

STATEMENT
by the Minister for Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety of Ukraine
Dr. Yu. KOSTENKO
at the 3rd Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change
1-10 December, 1997, Kyoto, Japan

Dear Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all let me express my sincere gratitude for the hospitality of the Government of Japan and the high level of organization of the Conference.

Efforts by the United Nations, international organizations and many countries focus on solving our common problem -- the global climate change, as well as strengthening international cooperation towards environmental protection, global environmental safety and achieving the sustainable development. I am glad that Ukraine, in its turn, makes its tangible input in achieving these global environmental goals, meeting, in particular, the commitments under the Convention at the national level.

Mr. President,

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Convention as one of the major factors that will affect the development of civilization for many years. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Conference in which we have the honor to take part. I believe the importance of the event could be compared with that of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that took place in Rio-de-Janeiro in 1992.

Today we are taking the first step into the next century. And this step should be firm and certain, but extremely considered, because afterwards further steps will depend on the first one taken. Are the Parties in the position to undertake obligations to radically reduce the greenhouse gases emissions in the next century as proposed, and if they are, by what cost? This quite complicated question makes me refer to the situation in my country.

Ukraine is one of the biggest greenhouse gases emitters. And that is no surprise, because the Ukrainian SSR, as a part of the former USSR, was a major producer of steel, coal, weapons and agricultural goods. This involved development of capacity for huge energy production, heavy industry, and a mining sector.

According to the experts' assessment, in 1995 Ukraine occupied the ninth place in the world with regard to the greenhouse gas emissions. Today, due to a severe economic crisis our consumption of fossil fuel has been reduced by one third as compared to 1990 and, obviously, this brought about significant reduction of national emissions. So, from a formal point of view, Ukraine meets the commitments under the Convention. However, this, in no way, means we need no further actions to be taken to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

In accordance with the Rio decisions Ukraine has developed a "Concept of Sustainable Development" and a document entitled "Main Directions of the State Environmental Policy". These documents define not only the goals and priorities in the field of environmental protection, but also the mechanisms of their realization, as well as directions for harmonization and integration of the Ukrainian environmental policy into the European and world environmental process.

The process of transition from administrative to market-oriented environmental management has started. The latter includes fees for the use of natural resources, for environmental pollution, a new system for funding environmental protection measures.

Ukraine has fundamentally reformed the national system of nuclear and radiation safety on the basis of the current international experience.

The process of matching national environmental regulations to international legislation is underway. Nowadays, Ukraine is a Party to 17 Conventions and 15 Protocols to them.

At present, we are in position to state that the basis (structural, scientific, methodological, legal, and economic) of environmental policy, following the principles of sustainable development has been established. And that is our major achievement.

Ukraine undergoes a structural transformation of its economy. This will result in significant reduction of the share of energy consuming sectors, by means of increasing the contribution of high technologies, services, and of the agricultural sector in the Gross Domestic Product. Such a transformation will result in both significant reduction of the energy consumption per the GDP unit and, consequently, reduction of the greenhouse gases emission.

In this context a number of important legislative acts on energy conservation have been recently developed. In order to implement that policy it is envisaged, in particular, to introduce new standards on energy resources use, tax exemption, ad hoc financing for energy conservation projects, and financial penalties for improper use of energy resources.

Significant reduction of the greenhouse gases emission will be also reached as a result of changes in the fuel balance of the country through increasing the relative input of nuclear power sector, recycling and using secondary fuel resources, partial replacement of coal and motor fuels with natural gas, and coalbed methane utilization.

A special attention is drawn to reforestation, since forests are main natural sinks of CO₂.

The Government takes measures to raise public awareness of climate change and energy and natural resource conservation, and towards the establishment of favorable conditions for activity of non-governmental environmental organizations.

In accordance with our assessments, the realization of the entire list of measures will allow saving nearly 100 million tons of oil equivalent annually, with corresponding reduction in the greenhouse gases emission.

Mr. President,

The measures mentioned reflect only a part of wide scale activities. The implementation of them will allow improving environmental conditions and reducing adverse human impact on the climate system. Undoubtedly, the introduction of such measures would generate not only environmental benefits but economic advantages as well. However, huge investments are essential at the initial stage, and there is a lack of appropriate financial resources.

Today the Ukrainian economy experiences difficult times. The severe economic crisis, which is typical for all countries in transition, does not allow accumulating sufficient financial resources, which are necessary to introduce energy saving technologies. Besides, 12 percent of the State Budget is spent on elimination of the consequences of the Chornobyl accident. Obviously, implementation of the Climate Change Convention in Ukraine will be substantially facilitated upon solution of these problems.

Mr. President,

Let me now touch on the commitments and measures proposed in the Protocol. From our point of view it would be the most acceptable approach if the Parties were to take commitments aimed at achieving an economically reasonable reduction in the greenhouse gases emission by the year 2010. I believe commitments under the Protocol should be differentiated taking into account the specific economic circumstances of countries and their national environmental priorities.

We support the mechanisms of implementation of the commitments such as emission trading and joint implementation of projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In the meantime, we call upon the Parties to put maximum efforts, at the national level, to reach the Convention's goals. We fully recognize that the guarantee of success is in goodwill and coordinated activities of the world community, governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the general public. Ukraine is ready to take immediate actions with all of us.