

Summary: Practices of water quality, water supply and sanitation in the Republic of Moldova

(Innovative practices to be considered at the ministerial-level consultations of the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum Nairobi, Kenya, 21-25 February 2005)

Problems of water protection resources and effective use of water, supply of the population with qualitative potable water is actual for the Republic of Moldova.

Quality of the water in the major rivers of the country varies from "moderately polluted" (Nistru, Prut) to "polluted" (Raut, Bic). The majority of underground water resources do not meet the quality standards and requirements for potable water because of excessive concentrations of undesirable chemical substances (fluorine, iron, hydrogen sulphide, chlorides, sulphates, excessive mineralization). The situation is especially unfavorable in rural areas where the main part of the population uses drinking water from underground water sources (132,000 wells, springs) and only 17% of families use central supply sources. Around 67% of rural water supply pipelines do not meet hygienic requirements and are in unsatisfactory condition.

The negative impact of unfavorable water resource conditions is reflected in the increased morbidity of the population caused by poor environmental conditions. In rural areas more than 80% of the population uses substandard water from local sources (underground), which are especially polluted. The existing wastewater treatment systems are not operational because they are switched off from power, destroyed or stolen. This impact on the population's health generates additional expenditures from the state budget, economic agents and the population. The current situation particularly affects the poor.

Taking into account the need to facilitate access of the population to safe drinking water and better sewage as stipulated in the Millennium Development Goals in the Republic of Moldova, "The Programme of water supply and sewage treatment in the settlements of the Republic of Moldova until 2006" in 2002 was developed and approved by Government.

The main objective of this Programme is to insure the sustainability functioning of the centralized municipal systems of water supply and the sewage treatment. This program provides short-term actions until 2006 and long-term - for the period up to 2010.

The program shows and concretizes ways to solve the problems stated in the strategic directions of social and economic development of the Republic of Moldova until 2005. That covers 43 settlements (small towns and cities) with a total population of about 1 million 500 thousand inhabitants and 77 rural settlements with a total population of about 237 thousand inhabitants.

The main priorities of the program are following:

- to increase access to drinking water sources and to improve water supply and sewage service quality;
- to improve environmental protection and the protection of water supply from pollution and depletion;
- to save water and energy resources;
- to rationalize tariffs for water supply and sewage services.

To achieve the 10th goal of the Millennium Development Goals, namely: to reduce by half by 2015 the number of persons without sustainable access to water, the Programme envisages that the ratio of the population with sustainable access to improved water sources will increase from 38.5% in 2002 to 68.5% in 2006. To achieve the 11th goal, namely: to significantly improve by 2020 the living conditions of persons from poor areas, the Programme envisages that the ratio of population with access to improved sewage will increase from 40.0% in 2001 to 90.0% in 2006.

In the process of implementation of the Programme it is planned to develop and modernize water supply and sewage systems in 156 localities, rehabilitate the 93,300 rural wells; to develop and to implement the pilot projects for ground water treatment with elimination of nitrates and sulphates by biological methods; to improve the monitoring of the level and quality of ground water; to improve assessment of groundwater usage; to prepare and to implement a set of measures for efficient surface water drainage; to restore and establish new water protection areas, river bank water protection belts and sanitary zones.

In 2004, under the aegis of the Government and with the support of World Bank has been developed and approved by Parliament the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy for the 2004 - 2006 period. This Strategy contains special chapters concerning water supply, sewage and environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources and plan of action with concrete measures and costs.

Now already the Programme is in the process of implementation. A number of projects concerning the Programme are been implemented from our own funds of Republic, grants and credits from international organizations and other Governments, especially financial support which has been rendered by the World Bank, the Governments of Denmark, Turkey and Switzerland and others. Now we are negotiating for reception of credits with the Governments of Italy, Poland and Kuwait.

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