

Speech notes of Mr Alexander Milyutin

(Economic Attache at the Embassy of Russia in Belgium, P +32 2 3745738)

at the Round table "2017: Year of Environmental Awareness in Russia", organized by CCBLR.org and NautaDutilh on 29 May 2017 in Brussels

Dear Mr Brouhns, Dear Mr Arianoff, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank the Belgian Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce for Russia and Belarus for the invitation to take part in this event and for the opportunity to speak.

In my intervention I am supposed to say a few words about the "Year of Ecology" that was announced in Russia in 2017.

On January 5th, 2016 the President of Russia Vladimir Putin signed a decree that declared the year 2017 to be the Year of Ecology in our country.

This decision is supposed to draw public attention towards environmental problems, support the protection of ecological and biological diversity and reinforce ecological security of the country. The Action Plan for the Year of Ecology provides for more than 600 events across all the regions of Russia.

The projects are divided into clusters. The largest one, both in terms of volume and number of activities, is implementation of the new waste management system and the best available technologies. Besides, key objectives include protection of the Baikal Natural Territory, conservation of water resources and development of the protected areas system.

Previously developed legislative changes in the field of ecology should be carried out during 2017. These changes will affect water, forestry, and land codes of Russia and many federal laws regulating these spheres.

This is why 2017 should become a year of environmental reforms, which imply the enhancement of the regulatory and legal frameworks in the sphere of ecology and implementation of the previously adopted norms.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment was appointed the agency in charge of the realization of the plans in the course of the Year of Ecology.

The key decisions that will be taken during the year concern the implementation of the best available environmental technologies, improvement of environmental indexes of the regions and of the waste management system.

Moreover, the Year of Ecology should become a step forward in achieving the objectives of the “Guidelines of the government policy in the area of environmental development of the Russian Federation for the period till 2030” and the State program of the Russian Federation “Environment protection 2012-2020”.

To give an idea of the scale of this program I will just say that the financing of the program totals 5,7 billion euro, of which the activities in 2017 only – 3,9 billion euro.

The activities of the Year of Ecology are realized in the following areas:

Improvement of legislation

Practical implementation of legislative changes in the field of ecology, which were developed in previous years, will be carried out in 2017. The changes will touch upon water, forestry, land codes of Russia as well as many federal laws that regulate this area.

Transition to the best available technologies

It concerns the best available technologies based on the newest scientific achievements to be implemented in the production processes of the most polluting plants.

The plan of the Year of Ecology includes 64 environment oriented activities that will be realized by 21 large companies in 22 Russian regions. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has concluded 25 agreements with companies on realization of environmental programs for the total amount of 400 million euro. As a result, pollutant emissions are expected to be reduced by 70 thousand tons per year.

For example, in the end of 2016 during the Forum “Arctic Days in Moscow” 3 environment oriented agreements were signed between relevant government agencies, regional authorities and industrial companies “Phosagro-Cherepovets” (phosphate fertilizers), “EuroChem” (fertilizers), “SUEK” (fossil extraction) for the total amount of 14 million euro concerning activities in the regions of Krasnoyarsk, Vologda, Tula and Republic of Buryatia.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is planning to conclude 13 agreements of the same type by the end of this year.

Waste management

The problem of industrial and household waste pollution is a reason of a serious concern in many regions of Russia.

In 2017, more than 20 sites of solid household waste will be reclaimed. For instance, Moscow region and Kazan, Tatarstan are planning to launch an innovative pilot project called "Zero Waste Dumping". New waste sorting centrals, waste processing facilities and waste treatment centers are opened all over the country. Implementation of a system for collecting mercury-containing and other hazardous waste will be continued in all regions of the country.

Creation of market conditions for introduction of separate waste collection system will also be continued.

In 2016, rates of environmental charges were introduced in Russia for goods subject to recycling, which relate to 36 groups of goods, such as goods made of paper, cardboard, glass, rubber, plastic, oil, lubricants, metals, textiles, as well as for batteries, electronic and electrical appliances. At the same time, the collected charges will be used to boost a waste processing infrastructure. The Ministry of Natural Resources estimates the amount to be invested in this area at about 2,5 billion euro.

Water

Water objects are the most important part of the environment and are renewable but limited and vulnerable natural resource, without which it is impossible to ensure economic, social and ecological well-being of people, the existence of flora and fauna. There are many unique water objects that require attention and protection in the territory of Russia.

The plan of the Year of Ecology includes 70 measures related to the protection of water sites. It is planned to have 26 facilities built that will reduce negative impact of human activity on natural water reservoirs, and special attention is focused of course on the protection of the Lake Baikal (where 33 measures are planned to be realized).

Reforestation

Forests of Russia represent an ecological skeleton of biosphere not only of our country, but of the whole northern hemisphere. More than 20% of the total area of forests and timber reserves of the world are concentrated in the territory of the Russian Federation. Forests occupy almost 70% of the land area in Russia. Therefore, ensuring rational, sustainable use of forest resources, their protection and reproduction is an important national mission, the completion of which should ensure the ecological balance of nature.

In 2017, it is planned to restore 800 thousand hectares of forests in the country, including reforestation in the Baikal natural territory, which badly suffered from wildfires in 2015.

Specially Protected Natural Areas

Specially protected natural areas have been one of the key-elements in preserving Russia's biological diversity for 100 years.

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the analysis of the country's natural reserve system in terms of preserving rare and particularly valuable species of animals and plants, as well as developing proposals for further enhancing the system and optimizing legislation in the field of territorial protection of nature.

In 2017 Russia will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the state's first natural reserve - Barguzinsky. All 168 activities of the yearly Plan for PAs are an integral part of the Year of Ecology. This year will become a landmark in the number of new federal Protected Areas created. Those will include:

Seven national parks:

- "Sengileevsky Mountains" (Ulyanovsk Region),
- "Kislovodskiy" (Stavropol Territory),
- "Ladoga Skerries" (Republic of Karelia),
- "Khibiny" (Murmansk region),
- "Kodar" (the Trans-Baikal Territory),

- "Zigalga" (Chelyabinsk Region),
- "Lena Pillars" (Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)).

Two state nature reserves:

- "Vasyugansky" (Tomsk and Novosibirsk regions),
- "Ingermanland" (Leningrad region).

Two federal wildlife reserves:

- "Solovetsky" (Arkhangelsk region),
- "Novosibirsk Islands" (the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)).

Strengthening the status of protected areas, national reserves and parks, as well as expanding them will preserve unique natural landscapes and ecosystems, rare animals and plants, as well as promote environmental education and develop educational tourism.

Altogether, within the next eight years there are plans to create 11 natural reserves, 17 national parks and 2 federal wildlife reserves. In addition, the territories of 12 existing federal protected areas will be expanded. Achieving of all that objectives will increase the total territory of the Federal Protected Areas by 18%.

(• 7 national parks (economic activities are limited and can only be carried out for recreational purposes)

- *2 state nature reserves (economic activity is completely banned)*
- *2 federal wildlife sanctuaries (special areas for the conservation and restoration of natural complexes)*

There will be also an expansion of the territory of 2 existing specially protected natural areas of federal significance:

- the national park "Russian Arctic"
- the Caucasian State Natural Biosphere Reserve

Wildlife Conservation

Plans for 2017 also include publishing a new volume of the Red Book of Endangered Species of the Russian Federation, creating new breeding facilities for the rare

species, continuing reintroduction of rare species program, including the European Bison, the Persian Leopard and the Przewalski's Horse.

Russian-Belgian cooperation in the field of environment

As far as the Russian-Belgian relations in the field of environment are concerned, we believe the potential in this area is still to be developed.

We welcome participation of Belgian companies active in the field of ecology and environment oriented technologies for the industry, as well as in the field of waste processing in Russia.

We are satisfied with the active cooperation in the gas sector between the Russian company Novatek and the Belgian company Fluxys, which are realizing a joint project on organization of storage and transshipment of LNG delivered from Russian Yamal region to the port of Zeebrugge and further to the Asia-Pacific region, which meets the highest ecological requirements.

I also would like to point out the existing contacts between our countries in the spheres related to environment, namely in the field of energy efficiency, between the Russian Energy Agency and the Belgian "Greenbridge" within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2013. After all, the more efficiently we use energy, the less we have to exploit non-renewable sources of energy, such as oil, coal and gas, which will contribute to less environmental impact of people on the nature.

We hope that cooperation between our countries in the field of ecology and environmental technologies will only be increasing in the future.