

4 July, 2017

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OSCE, UNECE, UNEP, OECD, World Bank,
European Investment Bank,
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development,
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ADDRESS

of Pan-Ukrainian roundtable
"The Dnieper River. Past. Present. Future."
dedicated to the International Day of the Dnieper River

Scientific and environmental non-governmental organizations of Ukraine, guided by the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, address the interested EU bodies with profound concern for the environmental future of this country and the fate of its population.

The concern is based on investment planning of Ukraine, which is a part of the Agreement with the European Union. Therefore, our address is confirmed by Art. 87, paragraphs (a), (b), (d), (f), and (g) of Title V of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has recently adopted the Hydropower Development Programme of Ukraine until 2026 (Executive Order # 552-r of 13 July, 2016), which provides for the construction of pumped storage and hydroelectric power stations at the peneplain Dnieper and Dniester rivers. This decision has stunned us. Does the government have people who have not heard and do not see the tragic consequences of building the cascade of hydroelectric power stations at the Dnieper?

The present manifestations of these negative anthropogenous impacts of the Dnieper cascade can be characterized by the following facts:

- Flooding of large territories, which has resulted in the loss of their economic productivity and the ability to fulfill their ecological functions (the destruction of ecosystems over a huge area of 700 thousand hectares, where the flooded areas have in fact lost their fertility);
- the rise in the level of groundwater, the disruption of underground flow, hydrological imbalance and partial flooding of territories (over the past 20 years, the total land area

with persistent manifestations of flooding doubled and covers 12% of the territory of Ukraine, and affects more than 540 cities and towns);

- biodiversity reduction, transformation of the river ecosystems and enabling the development of aggressive unwanted species;
- water bloom due to the development of blue-green algae (the content of which, in particular, in the Dnieper river water during the peak period of "blooming", is about 100 kg per m³, which is a million times larger than in the regular time);
- degradation of the whole ecosystem of the basin of the Dnieper river and its tributaries and the loss of sustainability of the self-reproducing natural components of this system.

The Government Programme for the Development of Hydroenergetics for the period till 2026 was approved by the Government of Ukraine in spite of a number of international agreements, which Ukraine has joined, in particular:

- The UN Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters of 25 June, 1998 (Aarhus Convention) (ratified by the Law of Ukraine # 832-XIV of 6 July, 1999);
- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) (ratified by the Law of Ukraine # 534-XIV of 19 March, 1999);
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (The Bern Convention) (Law of Ukraine On Accession with Reservations to the Convention # 436/96-BP of 29 October, 1996);
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) (Law of Ukraine On Accession to the Convention # 535-XIV of 19 March, 1999);

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (ratified by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Rada # 6673-XI of 04.10.1988);

- the Umbrella Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) (ratified by the Law of Ukraine # 1672-IV of 7 April, 2004);
- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) (Law of Ukraine # 801-XIV of 1 July, 1999 On Accession to the Convention);
- European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention) (ratified by the Law of Ukraine # 2831-IV of 7 September, 2005).

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Ukrainian Government plans to construct at least eight new hydroelectric power plants on the Dnieper and the Dniester rivers. The Government of Ukraine plans to attract more than US\$ 2 billion from international financial institutions, including European ones, to implement this programme.

The problem of restoration of the ecosystem of the Dnieper River, as the main source of quality drinking water, is extremely important for Ukraine. One of the most expedient options for solving this problem is a controlled reduction of the Dnieper man-made lakes. More than 300 projects have been implemented in the USA to lower similar lakes and dismantle dams and their power plants. The findings from this indicate a relatively rapid restoration of the river ecosystem and a significant increase in the safety of hydroengineering facilities.

The problem of revival of the Dnieper has a pan-European character. Irresponsible and careless attitude towards this problem discredits Ukraine in the eyes of the world community. A vivid example is the complete failure of the National Programme for the Environmental Improvement of the Dnieper Basin and Improvement of the Quality of Drinking Water (adopted by Supreme Rada of Ukraine, Resolution # 123/97-BP of 27.02.1997) and its continuation without significant changes until 2021 (Law of Ukraine On the Approval of the National Target Programme for the Development of the Water Economy and Environmental Improvement of the Dnieper Basin for the Period until 2021 adopted by the Supreme Rada of Ukraine on 24.05.2012. # 4836-VI).

So far, there has been no strategic evaluation of these intentions and the Programme as a whole. Moreover, regional authorities in whose regions such facilities are to be built, decided that such unsustainable activities should not be tolerated (local deterioration and hydrology of rivers). In addition, it should be noted that the Programme was not coordinated with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

Scientific and non-governmental organizations kindly request to initiate an appropriate transparent investigation and in particular the International Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (EIA), of the possible transboundary effects of the construction of new dams and hydroelectric power stations on the Dnieper and the Dniester in Ukraine. The EIA is envisaged by all conventions ratified by Ukraine: Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 1992); Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991); Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitats (Ramsar, 1971); as well as EU Association Agreement. This international EIA should certainly facilitate the participation of civil society and the public. Prior to such an EIA, any other measures to implement the hydropower programme should be discontinued, including international funding.

In addition, we would appreciate if the European Commission and European investment institutions clarify their views on further development of the hydropower sector on a pan-European scale, using an integrated approach and broad open discussion involving all interested persons and the public from the EU, the candidate countries and the countries of the Eastern European Neighborhood.

Participants of the Pan-Ukrainian roundtable

The roundtable was held at the Institute for Nature Management Problems and Ecology,
NAS of Ukraine,
Dnipro, 04 July, 2017