

Republic of Moldova

GOVERNMENT

DECISION No. 301
of 24.04.2014

on the approval of the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023 and of the Action Plan for its implementation

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In order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Programme of Activity of the Government of the Republic of Moldova “European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare” for the years 2013-2014 and creation of the strategic framework in the field of environmental protection, the Government DECIDES:

1. To approve:
the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023, as in annex no. 1;
the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023, as in annex no. 2.
2. The Ministry of Environment:
shall cooperate with international organizations and potential donors in order to attract the necessary volume of investments for implementing the provisions of the Environmental Strategy for the years 2013-2023 and of the Action Plan for its implementation;
shall submit to the Government annually, before the 1st of March, the monitoring report on the implementation of the indicated Strategy.
3. Ministries and other central administrative authorities:
shall ensure the implementation of the measures provided for in the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023 and in the Action Plan for its implementation, according to their competences;
shall submit to the Ministry of Environment annually, before the 1st of February, reports on the implementation of respective measures.
4. It is recommended to local public administration authorities to undertake the necessary measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Strategy.
5. It is established that the Action Plan for the implementation of the Environmental Strategy for the years 2013-2023 can be updated every three years, following an assessment of the progresses in the implementation process.
6. The control over the execution of this decision shall be the task of the Ministry of Environment.

PRIME MINISTER

Iurie LEANCA

Counter-signed by:
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Economy
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
and European Integration
Minister of Environment
Minister of Health
Minister of Transport

Valeriu Lazar

Natalia Gherman
Gheorghe Salaru
Andrei Usatii

and Roads Infrastructure
Minister of Agriculture
and Food Industry
Minister of Regional Development
and Constructions
Minister of Education

Vasile Botnari

Vasile Bumacov

Marcel Raducan

Maia Sandu

Chisinau, April 24, 2014.
No. 301.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR THE YEARS 2014-2023

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental protection is an issue of global importance, which has to become a national priority because it directly concerns the life conditions and health of the population, achievement of economic interests, as well as capacities for the society's sustainable development.

The existence of a clean environment contributes, undoubtedly, to ensure the fundamental human rights provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova: the right to life and the right to physical and moral health. This implies maintaining the quality of the main components of the environment (air, water, soil, flora and fauna) in terms of sustainable development.

As a result of changes produced over recent years in our society, in the structure of national economy, but also in the existing legal framework, it became necessary to develop a clear environmental policy that would:

a) establish basic principles and priorities in the field of environmental protection, rational use of natural resources and sustainable development of the country;

b) ensure the synergy of implementation of the international obligations assumed by the Republic of Moldova and realization of the policy framework through the European integration;

c) constitute the basis of an institutional reform and of capacity building for the implementation of the policy and legal framework in the field of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

The necessity to develop an environmental policy document has been noted over recent years both by national experts as well as by international experts engaged in various environmental missions in the Republic of Moldova.

Like the other countries in the region, Moldova is facing many significant environmental problems. Insufficient management of solid waste leads to soil, air and water pollution; inadequate management of forests and irrational agricultural practices result in soil degradation and biodiversity losses; small rivers and wells are heavily polluted due to agricultural activities, obsolete sewage infrastructure, illegal storage of waste and manure; industrial activities and a large number of old cars cause air pollution in urban areas, whereas the lack or renewable energy sources induces energy insecurity and contributes to climate change.

Elaboration of an Environmental Strategy has also been dictated by the political vector of our country's European integration, by the current requirements of national legislation alignment to the provisions of EU directives and of assuring the country's sustainable development by promoting green economy.

The process of European integration presents a challenge for the environmental sector and includes two main action directions: harmonization of national environmental legislation with the EU acquis in this field and institutional reform, which implies the development of an institutional mechanism capable to enforce the newly adopted legislation. The Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023 (hereinafter referred to as - the Strategy) covers exactly these challenges and aspires to be the key strategic planning document for the actions to be taken in the following decade.

The „Environment” Chapter of the Association Agreement provides for the concrete commitments and activities of the Government of the Republic of Moldova in the field of environmental protection, such as:

a) elaboration of legislation, norms and standards harmonized with the EU directives, institutional capacity building and the establishment of new required structures;

b) elaboration of a national Environmental Strategy that would include planned institutional reforms, within the established time frame, for the implementation of the environmental legislation and compliance;

c) elaboration of sectoral strategies for water, air, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation etc.;

d) strict and clear separation of competences between the environmental authorities at national, regional and local levels;

e) integration of the environment into other sectoral policies, promotion of the green economy development and of eco-innovations.

State intervention in environmental protection is also determined by the need to achieve the objectives set out in the Outcome Document adopted at the Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro „The future we want”, the Astana Ministerial Declaration on the environment; the 26 principles of the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment; the Millennium Development Goals (in particular, Goal 7 „Ensure environmental sustainability”); the UN Partnership Framework for Moldova for the 2013-2017 period, which includes the priority №3 „Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management”, aiming straight to the protection of the environmental factors and natural ecosystems, regulation, rational and sustainable use of natural resources and minimization of the impact on environment and human health.

Currently, whole chapters that comprise environmental protection measures are included into the national documents of strategic planning, as the Government Activity Programme and Action Plan, National Security Strategy, National Action Plan on Human Rights, Medium-term budgetary framework. Environmental protection was recognized as an important area for socio-economic development of the country by the National Development Strategy „Moldova 2020”.

However, in these policy documents the environmental priorities are presented briefly and sporadically, without a background environmental policy document, being formulated in terms of requirements and needs highlighted at the time. Thus, the Environmental Strategy for the 2014-2023 period seeks to compensate this gap and establish concrete objectives in the field of environmental protection, whose implementation will lead to the sustainable development of the country, to the European integration, to the application of green economy principles, as well as to the obtaining of considerable benefits in terms of health improvement and mortality reduction, as well as to the appearance of economic opportunities and savings at a large scale, which, respectively, will contribute to the welfare of the community.

II. VISION, GOAL, OBJECTIVES

1. **The vision of the Strategy** is oriented towards an implemented environmental protection sector reform, so as an institutional, administrative and environmental management system, adjusted to the EU requirements will be functioning and ensuring environmental sustainability and increase the quality of the environment.

2. **The goal of the Strategy** is to guarantee the right of the population of the Republic of Moldova for a sustainable, unpolluted and healthy environment in harmony with economic development and social welfare.

3. **The general objective of the Strategy** is the creation of an efficient environmental management system, which would contribute to the increase in the environmental factors' quality and guarantee the right of the population for a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

4. **Specific objectives of the Strategy:**

1) ensuring conditions for good governance and effectiveness of institutional and managerial potential in the field of environmental protection to achieve environmental objectives;

2) integration of environmental protection, sustainable development and green economy principles, of climate change adaptation principles into all sectors of the national economy;

3) raising the level of environmental protection knowledge among pupils, students and employees with at least 50% until 2023 and ensuring access to environmental information;

- 4) reducing the negative impact of economic activity on the environment and improving measures of environmental pollution prevention;
- 5) creation of an integrated monitoring and environmental quality control system;
- 6) ensuring rational use, protection and conservation of natural resources through:
 - a) improving the quality of at least 50% of surface waters by implementing hydrographic basins management system;
 - b) ensuring access of about 80% of the population to safe water supply systems and services and of about 65% to sanitation systems and services;
 - c) improving soil quality and ecological restoration of degraded, affected by landslides lands and farmland buffer strips up to 100%, as well as sustainable management and protection of useful mineral resources;
 - d) sustainable management and protection of useful mineral resources;
 - e) expansion of forest areas to 15% of the country's territory, of natural areas protected by state up to 8% and ensuring efficient and sustainable management of natural ecosystems;
- 7) creation of an integrated air quality management system, reduction of pollutants emissions into the atmosphere by 30% by 2023 and greenhouse gases emissions by at least 20% by 2020 compared to the baseline scenario;
- 8) creation of integrated waste and chemicals management systems that would contribute to a 30% reduction in the amount of landfilled waste and a 20% increase in recycling rate until 2023.

III. BACKGROUND, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, ACTION DIRECTIONS

Section 1

Institutional and managerial system in the field of environmental protection

5. Background:

1) *Strategic environmental planning*. First environmental policy document was the The Concept of Environmental Protection (1995), which encompassed, at that time, the main directions and mechanisms of environmental policy during the transition to a market economy.

Later the National Environment Strategic Action Programme was elaborated and approved by Presidential Decree no. 321 of 6 October 1995. The Action Plan for its implementation contained activities planned up to year 2005. Therefore this document is now obsolete and does not correspond to the contemporary tendencies of socio-economic development and of European integration. It was followed by the National Environmental Action Plan (1996), developed in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe.

The main directions of these documents were presented by the Strategic Guidelines of the Social Economic Development of the Republic of Moldova to 2005 (1998), where, for the first time, environmental issues were included alongside of economic and social problems.

In 2001 a new policy document – the Concept of Environmental Policy of the Republic of Moldova – was adopted, highlighting a series of new approaches, including orientation towards European integration and promotion of the inclusion of the environmental requirements into other sectoral policies. It is important to mention that the Concept did not determine the establishment of any strategic framework for the environment or the development of any policy documents defining measurable objectives.

Currently, the environmental policy framework it is in a development process and includes several policy papers that reflect objectives and actions in various fields such as waste and chemicals management, pollution prevention, biodiversity conservation, water supply and sanitation, desertification, forestry etc. However, most of these documents contain outdated concepts that have to be updated, whereas for the certain environmental components and aspects (air, soil and useful mineral resources protection) it is necessary to elaborate proper policy documents. Overall, the lack of an environmental strategy framework has caused a deficiency in environmental strategic planning in Moldova, lack of a general vision at the Government level and sector fragmentation.

Recently the Waste Management Strategy for the years 2013-2017 was approved, establishing a set of objectives and measures regarding the collection, transportation, treatment, recovery and disposal of waste in the Republic of Moldova.

At the same time,, certain provisions and actions regarding environmental protection have been included in a number of policy documents from other sectors (economic, agriculture, health, national security, regional development, transport, demographic, etc.), but the share of these actions and the level of their implementation remains low.

The implementation of provisions and measures of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources contained in the national and sectoral policy documents can not be imposed on local public administration authorities, being restricted by the legal base. Therefore, given the fact that local public administration authorities are responsible for ensuring the main facilities and services for the population, including water supply and sewage systems, collection of waste and reduction of their amount, sanitation, maintenance of green spaces and space planning, the realization of local environmental planning is crucial for their activity. However, it is quite difficult to accomplish, because, currently, environmental protection measures at the local level are largely coordinated by the agricultural divisions. Lack of relevant specialists, funds and equipment results in the sporadic character of these actions, which are not coordinated with policy documents at national or sectoral levels.

In between 1998-2001, the district councils contained specialized sections for environmental protection and rational use of natural resources, composed from 3-4 specialists who collaborated with central and local environmental structures. Thus, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and of the World Bank, local environmental action plans were developed. However, the administrative-territorial reform of 2001 led to the liquidation of these sections, so that local environmental planning was suspended. This had a negative impact on the decision making process of the National Ecological Fund, which, lacking a clear vision of environmental problems and objectives at the local level, met difficulties in expenditure planning for the appropriate financing of the local environmental projects.

Taking into consideration all these facts, the present Environmental Strategy aims to remove the gaps outlined in strategic environmental planning.

2) *Legislative/regulatory framework in the environmental field.* The field of environmental protection is regulated by a set of laws and regulations elaborated, adopted and, if necessary, amended in accordance with new environmental conditions and provisions. Moreover, some of them were adjusted, partially, to the provisions of the European Union environmental legislation. The development of legislative/normative framework started with the adoption of the Law on Environmental Protection, no. 1515-XII of 16 June 1993.

Currently, environmental protection is covered by about 30 laws and a set of regulations, developed under the framework of the abovementioned organic law.

Despite the existence of the legislative and regulatory documents that cover, virtually, all environmental sectors, these do not fully comply with the international environmental treaties acceded by Moldova and do not ensure proper management of natural resources that would prevent environmental pollution, and the right to a healthy environment, strongly requiring their improvement. The same emerges from the necessity to adjust the national legislation to the European Union directives, action that gained momentum with the approval of the Government Action Programme „EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, WELFARE, 2011-2014”.

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