

Education for Sustainable Development: Russian-Swedish Project

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Editorial: Milestones in March on the path to sustainable development

The most important event in the internal life of Russia in March was the presidential election held on the first Sunday of the month. The winner in the first round, as expected, became the acting chairman of the Government Vladimir Putin. The inauguration will take place in early May.

There were no intrigues in the election campaign. But there was a new element in the form of a series of policy articles by the main candidate for the presidency of the country in which sustainable development was mentioned as a national benchmark for the future. Matters of ecological development of the country have not been the subject of increased interest in the pre-election debates. However, during the election period, Putin has repeatedly touched on these issues one way or another. Thus, two weeks before the election, in a discussion of the draft framework for state policy on environmental development of the Russian Federation until 2030 in the Russian government, he said: *"We need ... to achieve a balance ... between the problems of economic development and the demands of the environment."*

On March 22 the elected president held a government meeting on the implementation of the tasks set out in his pre-election articles. Speaking at the meeting, Putin said: *"We need to master not only the enormous resources that would be required to implement the stated goals, we need to achieve a new quality in both education and healthcare, and also in the field of defence and security, and other critical areas of state activity. The money should be exchanged for reforms, work to increase efficiency."* Hopefully, among these critical areas there will be a place also for the environmental aspects of sustainable development.

Against the background of the electoral passions, little attention was paid to some dates of no small importance in the history of Russian society that are most relevant to the issues of sustainable development in Russia. Here, we limit ourselves to mention two important ones.

250 years ago, Peter III signed a manifesto on the freedom of the nobility, liberating them from compulsory service. This could have become analogous to the British Magna Carta. Instead, it actually weakened the nobility's incentives for constructive work, and caused an abrupt halt among the peasants.

In contrast to the manifest of March 1, 1762, the establishment of the Permanent Commission of nature protection of the Russian Geographical Society 100 years ago has undoubtedly played a positive role in Russian history. It is precisely this society that founded and laid the foundations of public policy for the conservation of natural heritage, so relevant in our time.

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Cooperation in the development of deposits in the Arctic

March 30th Prime Minister **Vladimir Putin** met with the head of the Norwegian company Statoil **H. Lund** and the head the French company Total, **K. de Margerie**. They discussed plans for joint projects, in particular for the development of the Shtokman and Kharyaga fields.



Turning to the partners, Vladimir Putin said: *"We have long-standing good relations; both companies have been operating in Russia for a long time and successfully. I hope that in the large projects that we are discussing now, we will say, you will also be successful. We will take one more step in the development of our cooperation - this applies both to oil and gas production.*

We have more new opportunities with our Norwegian partners. I am referring to the on the section in the North. Decisions taken at the political level must of course be appropriately implemented at the commercial level. I think we are quite able to negotiate joint work in the North, where your company has very good experience, advanced technology, a high level of competence. I hope that at the corporate level, at the level of relevant government departments, will be found such projects and solutions that will allow us to move forward.

Besides Statoil we have many other reliable partners, including, of course, Total. Total works with both the largest state-owned companies and with private companies, and indeed, the plans that your company has in Russia, are very far-reaching."

It is known that the Shtokman gas field is unique in many respects. 3.8 trillion cubic meters of gas and 37 million tons of gas condensate - such a resource base is the foundation that will ensure the sustainable implementation of this project.

Source: The official site of the Prime Minister of Russia V. Putin.

Climatic features in Russia in 2011

The regular edition of the "Report on the peculiarities of climate in the Russian Federation in 2011" has been published. The report is an official publication of Roshydromet. Its annual publication began five years ago due to the significant growth of interest in the issues of climate and climate change. The report has been prepared by a team of leading experts headed by Roshydromet head **A. Frolov** on the basis of data from the state monitoring network.

The report notes that 2011 as a whole in Russia entered the list of the five warmest years over the period of instrumental observations; the average temperature anomaly was + 1.55 °C. The average annual temperature anomalies in Russia are almost twice the global temperature anomalies, indicating that the preservation of a greater rate of warming in our country compared to global warming. An important seasonal feature of the year was a warm spring and summer and a very cold winter. Outbreaks of cold in the winter period (up to -3, -4 ° C) were observed in the north of European Russia, the southern part of Western Siberia and in the centre of Central Siberia. For the northern polar area 2011 became the warmest year since 1936.

The reductions in sea ice observed since the early 1980s has accelerated sharply in the late 1990s, and in September 2011 the sea ice covered 4.61 million km², which is the second minimum value since 2007 (4.30 million km²). The warm summer of 2011 led to an increase in average 10-15% of the thickness of the seasonally thawed layer (STL) of the permafrost, with the exception of Chukotka and Kamchatka. The European North of Russia had the largest STL increase over the observation period.

The climatic conditions that determined the productivity of agriculture in Russia in 2011 were generally more favorable compared to the dry year 2010. But as a result of the drought in the south-eastern part of European Russia, agriculture suffered significant losses compared to the high-yield year 2008. Large areas were affected by soil drought also in the Altai region and Transbaikalia.

The peak values of the size and intensity of the ozone "hole" over the Arctic zone in 2011 were higher than long-term averages. The spring anomaly of total ozone at high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere was one of the largest over more than half a century of observations. This gives grounds to speak about a worsening ozone problem in the Arctic.

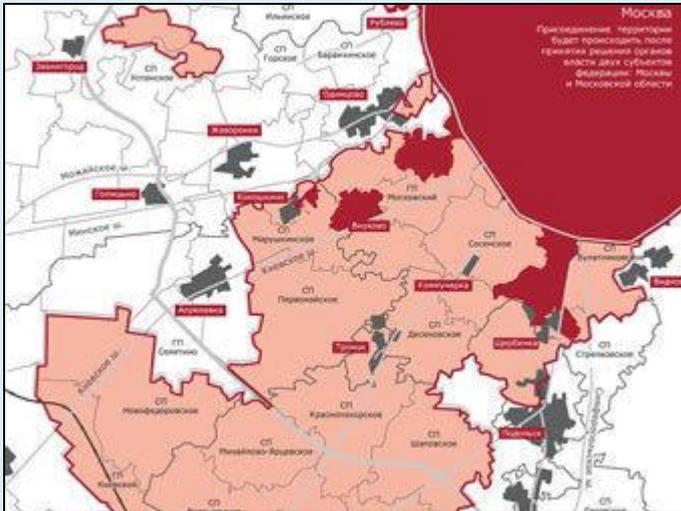
The authors of the report hope that the presented monitoring results of current climate in Russia will find practical application in the implementation of the unified state policy on adaptation to climate change and will contribute to more effective management of the risks associated with extreme climate events that lead to disasters, and that they also will stimulate efficient use of valuable climatic resources.

Source: Press Service of Roshydromet

Public Chamber against the expansion of Moscow

The "Greater Moscow" project initiated by President **D. Medvedev** raises more and more questions among professionals in the sphere of urban planning and the general public of the country. Information on the project first appeared at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum on June 17, 2011. In December 2011 the parliaments of the capital and Podmoskovie ratified the agreement on the new borders of Moscow. In accordance with this, Moscow will expand by nearly 149 thousand ha, thus increasing its territory by 2.5 times. A map of the new boundaries is available at the Moscow government web site. Part of Podmoskovye will officially become Moscow on July 1, 2012.

It is a known fact that this project, unprecedented in the national practice, was passed without taking into account the views of experts and without environmental review. This circumstance was the focus of the roundtable held March 28 in the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, known for its loyalty to the authorities of the country. Members of the working group on environmental protection of the Public Chamber have criticized the "Big Moscow" project. According to Kommersant (29.03), at a meeting of the group a resolution was adopted demanding to suspend the project until public hearings and environmental impact assessments have been conducted.



"On this project there have been neither public hearings, nor state, nor environmental review," - said World Bank expert Sergei Vasiliev. According to him, it is necessary to also conduct transport and sociological reviews. According to the website of the Public Chamber, he is supported by Public Chamber member Bogdan Novorok, who said that the project lacks "real public examination".

Another panelist, deputy director of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science Arkady Tishkov, said that many burial grounds for anthrax victims are located on the land being merged as well as "simply unsuitable land".

According to a member of the Moscow City Society for the Protection of Nature Anton Khlynov, forests around Moscow will be threatened if the project is implemented. "Forest lands will legally be settlements' lands, and there is no guarantee that the forests will be preserved," he said. Previously, residents around the Rublevo-Uspensky highway have protested against the project, fearing that the forest will end up in a built-up area.

In the Moscow City Council "Kommersant" was told that it is too late to cancel the project. The Moscow government declined to comment.

Source: Own information

On the eve of the conference "Rio +20"

Russia's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Yuri Trutnev** has taken part in the ministerial meeting of the Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on environment policy. The session was held in Paris 29-30 March 2012 in Paris. During the session, the participants discussed the strategy of "green growth" and its implementation by countries of different levels of economic development, resource availability and environmental pressure.

During the event, there were discussions about the results of environmental activities and future plans,

links between environmental policies and science, the contribution of the achievements of the OECD in the preparation of the international conference Rio +20, and other topics.

In his speech at the opening of the session Trutnev said: *"The Russian Federation supports the priorities of the OECD, and for its part, has taken the necessary steps to accede to it, including in the field of ecology."* According to Yury Trutnev, Russia expects to become one of the leading members of the organization. *"25% of the forest and 20% of the water resources of the whole world are located on the territory of the country, so its contribution to the preservation of nature on the planet cannot be overestimated. Russia is a kind of global ecological reserve of the earth,"* said the head of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

Yuri Trutnev spoke about the reform of the Russian environmental legislation and its harmonization with international law, in accordance with the requirements of the OECD. According to him, out of 37 OECD normative acts in the environmental field, for 23 acts the state regulation in the Russian Federation meets the stated requirements, and for 14 acts Russia has requested a "transition period" for the implementation of international legal norms in the Russian legislation. "In this regard, we consider the process of accession to the OECD as an integral part of the reform of environmental legislation", he said.

During the session it was announced that the OECD will present a Review on environmental protection up to 2050. In addition, practical steps will be offered that the country take to achieve sustainable development.

The Russian Federation together with members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted a joint statement by the ministerial session of the committee on policies in the environmental area for the international conference Rio +20.

In this address support is expressed for the strategy of "green growth" for the sustainable development of nations and enhancement of international cooperation in environmental protection. The statement also emphasizes the need for rational use of natural resources, and maintaining a reasonable balance between ecology and economy. We recall that the Russian Federation is in the process of accession to the OECD. Over 40% of the regulations of the organisation are devoted to environmental issues.

The statement signed March 30, 2012 is the first international political document in the sphere of ecology, approved at the level of leaders of environmental protection agencies of OECD countries with the participation of Russia.

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

Sochi: the development of "green" construction

In Sochi a group of international experts in the field of environment and ecological construction have begun their work. The first joint meeting of the Steering Committee and working groups was held March 26, 2012, on the basis of the Environmental Science Education Centre of Sochi National Park, established in the framework of the Olympic construction program. The groups' work is coordinated by the Management Committee under the chairmanship of Adviser to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Murad Kerimov** and the head of the UNEP mission **Theodore Aubin**.

The meeting defined the scope, timing and form of reporting in key areas. "Our task is to work together to make a clear sequence of actions and preserve the rich nature of the Black Sea area of Sochi," said T. Aubin. "Already by summer we will have analyzed all the details of the environmental component of the Olympic construction in Sochi, and will present our recommendations to the Russian government. The final activity plan, which will make the Sochi Games as "green" as possible, will be ready in July.

As the director of the environmental supporting department of state corporation Olimpstroy **G. Vatletsov** explained: "UNEP has recommended experts that will look at what has planned, what has been done and what still needs to be done. We want to get a qualified appraisal of our solutions, as well as authoritative proposals that will remove tension on environmental issues around the Olympic project," said Vatletsov.

Supervision and control over the implementation of compensatory measures and restoration of the ecosystem of the valley landscape along Mzymta river will be carried out by the staff of the Federal Service for supervision of natural resources. "Staff from the service have been included in the working group to coordinate this activity," said Deputy Head of Rosprirodnadzor **Amirkhan Amirkhanov**.

"Foreign experts are working together with representatives of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources, the company Olimpstroy, leading scientists, as well as activists of environmental organizations, on the activities to be implemented in the period before and after the Olympics. The main task for the groups is to develop a comprehensive plan to improve the situation and restore the ecosystem as a whole," says M. Kerimov.

The international experts recommended by the leadership of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), will get acquainted with Russian specialists' action plan to minimize and compensate for damage to the environment in preparation for the 2014 Olympics, they will assess the economic and environmental feasibility of the proposed conservation and recovery solutions as well as their compliance with international standards.

Three working groups will be engaged in the issues of compensatory measures, environmental monitoring and restoration of ecosystems and landscapes of the Mzymta river valley.

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

Russia's economic zone in the Arctic

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Dennis Khramov** has talked with radio Voice of Russia on the prospects of expanding Russia's economic zone.

"We have the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia Denis Khramov as our guest. The theme of our conversation is the Arctic and the Arctic shelf. The topic the Arctic and the Arctic shelf and its development recently is discussed quite actively.

There are a lot of arguments and opinions of the expert community, a lot of talk on the power level in all countries, and perhaps above all in Russia. How important are the Arctic issues for Russia, in particular those related to expanding the borders of the continental shelf?

Khramov: The Arctic, the Arctic region, the Arctic Ocean - these words are not strangers to many generations of Russians and citizens of the former Soviet Union, because of the thunder of the victories of polar explorers such as Papanin. At the time, every boy wanted to be on the ice, and little has changed since then.

To us the Arctic continues to be one of the priorities of both foreign and domestic policy. People live there, and there in the harsh conditions natural resources are extracted, both renewable ones, such as fish, and non-renewable ones. The Arctic shelf is very rich with hydrocarbon resources.

As for the prospects of expanding the boundaries of the continental shelf, it should be noted that Russia

has signed the special Convention on Maritime Law. In accordance with this document, establishing the outer limit of the continental shelf of any state is the main guarantee for securing the rights of that state to the natural resources located within this continental shelf.

That is, the international community has identified a list of rules, under which all coastal states have agreed to define their own boundaries. We too are a signatory to this treaty, and have pledged to abide by its rules.

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

Jubilee anniversary of World Water Day

In connection with the 20th anniversary of World Water Day, Russia's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has called on every citizen to a careful attitude towards the water resources of the Russian Federation.

This day was proclaimed by a UN General Assembly resolution in 1992 and aims to draw public attention to the condition of water bodies, to the problems of shortage of drinking water and water management, and to the role of water in the lives of everyone on Earth. In Russia, it is observed since 1995.

The theme of World Water Day 2012 is devoted to the issues of reliable water supply and food security. According to the UN, the largest consumer of freshwater in the world is agriculture.

In Russia, the structure of water consumption is as follows: production needs - 60.2%, household and drinking needs - 18.3%, irrigation - 13.6%, agricultural water supply - 0.9%, other needs - 6.5%. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia, in 2010 of the total water intake from natural water bodies of 76 497 million m³, water loss during transport from sources to consumers totalled 7.528 billion m³. Of these, the greatest water losses occur in agriculture - 4.487 billion m³.

To reduce transportation losses and improve water quality the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Rosvodresursy are implementing a package of measures. In 2008-2011, work has been carried out on reconstruction, overhaul and repair of hydraulic structures on 900 sites; on 800 of these sites work has been completed.

Russia is one of the world's countries with the largest water supply; the amount of renewable water resources amounts to more than 4000 km³. However, abundant water supplies are not a cause for reckless spending of the water. As is the case with other resources, water conservation is essential to reduce costs in the production of industrial and agricultural products, as well as in the housing sector.

In the period from 2008 to 2011 the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources has developed a package of legislation to improve the rational use of water resources, improve the ecological status of water bodies, raise the level of protection from adverse impacts of water and good governance in water management. A Water Strategy for the Russian Federation up to 2020 has been adopted. A basis for the implementation of a unified state policy on water management has been created. The concept of the federal target program "Development of water sector of the Russian Federation in 2012-2020" has been adopted. To date, the draft of this program has been prepared and submitted to the Government of the Russian Federation. The State Duma has passed the first reading of a bill aimed at regulating the economic development of territories with risk of flooding.

To ensure the safety of the population and economic objects from the adverse impacts of water, construction of engineering structures has been carried out, flood prevention measures have been

taken, and the capacity of watercourses improved. In 2008-2011 more than 250 objects of protection from adverse impacts of water have been built, with a total length of 400 km.

In order to meet the regions' needs of water resources Rosvodresursy conducts a wide range of works: new construction and restoration of the design capacity of existing reservoirs, optimizing the use of available water resources and water management options, based on the specific conditions of water availability during the specific period, establishing quotas for intake and discharge.

In 2008-2011 work was carried out on construction and rehabilitation of water reservoirs and water systems of 15 objects; 8 objects, including the water system on the river Samur (Dagestan), Sorochinskoy Reservoir on the river Samara (Samara region), Shemurshinsk reservoir (Chuvash Republic), Chermozsk pond and the pond on Lysva river in the village Zyukayka (Perm Territory), and others have been put into operation. The result of the measures was the increase in total reservoir capacity and water yield of over 520 million m³. The budget for this amounted to 6.8 billion rubles and the economic effect of the implementation of activities was 17.2 billion rubles.

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

Teaching material on climate change

The flow of information on climate change in the media gives a very mixed picture; to understand it is very difficult for an adult and almost impossible for a child. WWF's new textbook helps separate facts from rumours. In the end of March, one of a series of regional WWF workshops on climate change and the preparation of appropriate teaching materials was held in Arkhangelsk. The participants were about 40 teachers of city schools, as well as staff and students of the Institute of Natural Sciences and Biomedicine of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University.

Today, the growing instability of the climate, its change, is becoming increasingly visible not only to scientists, but also ordinary people. What awaits mankind in the future? What kind of disasters are we facing? From the total flow of information it is impossible to draw unequivocal conclusions about what is true and what is a myth. *"It is very important to explain to people that the climate change during the last 20-30 years is primarily due to the actions of man, who by burning fossil fuels increases the greenhouse effect. This is not a myth and not a bluff, but a serious reality that can be adapted to, and worst case scenarios can be prevented,"* says **Alexei Kokorin**, head of the WWF program Climate and Energy.

At the beginning of the seminar Alexei Kokorin showed the audience thematic presentations on global climate change and the situation in the Arctic. *"Understanding the issue is not easy. How can we link small scale warming in decades, and our path towards a new ice age on a scale of tens of thousands of years. How can we tie a negligible increase in average temperatures to the increase in extreme climate,"* says Alexey Kokorin. *"Remember the summer of 2010 and the fires in the central regions of Russia. Also in Arkhangelsk there was a wave of "heat" last December- 10 degrees above the normal temperature. Of course, the December heat did not lead to great damage, but it is a serious signal - the "heat" will not always occur in winter. Today we have discussed what could happen in the next 10-20 years. There are positive effects, too, but there are more negative ones, and we need to prepare seriously for them."*

The second part of the event was devoted to discussion of the new sections of the training manual, which WWF is preparing with the financial support of USAID based on materials of Roshydromet and institutes of the Russian Academy of Science.

The aim of the publication is to in a clear and accessible way provide reliable scientific facts about climate change. Another equally important task is to encourage people to act locally, and show teachers and young people how they can make a contribution to the efforts of mankind to mitigate the effects of climate change. The manual will be more complete than the previous version, taking into account the comments of interested parties on the 2010 edition of "Climate Change. Handbook for teachers of senior classes". The book is intended for teachers, lecturers and students of pedagogical universities, further education teachers and all those interested in climate change. The publication will be completed and submitted to the regions in the spring of 2013.

Source: Press Service of the WWF Russia

Hazards of offshore natural gas production

A large leak of natural gas occurred March 25 at the Elgin platform in the North Sea, owned by French oil company Total. The gas condensate that came into the sea formed an oil slick about 11 kilometres in length. According to the WWF, the accident at the gas production platform Elgin in the North Sea, owned by Total, shows how dangerous the production of hydrocarbons on the continental shelf of the Arctic seas is.

The leakage occurred under water and the company has not yet been able to determine the cause of the accident. Today there are no accurate estimates of anticipated volume of discharge, nor of the time that will be required to eliminate the leakage. *"The environmental problems lie in the fact that in addition to methane, which is a great danger in the event of any fire, and also is a greenhouse gas, sulfur compounds come into the water. This threatens to increase the acidity of water, which will obviously have a serious negative impact on the ecosystem. How serious is yet to be seen. In addition, an oil slick as already been formed in the area of the accident, so it is an especially dangerous accident, showing the complex risks of gas condensate production. We hope that all the information related to the accident will be open,"* says **Michail Babenko**, coordinator of the oil and gas policy of WWF's International Arctic Programme.

It is believed that gas and gas production cause less harm to the environment than petroleum and petroleum products. *"But the accident on the platform in the North Sea shows that production of hydrocarbons cannot be absolutely safe, and pollution of the marine environment as a result of this activity is not an uncommon phenomenon,"* says **Ekaterina Khmeleva**, WWF Russia's program manager for environmental law. *"A large international company has for several days been unable to stop the gas leak in the platform, despite the availability of legal, financial and technical resources to respond."* The Arctic is an extremely vulnerable area, and because of its climatic conditions oil spills are more likely to occur precisely here, and the consequences of the spill is more difficult to eliminate than in other regions. This is due to lack of natural light, low temperatures, drifting ice, strong winds and poor visibility. When starting oil production in the cold Arctic seas, one must possess not only efficient technologies, means of oil spill response, knowledge about the impact of oil on Arctic ecosystems. In our country, which has already begun active development of the Arctic shelf, there is practically no effective legal system protecting the seas from such accidents. To change the situation, WWF is currently collecting signatures for a law on the protection of seas from oil pollution; 85,000 signatures have already been collected.

When the number of signatures will be over 100,000, WWF will give them to the State Duma. State Duma deputy Nikolai Valuev has vowed to environmentalists to "personally see to the consideration of the law on protection of the sea in the State Duma if 100,000 Russians sign on for this law." To leave your vote, please visit WWF: <http://www.wwf.ru/eh2012/vote/>

Source: Press Service of the WWF Russia

Environmentalists on the fate of polar bears

The ban on international trade of skins of polar bears may increase poaching in Russia; the WWF warns about this paradox. The polar bear is now included in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This means that international trade in these animals and their parts is permitted, but only by special permission of CITES.

A group of Russian experts has taken the initiative to transfer the polar bear from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES, to make impossible any movement between countries of polar bears and their skins or other derivatives for commercial purposes. According to them, a ban on international trade, will mean that poachers in Russia will kill fewer polar bears.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) does not support this initiative for several reasons. The fact is that Russian poachers killing polar bears are working mainly on the domestic market, rather than for illegal export. In any case, no attempts to export the skins of polar bears from Russia have been discovered, the cases known concern sales on the domestic market. Unfortunately, our country is one of the leaders in the domestic demand for polar bear hides. Accordingly, changing the status of the polar bear in the international conventions will not reduce poaching in our country. Moreover, some consumers are now buying legitimate products from Canada, where indigenous people are allowed limited hunting of polar bears and selling their skins. If the supply of skins from Canada ceases, the demand for Russian - illegal - skins will rise, and the poaching of polar bears in Russia may also grow.

At the same time production in Canada will not be reduced, as the polar bear trade is closely related to the financial well-being of the indigenous peoples in Canada. The local residents not only have the right to a limited production and sale of polar bear skins, but they can also sell their "right to shoot" to a trophy hunter - a representative of a non-indigenous nation. As a result, for example, when the U.S. imposed a ban on the importation of polar bear hides from Canada, the price of skins fell in Canada, and production quotas for indigenous peoples of the animal had to be increased in order to avoid conflict. Moreover, Canada's federal structure gives the right to the territories, including the autonomous territory of Nunavut (the state of Canadian Inuits as part of Canada) to establish their own additional quotas for certain animals, including polar bears. Thus, it is possible that if export of hides to other countries will be denied as well, then the skins will lose value even more, and the quota will grow further.

In addition, CITES requires certain formal conditions for the transfer of species from one appendix to another. Grounds for transfer are: a threat to the existence of species originating from the its massive commercial use, critically low numbers, a very limited area and the likelihood of significant decrease in the near future. At the moment the population of polar bears is indeed under threat, but its numbers, though not precisely known, is roughly estimated to be about 20,000 individuals across the entire Arctic area (i e the area is not limited). Thus, according to the WWF, it is necessary to first conduct research on the state of the population, especially in Russia, where there is practically no data on the number of the species. After that it will be possible to make a decision about which status of the polar bear in CITES will contribute the most to its preservation. It is also essential to effective control illegal harvest of polar bears, including studying and fighting the markets dictating demand. It is on these problems focus is needed to really help the polar bear.

Source: Press Service of the WWF Russia
