

Education for Sustainable Development: Russian-Swedish Project

RUSSIAN SUSTAINABILITY NewsLETTER



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Editorial. Environmental context of the ending year

The year 2012 that is now drawing to an end had a special meaning in Russia with a large environmental component. It was the Year of Russian history, with growing importance of environmentally significant events. As usual, different entities of the historical process evaluate the events differently. Thus, the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment regards the year definitely positively, which cannot be said about the same Ministry's assessment by non-governmental organizations (read more about this in this issue). And the frustration of the environmentalists is easy to understand. On the one hand the authorities announce the course towards "green" economy, and on the other they are very stingy with practical actions to translate the declaration into reality.

The latest in a series of Russian novelties for greener life in the country was the creation of the Interdepartmental Working Group under the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation on issues related to climate change and sustainable development (Decree of 13 December 2012). As follows from the provisions of the interdepartmental group, led by presidential adviser A Bedritsky, its main task is to coordinate the activities of the authorities, NGOs, academic and other organizations on the implementation of the transition of the Russian Federation to sustainable development, approved by Presidential Decree from April 1, 1996, and the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 17, 2009.

But how is this certainly good sign consistent with that in the same year, such important events as Stockholm+40 and Rio+20 were almost unnoticed in the country? Why were such landmark environmental policy events as the 35th anniversary of the Tbilisi Conference on Environmental Education and the 40th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage no left without attention? And finally, why didn't the country somehow mark the 40th anniversary of the Decree on strengthening conservation and improving use of natural resources, historic for environmental policy in Russia?

To all these "why" there is no single answer, and this means that for Russian environmentalists, and for all who really is committed to the ideas of sustainable development, this is not the time to relax, even on the eve of new year, declared by the Russian president as the Year of protection of the environment.

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Trends in the environmental policy of Russia in 2012

In the last days of the year, WWF Russia offered the following original interpretation of their vision of environmental trends that will be continued in 2013:

1. The adoption of a large package of environmental laws has begun

In 2012, the State Duma passed the first law in the package of environmental legislation developed on behalf of the President in the latter half of the 2000s. In 2010-2011, President Dmitry Medvedev approved the assignment as a result of meetings of the State Council, many of which were devoted to the improvement of environmental legislation. Only in December 2012, the first of these laws was passed by the Parliament in all three readings. This is the Law on protection of the seas from oil pollution.

In 2013, WWF awaits the adoption of six more environmental laws: the Law on standardization, the Law on environmental assessment, amendments to the Law on protected areas, the Law on waste management, the Law on toughening responsibility for illegal trade and possession of rare animals and plants, and amendments to the Forest Code, restoring protection of forests from industrial logging. *"The most important is, of course, the adoption of the law on standardization and related laws on environmental assessment. They actually define new game rules for business, government and civil society organizations on the issue of control over industrial and domestic pollution. These laws will lead to a shift in the paradigm that has existed for over 20 years,"* said the director of WWF Russia **Igor Chestin**. The environmentalists also hope that this year Russia will ratify the Espoo Convention and the Aarhus Convention.

2. Public funding for environmental protection has increased

This is mainly due to the 2012 launch of large-scale projects such as the project on cleaning the Arctic (2.3 billion rubles allocated for 2012-2014.) and the Federal target program on Lake Baikal (the financing for 8 years is 58 billion rubles).

Work within the project on cleaning the Arctic began in August 2012. Members of the expedition have cleaned contaminated areas in the archipelago of Franz Josef Land from garbage. 43% of the funds allocated for the federal program for Baikal the authorities will spend on measures to reduce the pollution of the lake by waste and 20% on measures to reduce the discharge of pollutants into the lake. However, these costs will be in vain, if in 2013 the Russian authorities will not solve the problem of pollution of Lake Baikal by the pulp and paper mill. BPPM not only damages a Natural World Heritage, but is also unprofitable and works to the detriment of the country's budget.

3. The area of the country affected by fires in 2012 was the largest in the last 9 years

In the past year, the area of forest land affected by fires was, according to satellite data, more than 11 million hectares. Most forest fires in 2012 simply did not get into the official statistics: According to Rosstat data, from January to September fires covered slightly more than 2 million hectares of forest land (that is, 5.5 times less than according to the satellite data).

"The distortion and concealment of data have seriously affected the fight against fires," tells the head of Greenpeace Russia's Forest Program, **Alexey Yaroshenko**. *"The actual scale of the fires called for an emergency situation to be declared in at least 11 regions. This would automatically have meant an emergency situation of interregional or federal nature, with the need to mobilize additional forces and resources from the federal reserve. But this was not done, and there weren't sufficient forces to fight the disaster in the burning regions. Many residents of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions had to suffocate in the smoke for months."* A repetition of the dry and hot summer next year will inevitably lead us to a new catastrophe with forest fires

4. New legislative and judicial obstacles for environmental NGOs

This year laws on NGOs and meetings have been adopted, as well as amendments to the criminal code that expand the concept of "high treason" and "espionage". The law on noncommercial organizations

states that the protection of flora and fauna are not included in the concept of political activity. However, many other areas of environmental work - such as fighting pollution of the environment, fighting climate change and even protection of fungi (which are neither plants nor animals) - may become the reason for the organization being assigned the status of "foreign agent". So far, these laws have not directly affected the activities of environmental NGOs, but they can be used at any time if this becomes useful to opponents.

5. Russia is at the side of the international climate negotiations

In 2012, a new record was set on the ice minimum in the Arctic. Environmentalists attributed the reduction of ice primarily to anthropogenic climate change. At the same time, the international climate talks last year yielded few results. And those that have been achieved focus primarily on financial assistance to the weakest and most vulnerable developing countries.

But for Russia climate negotiations have been particularly unfruitful. In 2013 begins the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Our country decided not to participate in it, thus stopping the Russian Kyoto emission reduction projects. Neither did Russia participate in another international undertaking - the framework coalition Climate and clean air. The political decision to enter into it was taken, but since then - from mid-August - our country has been unable to move in this direction. The objective of the coalition is to reduce emissions of soot, a carcinogen that affects both human health and the climate. WWF hopes that in 2013, Russia will nevertheless become a real participant of this initiative, that the country will start soot monitoring and pilot projects, for example, transfer buses from diesel to natural gas.

6. Oil and gas companies postpone projects in the Arctic

In the second half of 2012 the development of Shtockman was delayed once again, Shell and BP suspended the projects in the American Arctic and Gazprom admitted that it was not ready for oil production at Prirazlomnoye. According to environmentalists, the oil and gas companies do not want to go to the Arctic, but they are being forced to by pressure from politicians and imperfect market mechanisms. In early 2012, WWF released a report on subsidies to the oil and gas sector. The survey showed that the state supports the extraction of oil and gas at the expense of taxpayers and the environment.

In addition, not one single company possesses technologies that could provide environmental safety for oil production in the Arctic. In August, Greenpeace and WWF - who declared 2012 the Arctic year - released a report that showed that the Prirazlomnaya oil platform in the Pechora Sea is unable to prevent and eliminate consequences of oil spills. Environmentalists hope that in 2013, oil companies will again postpone the launch of projects in the fragile Arctic.

Source: WWF Russia

Environmental outcomes in 2012

"In terms of reforming environmental legislation, we consider 2012 successful." This said the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Rinat Gizatulin** at the press conference Environmental Results of the Year, held December 26, 2012 at RIA Novosti.

During the press conference, the participants discussed the development of the system of protected areas, fire management, forest management, exploration of the Arctic shelf, environmental support for construction of Olympic facilities in Sochi in 2014, and other issues. R Gizatulin told about the main achievements of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia for 2012: *"First of all, on April 28, the President of the Russian Federation approved the basis of environmental policy in the Russian Federation, and on December 18, the RF Government approved the plan for its implementation,"* he said.



Participants of the press conference (left to right): Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Rinat Gizatulin, director of WWF Russia Igor Chestin and the head of Greenpeace Russia's forest department Alexey Yaroshenko.

Photo: RIA Novosti

Among the important results Deputy Minister Gizatulin marked the beginning of practical work on cleaning the country from contamination from past years: *"From the territory of the municipality Amderma village 5830 tons of waste and 500 tons of scrap metal has been removed; an area of 5.3 ha was cleaned. The island Alexandra Land has been cleaned completely and work has been done on Hooker Island in the archipelago of Franz Josef Land."* Gizatulin also reported on progress in the elimination of unauthorized dumps in the country: *"A total of 44 545 sites of unauthorized disposal of solid waste were discovered, many with the assistance of the citizens, and 31 013 of these sites have been eliminated."*

R Gizatulin stressed that the Government of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment conducted a lot of work in 2012 on reforming legislation: *"State programs for the period up to 2020 were adopted, on environmental protection, and on forestry development"*. *"A new specially protected area was created, the national park Land of Leopard, and the operating area of the North Ossetian state nature reserve was expanded"*, said R Gizatulin, speaking of the main results of the work of the Ministry in the field of environmental protection and the treatment of animals.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

State program on development of forestry in Russia

On December 7, 2012, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the draft state program "Development of forest management" for the period 2013-2020, developed by the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. In his presentation at the Cabinet meeting, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, **Sergey Donskoy**, noted: *"This program aims to improve the use, security, protection and reproduction of forests, ensure sustainable satisfying of the public's need of the forests' resources and health properties, while guaranteeing the preservation of their resource and ecological potential."* According to him, the program's total funding is 525 billion 800 million rubles. The document covers all issues of forestry and consists of four bearing subprograms.

In particular, according to the head of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the first subprogram, Preservation and protection of forests, is to reduce the loss of forest resources and to maximally prevent such loss in the future. The objectives of the subprogram include: improving the effectiveness of prevention, detection and extinguishing of forest fires, increasing the effectiveness of the protection of forests from pests, and prevention of illegal logging. *"As part of its implementation it is planned to conduct air monitoring over an area of 485 million hectares, for which it is planned to construct 180 hectares of runways, and new means of detection and suppression of forest fires will be developed. The health and sanitation measures will be increased by more than two times, which will clear our forests from the impact of the fires of the last two years,"* said Donskoy.

The second subprogram, Securing the use of forests, is aimed at creating conditions for efficient and intensive use of forests while maintaining their ecological functions and biodiversity, as well as gaining

better control over the use of forests. As a result of the subprogram, according to Donskoy, logging will increase by more than 100 million cubic meters by 2020. The objectives of this subprogram also include ensuring compliance with legal requirements in the area of forest relations, including effective supervision over how Russian Federation subjects implement the authority in forest relations referred to them.

"The purpose of the subprogram Reforestation is to balance the disposal and recovery of forests, and to increase their productivity and quality. The objectives of this subprogram are to restore dead and felled forests, to improve the selection properties of planting materials, and to ensure regular maintenance of forest plantations," said the head of the Ministry. By 2020, it is planned to conduct rehabilitation works on an area of about 1 million hectares of forest each year, and it is planned to create forest crops with improved hereditary properties.

The final sub-program, Ensuring the implementation of the Russian Federation state program on forestry development for 2013-2020, is aimed at increasing the efficiency of forest management. The bulk of the financial resources designated for this subprogram will be directed to the content of forest protection, and the authorities of subjects of the Russian Federation performing the function of state management of forests.

"One of the subprogram's top priorities is the creation of innovation centers, on which the coordination and implementation of advanced products and technologies in the field of forestry will be based. It is planned to establish two such centers at the St. Petersburg and the Far East Forestry Research Institute. No less important in achieving sustainable forest management is the quality of information on the condition of forests and their use. Such information is received during the state forest inventory. It is forecasted that the proportion of state inventoried forests will increase from 9% to 80%," Donskoy stressed.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

New nature reserves and national parks in Russia

By 2020, Russia will have an additional 11 new nature reserves and 19 national parks. This said **Vsevolod Stepanitsky**, Deputy Director of the Department of State Policy in the field of Environment Protection at the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, at a meeting of heads of nature reserves and national parks in Russia, held in Abakan (Khakassia Republic) from 4 to 6 December 2012. He stressed that over the last twenty years, the system of protected areas (PAs) in Russia has experienced a qualitative change: "Since the beginning of the nineties the total area of the protected area network in the country has increased by 80%. We will continue to improve the environmental protection system."

In his speech, Stepanitsky also noted the need for reform of environmental legislation in order to promote educational and ecological tourism, and improve funding and support to PAs: *"Today's society, businesses and the authorities associate protected areas with barriers to economic development. This practice must be radically changed, otherwise the Russian reserves will not be able to develop in the framework of international trends and provide adequate recreational and educational resources to their visitors."* *"In the last three years, there is a noticeable increase in funding of protected areas, in 2012, the total costs of protected areas is 78% more than in previous years. The financing has increased by 2.4 times, and I note that here we do not take into account the money spent by the Ministry on the large-scale program for eradication of environmental damage in the Arctic,"* said Stepanitsky.

The meeting participants reviewed the results for 2012 and discussed the development prospects for their territories. An expansion of the powers of state PA inspectors was noted, as well as development of tourism and environmental education, and a trend of a successful upgrade of personnel in the management structure of PAs.



Deputy Director of the Department for state policy and regulation in the field of environmental protection at the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Vsevolod Stepanitsky (pictured center) at a meeting of heads of Russian nature reserves and national parks.

Photo by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

The meeting was visited by the Head of the Republic of Khakassia **Viktor Zimin**. He spoke about the plans to develop a system of protected areas in the republic: *"In Khakassia 14 new protected areas will be organized in the period up to 2020, the total conservation area will triple. We support our nature reserves at the national level: revising the wages of state inspectors, acquiring modern equipment, supporting the introduction of modern technologies for monitoring."*

The event was attended by representatives of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Government of the Republic of Khakassia, PA managers, expert observers, UNDP / GEF, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Russia, the environmental education center "Reserves", the NGO Partnership for reserves, and the Bird Conservation Union of Russia.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

The environmental component of the Russian-Swedish Investment Forum

State Secretary, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation **Nikolay Popov** took part in the II Russian-Swedish Economic Forum in Stockholm. Popov made a presentation on improving the Russian legislation in the environmental field.

During the forum, the Deputy Head of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment held a working meeting with the State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Environmental Protection, **Anders Flanking**. The meeting was also attended by Sweden's Arctic Ambassador **Gustaf Lind**. Popov informed the Swedish side of the legislative work being done by the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as the draft laws already submitted to the Government. In turn, Flanking informed about projects in the field of ecology and environmental protection, which Sweden is going to offer in the framework of cooperation between Baltic Sea countries. Lind spoke about initiatives that Sweden intends to implement during its chairmanship of the Arctic Council, as well as the visit of the Swedish delegation to Moscow in the near future.

In addition, Popov held talks with the Director of Swedish state company Sweco Russia AB, **Bo Karlsson**. The company is performing a number of projects in Russia in the field of environmental protection, and after negotiations it was agreed to further develop the cooperation between Sweco and the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The Deputy Head of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment held a working meeting with the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Sweden **Gunnar Oom**, during which they discussed the prospects of Russian-Swedish cooperation in the environmental field.

In the investment forum organized by the trade representation of the Russian Federation in Sweden

participated representatives of the Swedish government, business community and the public, as well as Russian government agencies, regions and businesses.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Outcomes of the Doha conference

On December 7, 2012 ended the regular 18th session of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 8th Session of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (KP), held in the Qatari capital Doha. The Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation, the President's special representative on climate issues **A Bedritsky** and the head of multilateral cooperation in the field of environment of the International Organizations Department of the MFA **O Shamanov** told about the course and the main results of the International Conference on Climate Change at a press conference at RIA Novosti on December 13, 2012.

On all major issues of the negotiation process fundamental differences between developed and developing countries were revealed. The developing countries demanded a revision of the quantitative restrictions of greenhouse gas emissions announced by developed countries in the direction of greater reduction, the artificial limiting of transfer and use during the second period of emission reduction units accumulated during the 1st period. Participation of developed countries in the KP flexibility mechanisms was made subject to commitments of the 2nd period. The negotiators from developing countries demonstrated extreme rigidity of positions and unwillingness to compromise on any of the issues under discussion. The discussion of documents was inconsistent. The decisions of the 18th Session of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 8th Session of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol were adopted at the last minute on Saturday 8 December, after the formal end of the session.

The following was agreed and approved by resolution of the Meeting of the Parties (document FCCC/KP/CMP/2012/L.9): Quantitative commitments by developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the second period, the use of flexible mechanisms and transfer of greenhouse gas emission reductions from the 1st commitment period of the 2nd period, amendments to particular KP articles and applications, procedure for review of commitments as they are fulfilled in the direction towards increasing reduction. The duration of the 2nd KP period was set to 8 years. At the same time, quantitative commitments were made by the EU and Australia. This practically means that only 15% of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will be covered by commitments.

Developed countries were suggested to use the conditional use procedure of the 2nd KP period from January 1, 2013 and to notify the depositary of the UNFCCC about this. The decision also contained a requirement to achieve a reduction in emissions by 2020 by at least 25-40% compared with 1990 due to revision of the commitments as they are fulfilled, but not later than 2014. Use of the KP flexibility mechanisms is allowed only for the developed countries that have adopted quantitative commitments for the 2nd KP period. In turn, the unused quantity of emission reduction units from the first period that is allowed for transfer is reduced to 2,5 percent of the assigned amount calculated in the second commitment period.

Amendments to the Kyoto Protocol: The cumulative reduction in GHG emissions by developed countries by at least 18% compared to 1990 in 2013-2020 was established, the quantitative commitments by developed countries were approved (new format of Annex B to the KP), new list of GHG to be reported (new format of Appendix A), as well as a mandatory tax on all types of KP flexibility mechanisms to cover administrative expenses and support developing countries in their adaptation to climate change.

More at: <http://ria.ru/science/20121213/914612492.html>

Source: Press Service of Roshydromet.

Penalties for oil spills

"We need to significantly increase penalties for oil companies allowing oil spills during production and transportation" - this statement was made by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation **Sergey Donskoy** at the meeting on the prevention and elimination of pollution caused by oil spills held in the Ministry on December 10, 2012.

Donskoy noted that the companies Bashneft, Tatneft, Rosneft and Gazprom Neft did not in a timely manner provide the Ministry with data on the number of accidents, the area of oil spills, and measures for reclamation. The Minister stressed: *"We need to bring in Rosprirodnadzor to monitor the companies' implementation and development of plans to eliminate spills. For companies that do not fulfill these plans, possibilities of impact will be considered, up to the revocation of land."*

In addition, the Minister instructed the relevant departments and Rosprirodnadzor to study the issue of increasing penalties for companies that do not comply with requirements of oil spill prevention and response. The Minister cited data from the Ministry of Emergency Situations showing that in Russia more than eight thousand companies involved in the processing, storage and transportation of oil and oil products are required to develop plans for oil spill response, however, one in ten of these companies has not prepared such plans.

Deputy Head of Rosprirodnadzor **Amirkhan Amirkhanov** noted in his report that the greatest number of violations related to oil pollution of the environment was detected in the Urals Federal District. Within the district about 1400 cases of pollution by petroleum products were reported, and almost all occurred in only one subject - the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Yugra. At the same time Khanty ranks first in oil production in the Russian Federation.

At the end of the meeting the Minister informed about a number of proposals to be submitted to the government commission for the development of the energy sector. These are instruments of regulation that include mandatory insurance, changes in methods of estimating the damage to soil in case of contamination with oil and oil products, and changes in licensing agreements. *"All these proposals will be prepared before the end of December 2012,"* said Donskoy. The main causes of oil spills he described as a high degree of depreciation of equipment, illegal tie-ins into pipelines, accidents during the transportation of petroleum products, non-operational response followed by incoherence in the localization and liquidation of oil spills, inadequate, and sometimes complete lack of funding needed to prevent spills.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Meeting of the Maritime Board of the Russian Government

A meeting of the Maritime Board of the Russian Government, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister **D Rogozin**, was held on December 4 in the building of the FSUE CRI Center. The main topic of the meeting was the implementation of Russia's state policy in the Arctic up to 2020 and beyond. At the meeting, presentations were made by the Minister of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, **I Slyunyaev**, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation **V Olersky**, Commander of the Navy, Vice-Chairman of the Maritime Board **V Chirkov**, the Head of the Federal Agency for Subsoil Use **A Popov**, the Director of the Department for deep water studies of the Russian Ministry of Defence **A Burilichev**, and the Deputy Director of the Administrative Department of the Government of the Russian Federation, the Executive Secretary of the Maritime Board **A Balyberdin**.

The meeting was attended by the head of the Arctic group of the State Duma **M Slipenchuk**. In his opinion, the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is a catalyst for strong, sustainable development in the Arctic and the Russian North. Its revival and active use as both traditional traffic artery connecting the North and Far East sea basin to the rivers of Siberia and the Far East, can significantly reduce the cost of shipping, and make it a viable alternative to the Suez and Panama canals. Improvements in port and service infrastructure of the SMP will increase Russia's competitive advantages in the struggle for the development of resources in the Arctic.

Speaking at the Conferences of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR) in Iceland and Finland in 2012, M Slipenchuk invited parliamentarians of the Arctic region to develop a new institutional framework for the international public-private partnership in the Arctic, to develop the concept of development of the region with consideration of the interests of all the Arctic states. He also announced the idea to establish international Arctic consortia. In this regard, the creation of the Arctic banking consortium and the international public-private consortium Northern Sea Route, with Russia as the main participant, are seen as promising.

Source: Official website of the State Duma deputy Mikhail Slipenchuk

Meeting of the Public Council under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation **Sergey Donskoy** supported the initiative of members of the Public Council under the Ministry of Russia to increase the penalties for violation of environmental laws. During the meeting of the Public Council of 5 December 2012, Deputy Director of State Policy in the field of environmental protection under the Ministry **Nikolai Nefedyev** presented draft amendments to the Administrative Code to differentiate penalties in the handling of industrial and domestic waste. Chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, RAS Academician **Nikolai Kasimov** supported the bill. Following the meeting, the Natural Resources Minister instructed the relevant departments to consider the suggestions in their further work.

The meeting also reviewed the draft state program Development of Forestry until 2020, the changes in the program Protection of Lake Baikal and the socio-economic development of the Baikal area for 2011-2020, as well as issues concerning the clean-up of the Franz Josef Land archipelago from accumulated waste. First vice-president of the Russian Geographical Society, N Kasimov expressed satisfaction with the work in the Arctic: *"We are dealing with the elimination of 'chemical time bombs'."* In 2013, the work on the program to clean the islands of the western sector of the Russian Arctic will continue on Graham Bell Island in the eastern part of the Franz Josef Land, one of the most polluted islands.



Chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, the first vice-president of the Russian Geographical Society, Academician Nikolai Kasimov and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation Sergey Donskoy at the meeting of the Public Council of 5 December 2012.

Photo by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation

In turn, the Director of the Department of Economy and Finance at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment **Sergey Bubenov** said that changes in the federal program "Protection of Lake Baikal" will be introduced for the purpose of redistribution of funding. With the recent adoption of the program and the complexity of the technical tasks, it is necessary to adjust the timing of the work to eliminate the accumulated losses (BPPM landfills). Funds in the amount of 78 million rubles will be used for financing of protected areas in the Baikal region.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Seminars on Sustainable Development in the Republic of Komi

In late 2012, the Russian-Swedish project on education for sustainable development held seminars in the Republic of Komi, which is part of the Barents region. The seminars, carrying title Sustainable development of northern areas: Swedish Experiences and Russian realities, were held in Syktyvkar and Ukhta. In total, more than 50 people participated - representatives of administrations, environmental management organs, and teachers from local universities. The seminar in Syktyvkar was prepared with the assistance and active participation of the professor of the University of Syktyvkar **G Kniazeva** and in Ukhta of the vice-rector of Ukhta State Technical University **V Kuleshov** with the support of the city administration. The seminars were active and showed a real interest in such events among the Russian audience.



Participants of the workshop in Ukhta, held at the State Technical University. The picture was taken on their request after receiving their SEPA certificates of participation in the training. In the center of the image are professor B Kjellström, professor Y Mazurov, vice-rector V Kuleshov, the coordinator of the project, Sven-Erik Österlund, and professor L Rydén.

Photo by Ludmila Buryak, RANHiGS

At the very end of the year the organizers of these seminars received a message from **Olga Polikarpova**, teacher of biology, ecology and geography of the Moscow region, and participant of the workshop held in Moscow in April 2012. On behalf of her colleagues in the inter-regional environmental organization Ekosoyuz she writes: *"We thank you for a real strengthening of this theme, this is about our environmental safety as a whole. We all need to urgently expand the circle of consolidation, cooperation and action in this direction. Please accept our sincere greetings on the coming New Year and our wishes for good health and further harmonious development with nature and business cooperation in all directions of environment and nature."*

Thanks to Olga for the sincere words, thanks to the Swedish and Russian colleagues for commitment to sustainable development, thanks to **SEPA** for their support to this project, so positively received in Russia already for the fourth year in a row!

Source: Own information
