



# UN BULLETIN

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United Nations Office in Belarus



**Biodiversity is our Life.  
Let's Save it!**

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## UN BULLETIN

United Nations Office in Belarus

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### Information Dissemination is the First Step Towards Developing the Chernobyl Areas

33 journalists and 10 lecturers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, three days and hundreds of new facts about the Chernobyl tragedy and its after-effects: this is the result of the training workshop for journalists carried out under the UN Project "International Chernobyl Research and Information Network" (ICRIN) and held in Zvenigorod (Russian Federation) in late March.



The ICRIN project is a joint effort of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The project is intended to develop practical recommendations for the population of the Chernobyl-affected areas, based on the most recent research findings, and to communicate them to people living in these regions.

Experts at the training workshops included: Valery Kashparov, Director of the Scientific Research Institute for Agricultural Radiology at the Ukrainian National University of Bioresources and Nature Management; Tatiana Marchenko, Head of the Department for Mitigation of Radioactive Accidents and Disasters

at the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations; Yakov Keninsberg, Chairman of the National Commission on Radiation Protection under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus; and others.

The training workshop enabled journalists to obtain the most recent data concerning the situation at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, to discuss the impacts of the accident with the most reputable experts, and to make a collaborative effort to refute common stigmas. The statement by Yakov Keninsberg that "if before they used to say that 'all diseases originate from nerves', today it is claimed that 'all diseases originate from Chernobyl'" is the best reflection of the experts' position. Experts repeatedly emphasised that preventive interventions implemented by the governments of the three countries have proved to be fairly efficient, that the direct impacts have been eliminated, and that now is the moment to change the approach to the problem - i.e. to move away from granting benefits and towards addressing economic and information backlogs in the regions.

The participants of the training workshop came home with the knowledge that their precise practical recommendations, based on the research findings, would help to ensure safe and productive livelihoods in the Chernobyl-affected areas, and lead people to overcome their fears and come back to normal lives.

The next training workshop for journalists within the framework of the ICRIN Project will be held in 2011 in Belarus.

### Belarus' Investment Policy Review Presented in Geneva

The Investment Policy Review prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was presented on 27-28 April 2010 in Geneva.

Improvement of the business environment, acknowledged in the Investment Policy Review and confirmed by investors, is reflected in a strong FDI inflow which has surged to record levels since 2007, says the Review. It is recommended that Belarus adopt a strategy of foreign investment attraction based on further improvement of its investment climate in such areas as financial competitiveness, anti-monopoly policy and administrative efficiency.

"The Review provides a good analysis and a framework for understanding the situation regarding investment in Belarus. Additionally, it gives key stakeholders a better vision of the overall reform and development strategy being pursued by the Belarusian government. The report is well balanced in that it reflects positive progress and also highlights elements that still need more attention in terms of private sector development, and has a clear focus on the need to improve predictability and transparency in all processes and procedures", said



UN resident Coordinator A. Broek

Antonius Broek, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus, at the presentation of the Review in Geneva.

The visit of Belarus' delegation to Geneva included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Belarus and UNCTAD on cooperation priorities in the field of international trade, investment and development for the next five years.

### Ongoing Recovery of the Global Economy Has Not Yet Brought About A Revival in the Labour Market

In the nearest future, the pace of global economic recovery will be uneven and sluggish, which will not lead to a revival in the labour market. This has been conveyed in a new UN report titled "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010." Its authors point out that following a 2% downturn in 2009, world gross product (WGP) will grow by 3% this year and by 3.1% in 2011.

The report emphasizes that current forecasts of global economic growth are somewhat brighter than the ones released six months ago. But, unfortunately, the number of unemployed people keeps growing worldwide, because the economic revival stems mostly from budgetary stimulus policies. Financial markets continue to be unstable, and consumer demand remains weak.

The authors of the report point out that in 2010, GDP in the CIS countries will grow on average by 4.2% (4.3% in Russia). In the Eastern European and Central Asian region, economic development will be contained by low consumer demand and a low level of foreign investment.

# Belarus has Made Significant Progress in Recovering from the Economic Crisis

**T**hus concludes the fourth review of Belarus' performance concerning a loan agreement made under a Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), completed by IMF on 15 March 2010.

The initial 15-month SBA was approved on January 12, 2009, and on June 29, 2009 the size of the financial package provided under the SBA was increased to an amount equivalent to about US\$3.63 billion. The completion of the fourth and final review enables the immediate disbursement of about US\$662.9 million, bringing total disbursements under the programme so far to an amount equivalent to about US\$3.44 billion.

The review says that "Belarus is moving towards achievement of most of the programme targets. All year-end performance criteria and structural benchmarks had at the end of December been met. Other targets under the programme were generally met".

According to IMF Resident Representative in Belarus Natalia Koliadina, "Belarus has made good progress in recovering from the economic crisis and performance under the Stand-By Arrangement has been satisfactory. Output resumed its growth, inflation declined and the level of reserves increased during the programme period. Macroeconomic policies were generally appropriate. Fiscal policy served as an important anchor to the economic programme, with the deficit less than 1 percent of GDP in 2009. The re-centring of the exchange rate band at end-2009 and the depreciation of the ruble against the currency basket have supported external adjustment."

The main economic difficulties stem from a deteriorating environment for oil imports, as a result of which the country's balance of payment and budget deficits may rise up to US\$ 2 billion, or by almost 4% of GDP, unless compensatory measures are taken. However, a package of measures has already been proposed, including structural adjustments in oil refining as well as measures dealing with revenue, exchange rates, and credit policy.

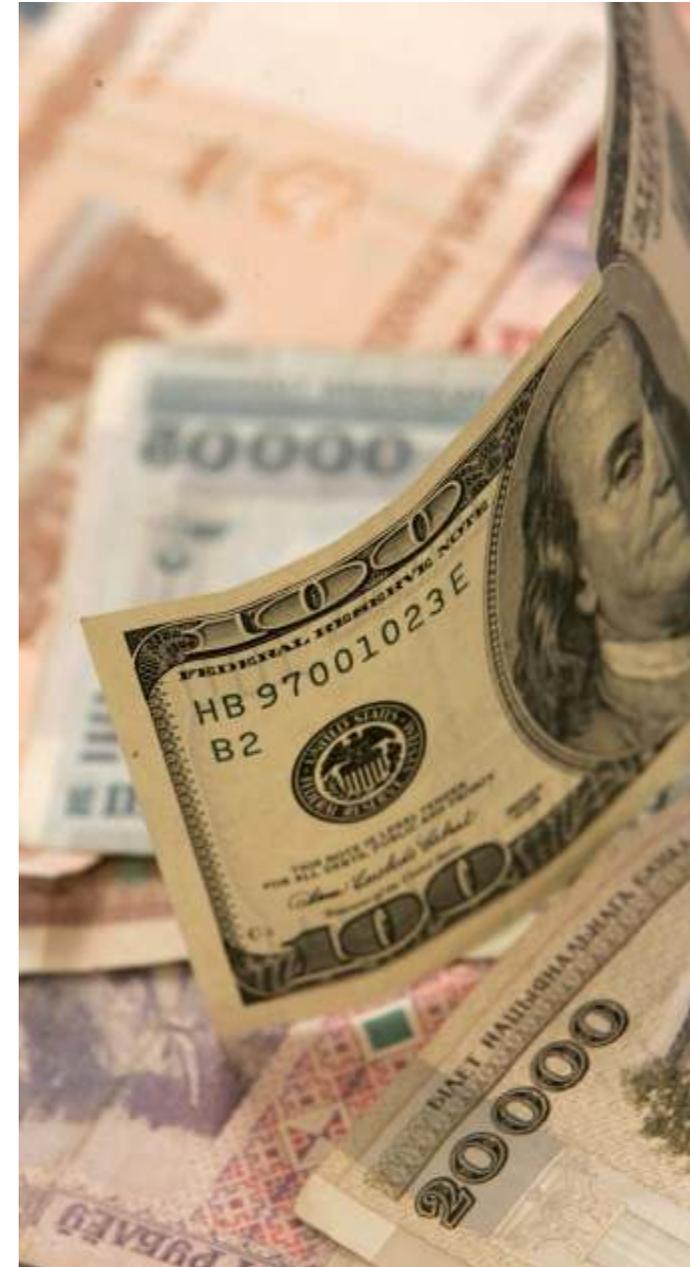
For example, the decision to increase domestic prices for oil products and to reduce the output of the oil refineries has reduced the need for subsidies. In addition, the decision to cut lending under government programmes will make more financial resources available to private business, creating conditions for a gradual reduction of market interest rates. The re-centring of the exchange rate band at end-2009 and the depreciation of the ruble against the currency basket have supported external adjustment. These measures, together with the strong revenue, exchange rate, and credit policy measures already taken, are expected to offset a large part of the balance of payments and the fiscal impacts of the oil price shock.

However, measures that have been taken are insufficient for a full recovery from the crisis: in addition to pursuing prudent macroeconomic and financial policies, structural reforms aimed at improving productivity will be essential for Belarus. "It is important to step up efforts in other areas of structural reform, including privatisation, measures for attracting foreign capital, and reducing government intervention in the economy. Structural reforms aimed at improving productivity will be essential for Belarus to restore high and sustainable growth rates", stresses the review. "IMF, in collaboration with the World Bank and other international financial institutions, stands ready to support Belarus with its reform efforts", – said Mr. Naoyuki Shinohara, IMF Deputy Managing Director.

The Belarusian authorities have also expressed their interest in pursuing further agreements with the Fund in the few years following the completion of the current SBA. They also emphasised the need for IMF assistance to Belarus in reducing external vulnerability and shifting from investment-based growth patterns towards growth based on productivity gains.

**The IMF's vast experience and its financial support were made use of at the right time, and they were instrumental in maintaining macroeconomic and financial stability in the Republic of Belarus in 2009. This laid the groundwork for the subsequent recovery of sustainable rates of economic growth, and for improving the well-being of the population.**

Y. M. Alymov, First Deputy Chairman of the Board of the National Bank of Belarus



# EU-UNDP-UNICEF Project: a Comprehensive Approach to Human Trafficking

The Multidimensional Centre for young people's employment support and youth business development opened on 13 May in Minsk, within the framework of the Project "Preventing, Fighting and Addressing the Social Consequences of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Belarus" – a joint effort of the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The opening of the Centre, created jointly with the Minsk Municipal Executive Committee, is the first initiative in Belarus intended to prevent human trafficking among young people through improvement of employment opportunities and development of youth business. The Centre will provide free counselling and training services aimed at helping young people find jobs and supporting young people willing to open businesses, through assisting with company registration and placement on privileged terms, offering consultations with a lawyer and an accountant, and holding workshops.

The establishment of the Centre is another major achievement of the EU-UNDP-UNICEF joint project which has been running since July 2009 and is aimed at national capacity strengthening in the fight against human trafficking, through prevention efforts, improvement of protection, and rehabilitation of people victimised by trafficking.

The uniqueness of the project is in its comprehensive approach to the problem. The project incorporates three basic pillars of combating trafficking in human beings, i.e. prevention, assistance to law enforcement agencies in prosecuting traffickers, and provision of social support and rehabilitation services to the victims of trafficking. Particular attention is given to minimising the social and economic factors contributing to trafficking, such as youth unemployment, by offering young people improved employment and business opportunities.



Public awareness event for youth "Stop Human Trafficking!", December 2009, Minsk, "Centralny" cinema hall



Training workshop on prevention of trafficking in human beings for education sector professionals

Another important area of activity is information, including the dissemination of more than 30,000 copies of printed materials about safe foreign travel and services offered by the "La Strada" hotline. Study trips to Germany, Israel, Lithuania, Great Britain and Estonia were organised to improve the competence of the staff of government agencies and non-governmental organisations focusing on combating human trafficking. 27 training workshops for education sector professionals have been held, covering prevention of trafficking in human beings.

The project provides financial support and technical assistance to the hotline for safe foreign travel and also provides shelter for the victims of trafficking under the "La Strada" Programme of the Belarusian Association of Young Christian Women. Training programmes have been organised for the staff of the hotline and for the shelter, which resumed its work in September 2009.

According to Project Manager Ekaterina Diatlova, "the project is an example of successful cooperation by governmental, international and non-governmental organisations that have consolidated their efforts for the development of the national capacity and the expansion of opportunities for preventing human trafficking and providing social support to victims".

# A City of Health for Each and Every One

On April 7, the world community celebrated World Health Day. It is not by accident that the theme “Urbanization and Health” was chosen this year for an entire array of various events all over the world – it was chosen in recognition of the impact produced by the growth of cities and their populations on our common health and on the wellbeing of every single resident.

Today, more than 3 billion people live in cities. In 2007, for the first time in the history of mankind, the world's share of city-dwellers exceeded 50%, and this number continues to grow. By 2030, 6 out of every 10 people will be city-dwellers, and by 2050 this indicator will grow to 7 out of 10 people. This is an irreversible trend that has become an inalienable feature of the world we live in.

Life in large cities is fraught with various health risks resulting from consumption of low-quality water, environmental pollution, violence and injuries, non-infectious diseases and their associated risk factors (e.g. smoking, malnutrition, lack of physical exercise, alcohol abuse), as well as outbreaks of infectious diseases.

## 1000 cities, 1000 lives

A large-scale information campaign entitled “1000 cities, 1000 lives” has been launched on the initiative of WHO in order to reduce the occurrence of these unfavorable consequences. Its worldwide goal is to facilitate the implementation of all necessary measures to turn growing cities into healthy cities. It is important to build “cities for all”, i.e. cities that are accessible and pleasant for people of all age groups, which will bring real benefits to their inhabitants.

To that end, it is necessary not only to put health issues at the top of the policy agenda for cities, but also to hold regular events at local, national and regional levels throughout 2010. Various initiatives implemented within the framework of “1000 cities” are included from closing off some streets to motorized vehicles, to providing assistance to poor city dwellers.

To achieve the goals of the “1000 lives” project, residents were asked to make short videos about famous figures who had made a significant contribution to supporting the health of thousands of people in their cities.

A new approach to tackling the world's urbanization problems should be based on urban planning and management that are conducive to healthy lifestyles, improved living standards and the quality of life of residents, including people with disabilities.

## World Health Day in Belarus

On World Health Day, in a range of Belarusian cities, a number of sporting events took place, including weight-lifting, tennis and volleyball tournaments, field-and-track competitions for emergency response units, and a national recreational sports day featuring race-walking and running. Minsk and the country's provinces also hosted initiatives on cleaning up and planting trees in the streets, preventing tobacco smoking, and restricting the use of motorized vehicles.

**“Urban sprawl exacerbates health disparities in cities. In order to reverse this trend, representatives of local and national authorities have to develop strategies that aim to protect and improve the health of city-dwellers and cover various sectors, such as the environment, healthcare, transportation, education and urban planning.”**

Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe



**“A sedentary lifestyle is a problem for the health of many city-dwellers. It's a serious risk factor for cardio-vascular and oncologic diseases, as well as type 2 diabetes. One must get regular exercise! Everyone should be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week.”**

Egor Zaitsev, Head of the WHO Country Office in Belarus

Lectures on the topic of World Health Day for students of specialized physical education establishments and sports teams were delivered at the National Sports Medicine Centre. Thematic screenings were arranged at movie theatres.

All city-dwellers were encouraged to think about their health, refrain from using personal motorized vehicles, and give up bad habits.

# Occupational Safety is the Key to Safe Life and Better Work

**S**ince 2003, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has observed the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April. The theme for this year is "Emerging risks and new patterns of prevention in a changing world of work". The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is intended to promote better occupational safety and the prevention of fatalities and illnesses at work.

This year the world trade unions community honoured the memory of the victims of accidents and illnesses at work. As stated in the final provisions of the International Labour Convention (June 2003), observance of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an integral pillar of the ILO Global Occupational Safety Strategy. The World Day also aims to raise public awareness about occupational safety and draw the attention of general managers to the issue of ensuring a comfort environment in the workplace.

A recent ILO Report dedicated to the 2010 World Day for Safety and Health at Work says that technological advances have made a direct impact on the current world of work. This trend has been observed during recent decades marked by significant changes in occupational safety patterns. However, traditional risks still remain in many workplaces and the number of work-related accidents and diseases is still high.

Occupational safety is a priority focus area of the International Labour Organisation, alongside promotion of decent employment, labour market development, ensuring pension security for all categories of workers and preventing forced labour. The recent ILO report highlights that the coming into force of ILO Convention No. 155 "Concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment" has demonstrated that many countries, especially developing countries, are updating their national occupational safety policies and regulations and are developing the respective legislative frameworks. Other countries are making efforts to address urgent concerns such as stress and musculoskeletal diseases, support for small and medium businesses and dissemination of occupational safety best practice.

ILO's long and diverse work over the last nine decades has provided a framework of international labour standards. Due to their universal nature, these standards are still relevant.

Belarus has been a member of the International Labour Organisation since 1954 and is one of the leading countries by the number of ratified conventions. Belarus has ratified 46 ILO conventions. Among them are eight fundamental conventions including those aimed at establishing and maintaining a safe working environment.

Today ILO is pursuing an integrated holistic approach to occupational safety issues, incorporating the physical, mental and social wellbeing of men and women in the workplace and in all industries.

Generally speaking, ILO occupational safety frameworks are essential for the prevention of work-related accidents and occupational diseases. According to I.A. Karchevsky, Head of the Occupational

Safety Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the country has established an efficient system of state management in the field of occupational safety; further efforts are being made to improve government supervision of compliance with legislation concerning labour and occupational safety, to prevent accidents at work and to align occupational safety management patterns set out in the national standards. Improvements in the occupational safety management system are striving to reflect ongoing economic and social changes.

Belarus has established a national legislative framework regulating social and labour relations. The Law of the Republic of Belarus "On occupational safety" has considerably expanded entitlements to a safe working environment. A system of government management of occupational safety has been legislated. Thus, the subjects and agencies responsible for government management in the field of occupational safety have now been covered by the legislation and the institutional arrangements established.

The republican government agencies are working on improving the sectoral and territorial systems of occupational health and safety management and on the adoption by organisations of the system methods of occupational health and safety management in accordance with the Standard of the Republic of Belarus STB 18001-2009 «Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems. General Requirements», developed on the basis of OHSAS 18001:1999, NEQ.

Ongoing efforts are being made to train and improve the qualifications of specialists and workers in all sectors of the national economy with regard to occupational health and safety and to promote safe work practices and methods. In 2009 about five thousand workshops covering occupational safety issues were held; they were attended by over 135 thousand general managers and specialists. To improve the qualifications of specialists responsible for occupational safety arrangements, a system of training and postgraduate retraining in the specialisation "specialist on occupational safety" has been established. Eight higher education establishments offer higher qualifications and retraining courses in this field.

The National Occupational Safety Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus has been established to assist the republican government agencies in implementing government policy in the field of occupational safety and to provide organisational and methodological support to employers on occupational safety arrangements.

Employees are also involved in ensuring a healthy and safe working environment. Regular discussion of the situation regarding occupational safety at general meetings and operational meetings attended by enterprise general managers and specialists is one of the forms of employee participation in occupational safety management.

Within the framework of the ILO World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus has developed an Action Plan for 2010 which includes workshops, roundtable discussions, conferences, contests for the best arrangement of occupational-safety-related work, participation in the 4th International Exhibition "Person and Safety" and so on. The government agencies responsible for occupational safety have been encouraged to organise similar events to mark the World Day at the local level.

A roundtable discussion "Development, introduction and operation of the occupational safety management system in Belarus based on risk assessment and management: first outcomes, problems and solutions" was organised in Minsk on 28 April 2010. The roundtable discussion was attended by representatives of government agencies and ILO social partners, organisations and educational institutions.

**"Fifty-three people died as a result of accidents at work in the period January-March 2010, three more than for the same period last year. Six people died in traffic accidents, the same as the number of traffic fatalities recorded last year".**

Data from the Department of State Inspection on Labour of the Republic of Belarus.

# Biodiversity is our Life. Let's Save it!

**40 years ago the first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States on 22 April 1970. Initially it was designed as a “one-time” event, but its success inspired the organisers to celebrate the event on a regular basis. The United Nations General Assembly declared that International Mother Earth Day would be celebrated on 22 April. This year, Earth Day was an event with a dual significance because 2010 was declared to be the International Year of Biodiversity.**

The 2010 Biodiversity Target was adopted at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, urging countries “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth”. On 20 December 2006 the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity (Resolution 61/203).

The problem of biodiversity conservation affects every individual. Biological resources are a foundation for the development of civilisation: nature enables the existence of such fields of human endeavour as agriculture, the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries, the pulp and paper industry, cultivation of vegetables, the construction sector and waste disposal. The loss of biodiversity threatens food reserves, recreation and tourism as well as the sources of timber, medicines and energy.

In recent decades economic development and technological progress have helped many communities throughout the world to improve their livelihoods. However, the same period has witnessed inefficient production and consumption patterns that have resulted in the largest reduction in biodiversity ever to be witnessed on our planet and have threatened the ability of ecosystems to withstand the impacts of economic progress.

The current rate of biodiversity loss is 50–100 times higher than the natural rate and scientists foresee its further increase. On current global trends, nearly 34 000 plant species and 5200 animal species, including every eighth species of bird, are endangered. The economic losses associated with biodiversity reduction are estimated at over US\$ 42 billion a year. Given that human activity has changed almost all ecosystems in the world, the problem of biodiversity conservation cannot be solved unless universal efforts are made.

It is for this reason that the United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been designated as coordinator of the



International Year of Biodiversity. Established at the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of nature's resources and the equitable sharing of the multiple benefits of biodiversity. The Convention has near-universal participation with 193 signatory parties.

The main goals of the International Year of Biodiversity are: to enhance public awareness of the importance of conserving biodiversity and of the underlying threats to biodiversity; to encourage individuals, organisations and governments to take immediate steps to halt biodiversity loss; and to promote innovative solutions to reduce the threats to biodiversity.

In support of the International Year of Biodiversity, in 2010 the United Nations General Assembly will summon at its 65th Session a one-day high-level meeting of Heads of State, governments and delegations, as well as the 10th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan. These events are expected to contribute to the development of future strategies for the conservation of global ecosystems.

The Republic of Belarus ratified the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity on 10 June 1993. Over the course of more than 10 years the country has been undertaking efforts aimed at conservation of biological diversity. The problem is of particular relevance for Belarus because the Polesie region, located in the centre of Europe, is a unique geological and geographical territory with large, well-preserved forests, wetlands and floodplains which have economic and ecological significance. The area of the Belarusian Polesie (more than 6 million hectares) is larger than that of

Denmark, the Netherlands or Switzerland. It occupies almost 30% of the country's territory and accommodates 52 administrative districts.

The Belarusian wetlands accumulate water and in periods of dryness give it back, stabilising temperature fluctuations and forming a microclimate which essentially creates conditions which permit the existence of wildlife. Lowland marshes in the floodplain of the Pripyat river and its tributaries are important biotopes for many biological species whose numbers are declining at a high rate both in Europe and in the world as a whole. The Polesie has international significance due to the existence of these biotopes and the associated biodiversity.

UNDP, with support from the Government of Belarus, has since 2006 implemented a project aimed at the conservation of the Polesie region's biodiversity. The project is intended to strengthen the systemic sustainability of the wetland protected area in the Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices. Project activities have included developing identification documents and commitments to put under protection the habitats of flora and fauna located in the Polesie nature reserves and inscribed in Belarus' Red Book, as well as establishing a comprehensive monitoring system for the country's nature reserves. An ecological and educational centre has opened in the Zvanets reserve; its purpose is to create an enabling environment for the development of ecological tourism in the reserve and to raise ecological awareness among local residents and guests.

In 2009 Belarus drafted a new National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity. The first National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity was developed in 1997. Since then, the country has witnessed a worsening of certain environmental problems, including the spread of foreign, invasive plant and animal species and the loss of rare flora and fauna. The main goal of the new Strategy is to ensure the conservation, recovery and sustainable use of environmental diversity in Belarus, based on the need to sustain the reproductive capacity of the biosphere and the ecological balance at regional and global levels. The implementation of the Strategy will help slow down and avert biodiversity loss, conserve rare and endangered species and facilitate their sustainable existence.

Over 40 events are scheduled for 2010 in Belarus within the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity. In February-March 2010 the National Library of Belarus hosted exhibitions under the theme "Biodiversity Conservation: International Experience and National Strategy".



On 22 April two ecological events dedicated to Earth Day were held in the Cherven district of Minsk Oblast, within the framework of the EU/UNDP project "Support to the Environment and Sustainable Development in Belarus" and the UNDP/GEF project "Renaturalisation and Sustainable Management of the Peatlands of Belarus to Combat Land Degradation, Ensure Conservation of Globally Valuable Biodiversity, and Mitigate Climate Change".

A public event attended by students of the Valevachy secondary school, representatives of UNDP and the EU Delegation to Belarus was held at the "Volma" fishery enterprise; it involved refuse collection, ecological contests and games, and an excursion to watch birds and wild animals in their natural habitats.

Participants of another event organised near the Galoie upland marsh, located in the Cherven district, reinforced one of the cofferdams at a drainage canal, thus making it possible to reduce water outflow from the marsh and restore its hydrological regime. Participants included UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus Antonius Broek, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus Anatoly Lis, the heads of the Cherven District Administration and the Cherven Forestry Enterprise, representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Department of Public Information and national media. "This small-scale event has a great regional significance as it helps local communities to find approaches to environmental issues including biodiversity conservation, reduction of 2 emissions and combating land degradation," – said UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus Antonius Broek before the start of the action.

The main goal of both events was to draw the attention of the public and mass media to the need for careful treatment of the environment and for effective systems for conserving rare and endangered biological species. It is just this approach that is laid down in the new National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Republic of Belarus.

The Mother Earth Day is over but the International Year of Biodiversity continues. The current approach to its observance gives hope that the International Year will bring sizeable benefits to the global community, both in terms of biodiversity conservation and the efficient and mindful use of the environment.

# We may have Once Won a Battle, but the War for Biodiversity Conservation is Still Raging

**Victor Fenchuk, Director  
of NGO "Protection of Belarusian Birds"  
answered the questions of the UN Bulletin**

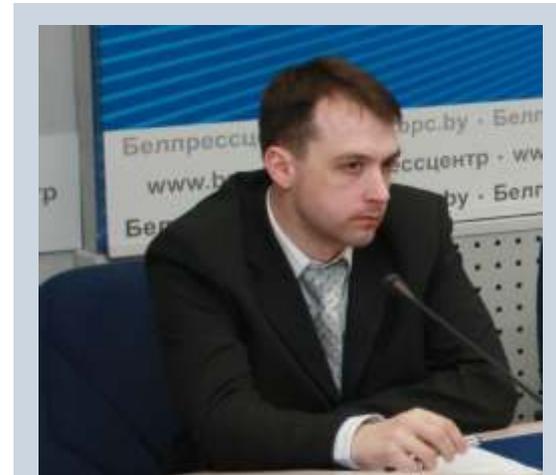
For a long time Belarus has had a good track record in biodiversity conservation, compared with many countries; Belarus' wisents are known all over the world. Over the last ten years, considerable and important work has been carried out to raise public awareness, practical efforts have been made to conserve biodiversity. However, in the opinion of many experts the situation in general is deteriorating. Why so?

It needs to be understood that biodiversity conservation has been successful in Belarus largely because the country has managed to preserve a considerable number of unique areas virtually intact. The transformations of the end of the last century contributed a lot to this process. In situations of general economic decline there were almost no conflicts between economy and ecology. As a result, environmental projects were easily implemented, bringing impressive results. Now, with the active development of the economy, we can see the emergence of conflicts of interests.

As far as ecological diversity is concerned, the wisent is huge and hairy and easily recognizable. The wisent is indeed a symbol of wildlife and is known to everybody. But meanwhile the habitats of many other species are equally or even more endangered, for example, the aquatic warbler or European mink. They are also "wisents" in this sense, but they're small and harder to notice. They are not covered by the government programmes, and against the background of the successful conservation of the wisent population, we sometimes simply do not pay attention to the decline or even disappearance of other species. That is why the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) is very important for informing people that there have always been problems, they still exist and we need to address them instead of being happy that some time ago we used to have fewer problems with biodiversity.

**Since you've mentioned the International Year of Biodiversity, let's discuss it in more depth. The Action Plan provides for awareness-raising events and for practical efforts such as contests in landscape gardening and territorial improvement, arrangement and maintenance of recreational areas, etc. Which of these, in your opinion, will prove to be the most effective?**

The most important challenge of this year is to discontinue the use of stereotyped actions carried out under the slogan of biodiversity conservation, and to start thinking about how we can really contribute to its conservation. Contests for the best landscape greening design are meaningful only if we simultaneously create habitats for other species. You can plant Canadian maples or Japanese cherry trees in front of schools, but that will not contribute to the conservation of Belarus' biodiversity because these are alien species. For example, everybody knows how to make a starling-house and I am sure that many more starling-houses than usual will be built this year. However, there are so many other bird species which need different types of nests, and these birds are also essential for biodiversity. New efforts should not focus on the activities which have been implemented for decades. Events and activities should be planned with a view to the real problems we intend to address.



**Victor A. Fenchuk**  
Biologist; after graduating from Brest State University, worked in Belovezhskaja Puscha National Park. Mr. Fenchuk joined NGO "Protection of Belarusian Birds" in 2005 and became its director in 2007.

The most effective efforts are those which enable people to do something with their own hands. In my opinion, it is very important to encourage people, especially those who make strategic decisions, to make contact with the world of nature. For example, the events dedicated to the Mother Earth Day celebrations in Belarus were attended by officials from various ministries. These are great opportunities for them to leave their offices for a while and to see the problems, the plants and animals whose destiny depends on one or other regulatory document. In this way, decisions are no longer made in offices, but during such events and, therefore, the events prove to be more effective.

**Aquatic and marsh-dwelling plants, animals and birds account for the majority of species inscribed in Belarus' Red Book. At the same time, the national programmes regulating wetland**

**use and protection are, to a certain extent, poorly coordinated. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is developing melioration programmes, the Ministry of Energy's "Peat" Programme provides for drainage of up to 50 thousand ha of wetlands within the next 10 years, while the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is simultaneously developing wetland protection measures. Are there any efforts to formulate a single approach to melioration in particular and to the Belarusian marshlands generally?**

The problem of the conflict of interests is quite natural for a developing economy, where a consensus between the interests of different sectors has not been reached yet. One of the goals of the International Year of Biodiversity and, at the same time, one of the opportunities it provides, is to draw attention to the role of biodiversity and to strive towards agreement on the essential foci for the conservation of species and ecosystems and on the mechanisms of sustainably using the environment for the benefit of the

**The most important challenge of this year is to discontinue the use of stereotyped actions carried out under the slogan of biodiversity conservation, and to start thinking about how we can really contribute to its conservation.**

economy. It is quite normal, for example, that the Ministry of Energy deals with energy sector development, it has been established precisely for this purpose and it has its own interests. In this case the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection should seek a trade-off, acting as an advocate for nature. Then they would obviously require data showing that biodiversity conservation also generates economic benefits.

At an emotional level, people do realise the importance of biodiversity. However, the development of the country requires clear data rather than emotions. And here it is important, for example, how many cranberries can be annually harvested in our wetlands. Of similar importance is the role of the marshes as huge reservoirs of moisture. The role of marshlands in Belarus' adaptation to climate change is much more important than the amount of peat that can be extracted. A marsh can be drained and its peat sold just once, while a marsh can provide water, carbon sequestration and renewable resources generation over hundreds and thousands of years. This also means that it provides a huge amount of money! And



the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection should communicate these data to other ministries in order to avoid discussions on draining and utilising the marshlands, driven by a desire to obtain immediate profits.

**Summarising the problem of biodiversity in Belarus, in what areas are there improvements and where is the situation deteriorating?**

Belarus is part of the world and this problem is worsening all over the world as a whole. It would be strange to claim that we have made strong progress in biodiversity conservation while it is acknowledged in the rest of the world that the respective target under the Millennium Development Goals has not been met. Old forests are declining in Belarus, marshes are degrading, wetlands are being drained. By the size of protected areas we fail to meet the 10% target recommended in the Convention on Biological Diversity; importing of invasive species continues; efforts aimed at the above-mentioned aquatic warbler are only aimed at slowing down its disappearance and, unfortunately, there are no signs of an increase in its population. It is very important to acknowledge these problems and not to "hide behind the wisent", because acknowledgement is already a first step toward a solution. As for biodiversity conservation, we should not relax, we should not believe that if our situation is not as bad as that of our neighbours, we are prospering. We should be honest with ourselves. We may have once won a battle, but the war for biodiversity conservation is still raging. Unfortunately, so far we are losing.

# Copyright in Belarus: its Origins and Evolution

**The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has been observing World Book and Copyright Day since 1996. Every year on 23 April UNESCO urges the international community to promote the reading of books and facilitate book publishing and copyright protection.**

Julia Fedorova, Research Officer at the Department of Economic Development and Ecology at the National Centre for Legislation and Law Studies of the Republic of Belarus, told a correspondent of the UN Bulletin about the origins of copyright legislation in Belarus, the participation of our country in international agreements and the protection of copyright.

**The Law "On copyright and related rights" dated 16 May 1996 is currently in force in Belarus. You participated in the elaboration of the draft Law "On copyright and related right" that was submitted to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus in March this year. How would you describe the evolution of Belarusian legislation in this field?**

Everybody knows that the formation of Belarusian legislation in the field of copyright has started relatively recently, just like in any other area of public affairs. This painstaking process was triggered by the breakup of the Soviet Union and, subsequently, the emergence of a sovereign country.

The first special legislative act governing copyright-related issues was adopted in Belarus in 1996. This was the above-mentioned Law of the Republic of Belarus «On copyright and related rights» dated 16 May 1996, which was developed on the basis of experiences of copyright protection in the USSR and in other countries, including continental Europe.

In 1998 the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On copyright and related rights" dated 16 May 1996 was revised; addenda and amendments were also incorporated in 2003 and 2008.

Now, a new Law of the Republic of Belarus "On copyright and related rights" has been drafted to reflect the evolving trends in copyright legislation and scientific advances in this area. To a great extent, it is a successor to the current Law though certain provisions are new and, to some degree, unique.

## **What are the specifics of Belarusian copyright legislation?**

At the moment it is difficult to highlight the specifics of Belarusian copyright legislation because in general it is aligned with the basic international agreements in this field.

The specifics lie in the instruments of implementation of certain provisions recognised by international practice, such as the implementation instruments of the provisions regulating the transfer of exclusive copyright, royalty payments, collective management of property rights, copyright protection, and so on.

A good example is the situation regarding the collective management of property rights of authors (or other rights-holders). Unlike special legislation existing in most other countries, including CIS member-states, the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On copyright and related rights" dated 16 May 1996 contains just one article dealing with such a serious issue, that is Article 42 of the said Law. It stipulates that in order to secure the property rights of authors (or other rights-holders) in cases when it is difficult to implement the said rights on an individual basis, it is permissible to establish organisations to implement and protect the rights of those persons on a collective basis. The procedure of the establishment and functioning of such organisations is set out in the legislation stipulating that collective management of the property rights of authors (or other rights-holders) shall be exercised by the National Centre for Intellectual Property, which is a state-owned organisation. By the way, this is not



Julia Fedorova

a common practice for the collective management of copyright in foreign countries, though such an approach is used in some countries.

**The Republic of Belarus is a party to a number of international agreements such as the World Convention on Copyright (1952), the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886) and WIPO Treaty on Copyright (1996). How has this influenced the evolution of Belarusian legislation on copyright?**

Having recognised the binding force of the provisions of the 1952 World Convention on Copyright, Belarus, at that time one of the Republics of the USSR, made a commitment to incorporate in its legislation the minimum level of copyright protection envisaged in that international treaty. In 1997 the Republic of Belarus

joined the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, as amended by the 1971 Paris Act, and made the commitment to reflect in its national legislation higher requirements than those set forth in the 1952 World Convention on Copyright. Consequently, amendments and addenda were incorporated into the Law of the Republic of Belarus «On copyright and related rights» dated 16 May 1996 or, more precisely, it was revised as a new version in 1998. This version also reflected the requirements of the 1996 WIPO Treaty on Copyright which was ratified by Belarus in 1998.

## **What are the problems in the field of copyright protection in the Republic of Belarus?**

I would not say that there are problems with the protection of copyright in the Republic of Belarus. It is not so. The Belarusian legislation on the protection of the rights on literary (scientific, artistic) works is well elaborated. There are substantive legal provisions that envisage civil and legal forms of protecting individual non-property and property copyright and establish administrative and penal sanctions for violations in this field. The provisions of the procedural side of the law are also fairly well-elaborated, allowing people to seek protection of infringed rights and to bring offenders to accountability. It is another matter, however, that rights-holders are insufficiently aware of their rights and how these rights are realised and protected. Although the government makes a considerable contribution to raising awareness about intellectual property in general and copyright in particular (since 2006 a course entitled "Basics of intellectual property management" has been taught in higher education establishments in Belarus), there is still room for improvement.

## **Which organisations deal with the protection of copyright in our country?**

Copyright protection is dealt with by rights-holders and, most of all, authors themselves.

There are organisations facilitating the protection of copyright, for example the National Centre for Intellectual Property which is an organisation responsible for the collective management of the property rights of authors (and other rights-holders) in the Republic of Belarus. There are also agencies directly involved in the protection of copyright. The main one is the Judicial Board on Intellectual Property of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus, which examines all intellectual property related disputes as the first instance.

# Intellectual Property Issues: Outlook From Belarus

On 26 April 2010 the World Intellectual Property Organisation celebrated two anniversaries: the 10th anniversary of World Intellectual Property Day and the 40th anniversary of the Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organisation. On World Intellectual Property Day this year, WIPO's focus is on "Innovation - Linking the World".

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) became a United Nations specialised agency in 1974. WIPO is responsible for promoting the use and protection of intellectual property and for developing various international treaties intended to harmonise the national legislations of its member-states in the field of intellectual property. Another core task of WIPO is to facilitate information exchange between countries. WIPO deals with patents, industrial designs, copyright and geographical indications. WIPO's role is increasing with the emergence of new technologies and the development of the intellectual property segment.

Belarus joined WIPO on 26 April 1970 and participates in a number of bilateral treaties. In the summer of 2003 Doctor of International Law Kamil Idris (Sudan), WIPO Director-General since 1997, visited Belarus for the first time. A number of documents signed during the visit laid the foundations for the cooperation of our country with the World Intellectual Property Organisation. At the end of that same year, Mr. Idris met for the second time with Belarus' President Aleksander Lukashenko at the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva. The meeting resulted in the establishment of a training centre at the National Centre for Intellectual Property in Minsk with support from WIPO. Since then many Belarusian specialists have received training at the Centre.

During his third visit, Dr. Kamil Idris met with Belarus' Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky on 31 January 2007 to sign the Joint Declaration on strengthening the intellectual property system and development of innovations in Belarus.

In Belarus the protection and management of intellectual property is the responsibility of the National Centre for Intellectual Property (NCIP). What are its focuses today? How is Belarus developing international cooperation in the field of intellectual property? We discussed these issues with **Valentin Rachkovsky**, Head of the Information and Methodology Department and Assistant to the General Director at NCIP.

## What is WIPO?

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is dedicated to developing a balanced and accessible international intellectual property (IP) system, which rewards creativity, stimulates innovation and contributes to economic development while safeguarding the public interest.

WIPO was established by the WIPO Convention in 1967 with a mandate from its Member States to promote the protection of IP throughout the world through cooperation among states and in collaboration with other international organizations. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

## How does NCIP manage to cover such a vast area as intellectual property?

NCIP deals with key aspects of intellectual property protection and management, ranging from maintaining a register to dealing with economic aspects and monitoring compliance with the relevant legislation. To a great extent, the Centre is a driving force in the development of the intellectual property system in Belarus and acts as an educational, information and methodological focal point for organisations and individuals. However, it is obvious that the successful accomplishment of multi-faceted tasks in the area of intellectual property requires not only an efficient performance by the NCIP team and effective collaboration with other government agencies, but also proper



Valentin Rachkovsky

organisation of the actual owners and users of intellectual property (IP). Therefore, the current challenges include strengthening the sectoral and regional infrastructure of the IP system in Belarus, improving IP protection and management efficiency at the company level, and further developing training systems and informational and methodological support in this field.

## What are the current focuses of the National Centre for Intellectual Property?

Generally speaking, the activities of the Centre can be divided into a number of relatively independent directions.

The primary area is that connected with the traditional functions of a patent agency, such as registration of inventions, trademarks and other items of industrial property, issuing titles of protection (patents, certificates), maintaining the respective government registers and monitoring the use of rights.

Another focus is protection and realisation of copyright and related rights. Here it is worth emphasising the collective management by NCIP of the property rights of authors and other rights-holders (centralised collection of royalties for use on TV and radio channels, in cultural establishments, etc.) and registration of computer programmes.

Good progress has been achieved in the provision of educational, informational and methodological support to the system of IP protection and management. The Training Centre for Intellectual Property offers IP training covering a whole range of educational modules, ranging from IP basics to patent searching, accounting and copyright protection. The Centre publishes a magazine called "Intellectual

**The IP system and problems related to its functioning often involve clearly visible cross-border aspects. International cooperation in the field of intellectual property is a necessary instrument helping countries to address problems together and, thereby, to maximise the benefits from the efficient use of intellectual property.**

property in Belarus" which is currently the only professional publication in the country on IP issues. The most important information is also available on the official website of the Centre ([www.belgospatent.org.by](http://www.belgospatent.org.by)). Consultation offices of the Centre have been opened in all Oblast capitals. NSIP activities include provision of a wide range of services, including patent and information-related services.

#### **How is intellectual property protected in Belarus?**

Belarusian legislation provides holders of intellectual property with opportunities for the realisation of their IP rights and a broad range of instruments for their protection. Infringement of intellectual property rights in Belarus entails penal, administrative, civil and legal sanctions. Various penalties can be imposed, ranging from compensation of losses to imprisonment. IP rights-holders may approach departments of internal affairs, the prosecutor's office (in case of certain offences) anti-monopoly agencies (in case of unfair competition) and customs authorities (to secure protection in case of IP articles being moved across customs borders) for the protection of their rights. The Belarusian Supreme Court's Judicial Board on Intellectual Property is a special body for the examination of civil cases on IP-related issues.

Recently, NCIP's range of functions relating to the protection of IP rights has been broadened : NCIP has been empowered to draw up protocols on administrative offences and is now an authorised agency for monitoring and inspection in the field of intellectual property.

#### **Could you please tell us about international cooperation between Belarus and organisations dealing with intellectual property?**

The IP system and problems related to its functioning often involve clearly visible cross-border aspects. International cooperation in the field of intellectual property is a necessary instrument helping countries to address problems together and, thereby, to maximise the benefits from the efficient use of intellectual property.

Being a member of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, the Republic of Belarus participates in all key international treaties administered by WIPO. Our collaboration with WIPO can be certainly characterised as fairly intensive and mutually beneficial. WIPO provides valuable support in the development of IP education, via training of Belarusian specialists at the WIPO Academy, arranging

**The successful accomplishment of multi-faceted tasks in the area of intellectual property requires not only an efficient performance by the NCIP team and effective collaboration with other government agencies, but also proper organisation of the actual owners and users of intellectual property (IP).**



their participation in various educational events abroad, organising similar events in Belarus and so on. I should emphasise the considerable technical assistance and expert advice provided by WIPO to the Centre's initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency of the IP system.

Belarus' membership in the Eurasian Patent Office makes it possible to obtain a single (regional) patent which is valid in Belarus and other member-states of the Eurasian Patent Convention. As a member country of the CIS and the Eurasian Economic Commonwealth, Belarus actively participates in the work of specialised IP agencies of the CIS and the Eurasian Economic Commonwealth, whose efforts contribute to addressing IP challenges common to the countries of the region.

As the national agency for the collective management of the property rights of authors, NCIP acts as a member of the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers and this enables the Centre to adopt the most recent international standards of copyright realisation in its practical work.

NCIP is also developing partner relations with the European Patent Office, currently focusing on several patent and information projects, training for Belarusian specialists in the Academy of the European Patent Office and advisory support.

Cooperation in the field of international exchange of patent information and documents and bilateral relations between NCIP as the national IP agency with counterpart organisations in foreign countries are progressing fairly well, thus establishing a solid basis for exchanging experience and concrete practical collaboration.

## Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings Project Launches Website

The project "Preventing, Fighting and Addressing the Social Consequences of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Belarus", a joint effort of the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has launched a website [www.trafik.by](http://www.trafik.by).

The website provides a detailed outline of the project's tasks and objectives, key activities, participating organisations and achievements. It contains a variety of information about the problem of trafficking in human beings, the respective international and national legislation, and Belarus' efforts to combat trafficking. Information and methodological materials developed by the project can be downloaded from a special section.

The "Press Center" section presents information about current project activities and news from Belarusian and international sources covering efforts to combat human trafficking in Belarus and worldwide. It also contains recommendations for journalists on how to cover the trafficking problem in the media.

The website will soon contain a special section for young people, offering recommendations on safe foreign travel.

## Welcome to the New Website of the WHO Regional Office!

The WHO Regional Office for Europe has launched a new website <http://www.euro.who.int/en/> with an improved design and updated structure. The website is intended to become a reliable online source of information on public healthcare in WHO's European region.

The most popular categories are highlighted on the main page of the website: healthcare issues, news, fact sheets, reports, and statistics. Library resources include more than 3,000 publications - books, technical reference documents, summaries of meetings, and informational and educational materials. Searched can be performed using key words, topics and type of publication.

The website has an attractive design, enhanced navigation, and clear headings with a description of every section, which makes it as convenient and user-friendly as possible.

## International Mother Earth Day Marked by Environmental Actions with the Participation of the United Nations



In the Cherven District, employees of the UN Country Office, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and heads of local executive authorities reinforced one of the closing dikes at a draining canal in the Galoie upland marsh with their own hands. This will allow a reduction in the outflow of water from the marsh and restore its hydrological regime in the future.



On the premises of Volma Fish Farm, inhabited by the Black Stork and other rare animal species listed in the Red Book, representatives of UNDP and the European Union segregated garbage together with schoolchildren from Valevachy Secondary School.