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HIGHLIGHTS

UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA SET UP JOINT COMMISSION ON DNISTER RIVER PROTECTION

This was agreed during a visit by P.Filip, Prime-Minister of Moldova, to Kyiv on February 13, 2017. During the visit the countries signed a Roadmap on Ukraine-Moldova Cooperation Development for 2017.

Negotiations between the President of Ukraine and Moldova's Prime-Minister led to a deal on joint commission and "resolute steps" to solve environmental problems of Dnister river. Joint commission will be set up with involvement of the European Commission to "draw efforts and financial aid, as well as to ensure transparency of the process". Ukraine's President said that joint efforts are needed to overcome environmental challenges and to ensure energy independency of Ukraine and Moldova.

O.Semerak, the Minister of Environment of Ukraine, confirmed the commission will be set up at the level of ministries of environment and energy from both countries, and will look into water flow regulation and general state of Dnister river. A key issue is development of hydroenergy projects by Ukraine on Dnister river. At the same time, Ukraine also expressed concern over Dnister pollution by outdated sewage water treatment facilities at Soroky (Moldova) and industrial pollution of Kyrpyzh-Kytai river in Moldova.

Therefore, energy and environment will be considered as interconnected issues. It is unclear how wide will be the mandate of the commission and whether EU intends to participate.

UKRAINE BANS ELK HUNTING FOR 25 YEARS

On February 3, 2017, the Minister of Environment of Ukraine signed an order banning elk hunting. This is important signal for environmental community in Ukraine, as the decision has a clear nature conservation goal: conservation and restoration of European elk (*Alces alces*) population in wild.

The document imposes a ban on elk hunting all over Ukraine for 25 years. State control (oversight) over the ban is put on State Environmental Inspectorate. At the same time, a restoration program is planned for elk population in Ukraine, including necessary scientific research and monitoring.

'Ukraine is several decades late with introducing a moratorium on elk hunting. Some estimations suggest elk population in Ukraine is about 2-6 thousands. Belarus and Poland, to compare, host about 30 thousand', commented his decision O.Semerak, the Minister of Environment of Ukraine.

In turn, an association of hunters and fishermen made a statement claiming the ban will have negative consequences for hunting activities and, therefore, will not lead to increase in elk populations. They suggest a ban could be effective if applied to certain areas only, where the population is inadequate.

One issue is in common for environmental and hunting community: state should invest more efforts into fighting poaching. This is a necessary element for wild fauna conservation in Ukraine.

BLITZ-ANALYTICS

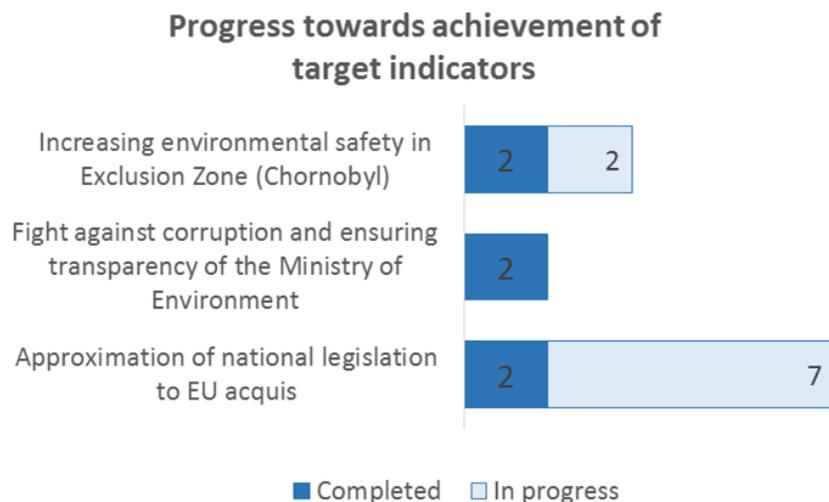
GOVERNMENT 2016 REPORT: FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION INDICATORS OF THE GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAM

On February 14, 2017, the Government of Ukraine approved its Report on progress and results of the implementation of the Action Program of the Government in 2016. The reporting was done in line with the government's Priority actions plan for 2016 following 74 priorities, each having a goal, target indicators and specific steps to be taken in 2016. We consider public reporting by government is a positive development in itself.

In environmental area the Government reported in three sub-areas:

- Approximation of national legislation to EU acquis;
- Fight against corruption and ensuring transparency of the Ministry of Environment;
- Increasing environmental safety in Exclusion Zone (Chornobyl).

Out of 15 target indicators the government assessed 6 (40%) as completed. Interestingly, the government does not use "not completed" assessment at all, so the rest of indicators are marked as "in progress".



Such self-assessment by the government of its achievements in environmental area is promising, but a closer look raises doubts. For example, the government reports as completed an indicator related to introduction of an European mechanism for wild flora and fauna protection (birds and habitats directives). Yet, all what this mechanism means is a scheme for amendments of national legislation for approximation with relevant EU directives. Seems like neither the legislation itself, nor its implementation is needed for protection of birds: in government's opinion the scheme has protected them already.

There are further concerns about future steps planned by the government. The government plans to develop draft amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On key foundations (strategy) of State National Environmental Policy till 2020" and a National Environmental Protection Plan for 2017-2021. The latter is to be adopted on the basis of the strategy, while the government only plans to have a draft. Timeline remains unclear: 2020 or 2021. We consider inconsistent government's position as to setting up a single environmental control (inspectorate) agency. The plans refer both to state environmental inspectorate and, in future steps, state environmental agency as future authorities.