive Committee Natalia Matsko noted that in February 2013 Novogrudok joined the international initiative Covenant of Mayors. This covenant has a total of 5,400 signatories, including 7 Belarusian cities. In order to fulfill energy-efficient and sustainable development targets stipulated by the covenant, Novogrudok shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020, increase the share of renewable energy sources, cut down on energy consumption and come up with a plan to promote energy efficiency. One of the first steps to fulfill these obligations will be participation in the Green Cities project. Apart from Novogrudok, another two Belarusian cities are taking part in the project. They are Novopolotsk and Polotsk. The project aims at minimization of inputs of energy, water, and food and waste, output of heat, and air pollution.

According to the economy department, Novogrudok consumes over 16.6 million kWh of energy per annum. It generates 25.6 million kWh of energy using its own energy-generating facilities (cogeneration plants). The first Belarusian wind turbine with the capacity of 1.5MW was constructed near the village of Grabnikiu in Novogrudok District. Since it was commissioned in May 2011, it has produced 12.3 million kWh of energy. Another six wind-driven power generators with a capacity of 1.5-2MW will be constructed to the south of the site. The wind farm will help Novogrudok to save over 6.5 million cubic meters of gas and generate 22.14 million kWh per annum. Thus, Novogrudok will use only eco-friendly wind power in the future.

EXPERIMENTAL AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PARK FOR GRODNO OBLAST

Plans have been made to create the agro-industrial industrial park Paradise Valley in Grodno District, BelTA learnt from Vladimir Ushkevich, Director General of the Grodno Oblast Association of Farmers.

The park will be created under the auspices of the Paradise Valley farm to support the private sector of the region's agricultural complex. The creators will draw on the experience of Poland, Netherlands and Austria.

According to the project, plans have been made to build a training center for growing and processing agricultural products. The center will include a pilot mini-factory with modern equipment. In particular, according to Vladimir Ushkevich, this factory will house a shop for the cultivation of mushrooms (oyster and shiitake mushrooms), a shop for deep shock freezing of mushrooms, berries and vegetables, a drying shop, a shop with refrigeration equipment to store products and the one for thermal and vacuum-packing. Other facilities in the region will also partake in the implementation of the project.

Technical carbon factory in Belarus by 2017

Plans have been made to build a technical carbon factory in association with Russia's Omsk Oblast by 2017, BelTA learnt from the press service of the Belarusian Industry Ministry after a Belarusian delegation led by Industry Minister Dmitry Katerinich visited the city of Omsk.

According to the source, the Belarusian Industry Minister is confident that the construction of the technical carbon factory in Belarus will be implemented in association with Omsk Oblast by 2017. The Minister said Belarus is ready to bring investments to the Russian region. The investments may include investments in the establishment of joint ventures and enterprises to assemble agricultural machines, automobile engineering enterprises, optics and electronics enterprises.

The press service said that the sides are ready to bolster cooperation. The assembly of the latest powerful Belarusian tractors in Omsk is one of the projects, which are earmarked for implementation. The Belarusian delegation visited a transportation mechanical engineering factory on 4 April and was shown the premises where the new tractors may be assembled. “We are talking about the production of 450hp brand new tractors. The tractors have been designed in Russia and are ready, they are being tested. Omsk is one of the possible locations where the tractors may be assembled,” the press service quoted the Belarusian Industry Minister as saying. Omsk Oblast has experience of assembling Belarusian agricultural machines, for instance, Lida and Polesie harvesters. About 100 agricultural machines of the kind already work in Siberia.

Apart from that, the Belarusian side is interested in cooperation with the Omsk group of companies Titan. According to Dmitry Katerinich, Belarus has two oil refineries with raw materials for manufacturing artificial rubber. The Belarusian tire manufacturer Belshina uses a lot of artificial rubber. “We are also in the center of Europe and therefore are a good springboard for exporting artificial rubber,” the official was quoted as saying.

In Omsk Oblast there are 11 Belarusian-Russian joint ventures specializing in agribusiness, retail trade, petrochemical industry, and transportation. It is expected that the pilot factory will be a platform for the implementation and development of innovations in food production and a platform for scientific research of the Grodno State Agrarian University. The center could also be used for the training of specialists in specific food industry sectors. In the future new food products may be created by this educational and industrial complex. Cadres for the agricultural sector will be trained here, too. The complex will be the core of the future agro-industrial park, which will include several food processing enterprises. The park will develop new technologies and use environmentally friendly ones in food production. It is expected that the center will provide necessary support for the creation of the Belarusian Product quality mark.

It is planned to get funds for the project through international technical assistance in the form of a UNIDO grant (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization). The Economy Committee of the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee said that about $1 million will be utilized for the purposes of the project. The implementation of the project is expected to be completed within 30 months.

POLISH FORESTERS PLANT TREES IN IVIE DISTRICT

Polish foresters have taken part in the For-WoW Week campaign in Ivie District, Grodno Oblast. A Polish delegation arrived in Belarus to share their expertise and knowledge. The Polish foresters took part in the nationwide campaign timed to the 70th anniversary of Belarus’ liberation from the Nazi invaders.

The Polish delegation and their Belarusian partners planted trees – larch, pine, linden and birch – on an area of 1.5 hectares and placed a special plaque there.

The nationwide campaign Forest Week was initiated by the Forestry Ministry of Belarus and took place on 5-12 April. Over this time Belarusians planted about 3 million trees, whole alleys and green areas. They also put in order military burial grounds and areas around tombs.
The development of nuclear power engineering will continue and there are fundamental reasons that will make it happen. The opinion was voiced by Professor Rafael Arutyunyan, Deputy Director for Science and Promising Research Coordination of the Nuclear Safety Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, during the online conference hosted by the BelTA website on 25 April to discuss nuclear energy prospects.

According to the source, organic heat transfer agents cannot be used to provide the mankind with energy in an environmentally friendly manner. “Even with the present number of people living on the Earth the use of heat-based power engineering for other countries to reach electricity consumption levels on par with developed nations would result in an absolutely unacceptable scale of ecological problems,” stressed the prominent Russian scientist.

In view of the risks relating to global warming due to the man-caused factor nuclear technology is the only one able to satisfy the basic demand of the mankind for electricity, Rafael Arutyunyan is convinced.

A new safe confinement will be pulled over the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant sarcophagus in 2015, said Alexander Borovoy, Doctor of Physics and Math, counsellor of the president of the Russian research center Kurchatov Institute, during the online conference hosted by the BelTA website on 25 April.

Alexander Borovoy has worked at the Shelter object in Chernobyl for many years. According to the scientist, work is in progress to create a new safe confinement for the damaged nuclear power plant. The current one is a metal arch weighing about 30,000 tonnes. It is being assembled next to a known sarcophagus (aka the Shelter) and will be pulled over the sarcophagus in 2015.

In 2015, this sarcophagus will be the largest pulled-over structure in the history of the mankind. The height of the arch will be even slightly bigger than the central span of the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco.

Asked why the Shelter object, which was built in 1986 to cover the damaged fourth power-generating unit of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, needed another cover, Alexander Borovoy said that the data collected by examining the inside and the construction components of the Shelter object by 1989 revealed that the Shelter represents a hazard to the environment (for instance, due to radioactivity) and the hazard will grow stronger with time.

Back then the Kurchatov Institute created the concept for an extra-long-term and environmentally safe way to safely store fuel. Plans will create yet another hermetically sealed solid shell that would completely isolate the outside environment from the radioactive materials still inside the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. At the same time the shell would offer reliable protection for dismantling the unit.

“It has taken 25 years to overcome technical, organizational, and astronomical financial difficulties in order to see the huge structure now rising at the construction site. The arc costs about $1 billion at present. The project is financed by the Chernobyl Shelter Foundation arranged by donor states,” said Alexander Borovoy.

In his words, the Arc boasts not only a large scale but also a complicated internal structure. Mechanisms for dismantling structures and radioactive materials in the Shelter make up a large part of the Arc.

The expert added that in autumn 2013 the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the Russian nuclear power engineering institute NIKIET signed a protocol on prospective research and development initiatives. The initiatives include the preparation of a new concept for decommissioning the first, second, and third power-generating units of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, concepts to handle radioactive spent nuclear fuel and the monitoring and reinforcement of barriers that prevent the propagation of radioactive substances.
SUPPLEMENT “NEWS & EVENTS IN BELARUS” TO THE DIGEST “GREEN BELARUS”
http://ecoinfo.bas-net.by/ecology-belarus/
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Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan to discuss state support for agribusiness

State support for the farming sector will be considered at a meeting of the Prime Ministers of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia in Moscow on 11 April. Belarusian Premier Mikhail Myasnikovich told media at the ceremony to unveil a new technological line at Korelich Len on 11 April, BelTA has learnt.

The Premiers will talk over the agenda of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council which is due in Minsk on 29 April,” he said. State support for agribusiness will be considered at the Troika summit in Minsk as well.

Belarus believes that state support for the farming sector should not exceed 10% of the cost of the agricultural produce. “We understand that for a big number of companies it will be a difficult task – to produce products competitively both in quality and cost. However, this measure is objective in the open economy,” the Prime Minister said.

It has been earlier informed that Belarus should reach this level of state support for the farming sector by 2016 in line with the unified rules of state support for agriculture within the Single Economic Space. The document contains the norms of the WTO agreement on agriculture. In 2011 the state support stood at the level 16%, in 2013 it was lowered to 14%.

The heads of government of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan plan to discuss the main issues related to the development of the Eurasian integration and the preparation of the draft Eurasian Economic Union Treaty.

Bright future for Belarus-Russia nuclear energy cooperation

After the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant, nuclear energy will account for about 40% of energy generation in Belarus. This will allow enhancing the energy security of the country, OAO NIAEP Vice President for Northwestern Russia and the CIS, head of the Belarusian Office of the company Oleg Shperle told reporters.

Oleg Shperle is convinced that Belarus-Russia cooperation, including cooperation in the nuclear energy sector, has a bright future. “We expect a considerable payback from the joint projects in this field. The Belarusian nuclear power plant is the biggest joint project in the history of Belarus-Russia relations,” he underlined.

According to Oleg Shperle, the fact that Belarus and Russia have a common historical, cultural and ethnic background plays an important role in the development of the nuclear energy industry in Belarus. “Standards used in Belarus and Russia are similar; there is no language barrier. This makes it easier for us to cooperate in our energy sector. Specialists for Belarus’ nuclear industry, draft the necessary legal framework and produce equipment for the Russian nuclear power plant,” he noted.

“We as know, hydrocarbon resources are depleting and some of Europe’s oldest deposits are shutting down. Therefore, nuclear energy comes to play an increasingly big role worldwide. It will help solve the issues associated with global warming. Alternative sources of energy, of course, well also be involved, however, all sensible people understand that neither bio-fuel nor wind, nor solar energy on their own will be able to meet the energy needs of the population,” Oleg Shperle noted.

In his words, the major task facing the nuclear energy industry worldwide is to train and select professionals for the nuclear industry and regulating agencies. Majors in nuclear energy have been encouraged and promoted around the world; a number of benefits and bonuses are offered to encourage students to study nuclear energy. Regional information exchange networks are established; interaction between regulating organizations is improved. Therefore, forums like AtomExpo Belarus are very important.

The 6th international nuclear industry expo and conference AtomExpo Belarus 2014 is taking place in Minsk on 1-3 April. The forum is organized upon the initiative of the Energy Ministry of Belarus and with the support of the Russian state corporation Rosatom. The forum showcases the latest technologies in engineering, construction, maintenance and conference AtomExpo Belarus 2014.

SCIENTIST: NUCLEAR POWER SAFETY SHOULD BE FREE FROM POLITICS

Nuclear power safety should not depend on political, economic or any other factors, Deputy Director of the Nuclear Safety Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences Rafael Anutyunyan told a press conference hosted by BelTA on 25 April.

The Russian scientist pointed to one more important aspect: public perception of radiation accidents regardless their radiological impact is always sharp and leads to serious social and economic consequences. “It is not only the Chernobyl lesson but also the Fukushima accident. The very factor, given the insignificant radiological impact of the Fukushima accident on the personnel and the population, has lead to considerable social and economic consequences,” Rafael Anutyunyan stressed.

According to the media reports, the Japanese government has approved an energy plan that foresees the use of nuclear power. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s new plan envisages idle reactors to be switched back on after they are checked by independent inspections. The government’s plan also promises to increase the country’s reliance on renewable energy.