

WORLD DIPLOMACY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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On the threshold of the third millennium, humankind has started to face a new problem: that of preserving itself as a biological species. We have all seen large-scale negative changes to the environment brought about by the economic activity of man. Technogenic catastrophes that touch all areas of our planet and are cause for joint international effort and co-operation.

In the context of "world diplomacy and the environment," what is highly important is the implementation of the philosophy of sustainable development which was declared at the United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The plans made in Rio should become an international guide for international co-operation. Unfortunately, the results have not ensured a radical change in the global tendency for environmental degradation.

Problems that have been caused by globalisation show the necessity of ensuring a global balance and this should be the ultimate aim of all economic activities. Our global task is to ensure sustainable development and the preservation of the environment. The Russian government would like to see Agenda 21 adopted as a practical guide for international co-operation by all nations. A forum titled "Rio+10" will take place in Johannesburg in 2002 to sum up the results of the implementation of Agenda 21. We believe that this upcoming forum will make a significant contribution to the solution of such conflicts as the question of the maintenance of ecological security, assistance to sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Russian government is in favour of close multilateral co-operation within the framework presented by the Kyoto Protocol. For the practical realisation of the Kyoto Protocol, organisational and legal mechanisms must be worked out, including the so-called mechanism of cleaner production which presupposes the conveyance to developing countries of modern efficient energy technology and joint projects to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. The second part of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will take place a month from now in Bonn.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was a very important step forward for mankind as we see our general task for the future. The fifth meeting of the Convention's subsidiary body, which was held in Montreal in 2000, reinforced the need to ensure more effective international action to conserve and sustainably use the earth's natural resources which together constitute biological diversity.

Another important initiative held under the auspices of the United Nations – which together with climate change and biological diversity is one of the three Rio, or sustainable development, treaties – is the fight against desertification. A special amendment to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification has been adopted for Central and Eastern European countries. This is especially important for the region that I represent.

In Russia, much importance is given to the management of forest resources and we take an active role in international processes forming new approaches to the sustainable management of forests. It is necessary to spread agreements among members of the UN to format a new structural unit to be created within the UN system: a UN Forum on Forests. The sooner this forum starts its work, the better it will be for the world.

Ambassador Mikhail Nikolaievich Botcharnikov holds the diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and has held the post of Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Greece since March 1999. Graduating from the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs in 1971, he entered the diplomatic service and served in a number of African countries. In 1996, he was

appointed Director of the Department of Africa of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, the post he held prior to his appointment as Ambassador to Greece.