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### **Conference Services**

Please find attached the presentation by Mr. Aliaksandr Stankevich, Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources, Belarus delivered at the Plenary Session 6 - Co-operation in transboundary water courses and rivers, First Preparatory Conference to the 16<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum “Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing Security and protecting the environment” held in Helsinki, 10 - 11 September 2007.

## **Participation of the Republic of Belarus in international projects of transboundary water flows**

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The territory of Belarus is a watershed for basins of the Baltic and Black Seas. Approximately 55 % of a river drain fall constitute the basin of the Black Sea and 45 % - the Baltic. Practically all basins of Belarus rivers are transboundary. The basins of the Western Dvina (Russia - Belarus -Latvia), the Neman (Belarus – Lithuania - Russia), the Western Bug (Ukraine - Belarus - Poland) are located in the basin of the Baltic Sea.

Belarus has joined to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Convention on waters), the Protocol on Water and Health and the Protocol on Civil Liability.

Certain actions on preparations of tripartite Agreements are planned for the implementation in 2007-2010 between the Government of Belarus, the Government of the Lithuanian Republic, the Government of the Latvian Republic and the Government of the Russian Federation about cooperation in the field of use and protection of water resources in basins of the rivers Neman and Daugava (Western Dvina). They are included into a National Environment Protection Action Plan for 2006-2010.

Preparation for signing of the Agreement between the Government of Byelorussia and the Government of Poland Republic about cooperation in the field of protection the transboundary waters is planned in 2007. Similar agreements are already signed with the Russian Federation and the Ukraine.

Some activities are carried out on the adoption of a new edition of the Water code which will correspond to the separate positions of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes taking into account a principle of water basin management and the Water Frame Directive.

At present Belarus continues to be involved in realization of joint projects with all neighbouring countries - the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

During last ten years interaction with the Russian Federation was carried out within the framework of the Contract about creation of the Allied state in the field of protection of transboundary water objects and various actions, such as the joint Russian - Belarus program «Perfection and development of uniform technology of reception, dump, the analysis and the forecast, storage and distribution of the hydrometeorological information and the data on pollution of the natural environment» have been lead. Results of ten years cooperation of Russia and Belarus in the field of hydrometeorology and monitoring of pollution

of the natural environment were a subject of scientific - practical conference «Ten years of cooperation of Russia and Belarus in the field of hydrometeorology and monitoring of pollution of the natural environment and prospect of his further development», which was held in Moscow in December, 12-14, 2006.

In basin of the Black Sea on territory of Belarus the rivers Dnepr and Pripyat are located . Since 2000, in the basin of the river Dnepr a trilateral international (Russia - Belarus-Ukraine) UNDP-GEF «Ecological rehabilitation of basin of Dnepr» project have been carried out within the framework of which the Transboundary diagnostic analysis was prepared, and the Strategic Action Plan and the Transboundary Monitoring Program was developed. Many elements of these documents have been already introduced into the national practice. The Tacis (Belarus - Ukraine) Project «Transboundary river basin management. Phase 2 for the Pripyat river» is being implemented in the basin of the Pripyat. In the framework of this project the River Basin Management Plan for the basin of the Pripyat will be developed.

Cooperation with the Republic of Poland is carried out in the field of transboundary waters and protection of biodiversity. Sessions of the joint commission and working groups are carried out on a regular basis.

The joint project on monitoring and water quality assessment in the Western Bug river basin has been completed in 2003 under the financial assistance of the Tacis Transboundary Cooperation Programme.

At present the trilateral interdepartmental cooperation agreement in the sphere of underground waters monitoring in the Western Bug river basin is at a stage of discussion. Existing agreement of 2003 on cooperation between Department on Hydrometeorology of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and Polish Institute of Meteorology and Water Resources ensures regular exchange of the hydrometeorological information and joint realization of hydrological activities in the Western Bug river basin.

Cooperation with Lithuania is one of the most intensive. The basis of cooperation the is the trilateral interdepartmental cooperation agreement (Cooperation agreement in the field of the environmental protection of 1995). Sessions of the Belarus-Lithuanian working group are carried out on a regular basis (one or two times per a year) where the results of cooperation and new directions of interaction are being discussed. The main sphere of cooperation is the protection of surface waters. In this context mutual visits of the monitoring point experts as well as information exchange about the cases of pollution in the Neman river basin take place and the activities on creation of a uniform criteria of pollution are carried out.

International projects donors in the Neman river basin are various organizations such as Swedish EPA (SEPA), TACIS Program, OSCE Office (Minsk).

With SEPA assistance the following international projects have been realized:

1. Development of the trilateral cooperation in the field of use and protection of water resources of the Neman river basin (1999-2001).
2. Water resources management (2005).
3. Quality assurance in the laboratories which provide the water monitoring (2006).

The project «Decreasing the industrial and agricultural pollution in the Neman river basin (the Grodno district)» had been realized within the framework of the TACIS Transboundary Cooperation Program in 2003.

The OSCE Office in Minsk promoted the project on uniform specifications of water quality in the Neman river basin, and with the assistance of this project a guidelines «The Water Frame Directive of EU and a policy of Belarus in the field of water resources » was developed.

EPA (Germany) in 2005-2006 promoted implementation of the project on the decrease of the emergency pollution in the Neman river basin. The participants of the project were the organizations from Belarus, Lithuania and Russia (the Kaliningrad district), involved in water monitoring and early warning in the emergency situations.

Swedish EPA in 1997 initiated the development of transboundary cooperation in the Western Dvina river basin. The report «The Hydroecological condition of a river basin Western Dvina/Daugava» was published. A project on a trilateral cooperation Agreement in the Western Dvina/Daugava river basin and suggestions on creation of the basin commission were developed in the framework of the program of cooperation with the countries of the East Europe. In 1999-2000 in Belarus the TACIS Project «Water resources management of the Western Dvina river basin (Vitebsk district)» was implemented.

Now the Initiative of EU on transnational cooperation has specific value in the field of spatial and regional development - the Program of region of the Baltic Sea - BSR Interreg III B Program , aimed at promoting the international cooperation and harmonization on the EU territory. Priority directions of the BSR Interreg III B Program are:

- Development of spatial planning strategy
- Development of the territorial structures supporting sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region
- Development of the legislative basis, strengthening the international spatial planning
- Technical assistance to the development of the international cooperation.

Taking into account that Belarus uses the water resources of the transboundary Baltic Sea basins alongside with the members of the EU such as Latvia, Poland and Lithuania, it is possible to expect the interest from the EU to cooperate with Belarus on water issues.

In 2006 was launched the international project across the Baltic Sea which covers water problems in the river basins. The objective of the project named TRABANT (River Basin Districts on the Eastern Side of the Baltic Sea Network) is aimed at improvement of the initial conditions for integration of the important environmental and administrative aspects, including spatial development of the Eastern Side of the Baltic Sea. Project implementation is concentrated on the inter-regional cooperation between the countries of the European Union (Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), and with the countries which are not members of the EU (Belarus, the Russian Federation) in river basins of Vuoksi, Narva, Western Dvina and Neman.

Evaluating the practice of the international project implementation in the field of the transboundary watercourses it is possible to come to the following conclusion, that the most significant obstacles in cooperation in the sphere of transboundary watercourses between the neighboring countries are the following:

1. Absence of budgetary financing of the programs of transboundary cooperation;
2. Application of various water resources management systems;
3. Absence of a high-grade information exchange on the state of the environment and about the national water resources protection in the national parts of the river basins;
4. Specific status of the countries in their relation to the international conventions;
5. Lack of the European Union financial assistance for the joint projects.

## **Projects proposals**

It is necessary to underline the possible participation of the OSCE to find new donors for the international projects, which are included in the list of the project proposals for the international technical assistance of Belarus for 2006 - 2010 where the needs for donor financial assistance are pointed out at:

- Development of the main provisions of the Western Dvina River Basin Management Plan (Russia - Belarus - Latvia).
- Definition of target surface water quality parameters of the transboundary rivers Western Dvina (Russia - Belarus - Latvia) and Neman (Belarus - Lithuania) and development of recommendations on upgrading the monitoring and assessment of their condition.
- Definition of target surface water quality parameters of the transboundary river basin the Western Bug (Ukraine - Belarus - Poland) and development of recommendations on upgrading the monitoring and assessment of their condition.

- Development of recommendations on the monitoring water ecosystems arrangements in the Augustov and Oginsky channels with the account of the interbasin (the Baltic and Black Seas) transit of waters.
- Development of the Water Resources Management Plan for the international (Belarus - Lithuania) lake Drisvjaty.