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(Minister's speech)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every responsible and thinking man is now aware of the fact that mankind may live only within limits tolerable for our planet. Based upon this knowledge we come to the necessity to accept the ethics of sustainable development.

In these days, we talk about a problem of such an extent which the mankind did not meet until now - a global warming. The main cause of global warming is the inappropriate use of fossil fuels for energy production. The issue of exploiting the earth's resources in sustainable way and thus, finding the most effective way is the issue of high importance.

Slovak Republic, which I have the honour to represent today, is a young state in the centre of Europe. In the centre of Europe not only from a geographical point of view but also from the point of its civilization. In our country, high energy consumption is connected with a high degree of industrialization.

Though the share of Slovakia in the worldwide carbon dioxide emissions is relatively small - 0.2 %, the share of per capita emissions is 11 tons per year. This classifies our country among the leading countries of the world. As we consider our share of responsibility for a global development of mankind, our Government adopted, as one of its environmental targets, the National Programme on Carbon Dioxide Emission Reductions in 2005 by 20 % compared to 1988.

This national target may be reached if the following basic assumptions are fulfilled:

- the gradual reduction of energy demands in the national economy through a change in the structure of sources for gross domestic product;
- the utilization of an existing potential for considerable energy savings, which are the inheritance of a long term ineffective consumption, often leading to the wasting of energy;
- a total reduction of the fossil fuel share of primary energy sources;
- the change in the fossil fuel structure, preferring more environmentally friendly fuels, especially natural gas;
- a higher usage of renewable energy sources;
- completing the nuclear power station in Mochovce and the full performance of the hydro power dam - system Gabčíkovo - Nadmaros, will contribute to a significant reduction of carbon dioxide emission, approximately by 10 %.

Among the means for fulfilling the Slovak national programme is the Clear Air Act, creating pressure for implementation of new environmentally acceptable technologies and leading to the change in the fossil fuel structure, preferring a higher share of natural gas.

The economic tools are also significant. There are for instance: the income tax and the road tax, which encourage the usage of renewable energy sources or environmentally favourable fuels, respectively.

Another group of tools are strategic tools, which includes the environmental strategy of Slovakia, where the principle of sustainable development in society is clearly formulated.

Here, I would like to mention some difficulties which we have:

One of the impediments which has deep roots in the past, is insufficient price liberalization of fuels and the absence of a competitive environment at energy production and distribution. However, the solution of this problem is very complicated and can be done only through the set of gradual steps because of a considerable impact upon all groups of population.

The significant obstacle is a chronic lack of financial sources, especially concerning long-term „soft“ loans. Therefore, Slovakia welcomes „Joint Implementation“ as one of the suitable tools which might help to bridge this problem.

Finally, a gradual increase of global information and public awareness on energy saving is especially significant as a tool which can be used in Slovakia in its full extent.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention.