

FOREWORD

Few people today realize that the environment is a conditioning factor for the existence of each one of us. All of its components and ecosystems influence its trend. Their situation today is changing not only within the local and regional scope, but also at the global level. Several places have shown improved quality of the environment thanks to building the environmental infrastructure. Through implementing legal, educational, economic, organisational, and other instruments we have been trying to increase environmental safety, appropriateness, loading capacity, usability, and aesthetics. These include also building flood protection facilities in areas with the highest risk of floods in Slovakia. The world is facing environmental threats of global magnitude. These include, for example, impacts provoked by the changed climate or gradual depletion of selected strategic natural resources. All of this occurs also in consequence of a continuing rise in the world's population that exceeded the number of seven billion people. In many countries, this has spurred phenomena such as starvation, poverty, devastation of land and marine ecosystems, reduction of biodiversity, excessive exploitation of minerals, and enormous air pollution, water contamination and environmental pollution by waste.

The UN Conference for sustainable development - RIO + 20 organized in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 addressed the already mentioned as well as other issues. The Conference hosted also the Slovak delegation. This global conference of the highest rank analysed the possibilities of reducing the impacts of adverse environmental situation in social and economic aspects and proposed measures for its improvement and for securing sustainable development. Following the global RIO+20 conference, the European Union prepared its 7th Environmental Action Plan by 2020 (7. EAP) as its basic strategic document. The document aims mainly at improving air quality, staying within the limit values for pollution, flood protection, and other environmental catastrophes, as well as better effectiveness of waste management, etc. This programme called "Good life within the possibilities of our planet" focuses mainly on supporting the funding of those sectors of environmental protection which act as prevention or which eliminate the negative phenomena and acute national environmental risks, or increase environmental safety, appropriateness, and usability, especially through increased protection and more rational use of the components of the environment, natural heritage, natural resources. Priorities of the 7th EAP include protection of the EU population against the environmental pressures and risks that pose threat to its health or wealth, together with perfecting the knowledge base for the environmental strategy. These and other EU objectives are in line with the Programme declaration of the Slovak Government for the years 2012 – 2016 with an outlook to 2020 (approved by the Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 144/2012 and the Slovak National Council Resolution 24/2012) especially in its part titled: "Environmental care". Many environmental measures are included also in other chapters dealing with social stability and securities for people, sustainable economic development, knowledge society, education and culture, development of the regions of Slovakia, and quality of life as a result of cohesive society.

Slovak Ministry of Environment in its new sectoral national environmental strategy outlined the environmental objectives of the mentioned programme declaration of the Slovak government. This strategy builds on the assessment of the environmental situation in Slovakia from the European and

global perspective. At the same time, it represents documentary basis for drafting "Quality of Environment Operation Programme for the years 2014 - 2020". The Strategy was approved on March 28, 2013 and titled: "Orientation, principles, priorities, and major tasks in the environmental care in the Slovak Republic for the years 2014 - 2020". The Strategy sets out 8 basic roadmap objectives of the national environmental strategy, along with its 10 principles, 7 priorities, and 85 major tasks. The seventh strategic priority supports environmental formation and education, science, research and development, environmental monitoring, and information science, and voluntary instruments of the environmental strategy. Publication of the twentieth report on the state of the environment in 2012 within its seventh priority follows up the sectoral national environmental strategy. This report on the state of the environment differs from its previous version in that it adopts a broader approach to the process of environmental situation assessment in Slovakia since the start of its monitoring, and provides a more detailed comparison between the environmental indicators among the neighbouring and other EU member countries.

The year 2012 is considered a breakthrough year in the environmental care not only in the world and Europe, but also here in Slovakia. We are looking back over its twenty-year history and outlining a new route for our environment with the conviction that we will be able, through a common effort, reach all the environmental goals by 2020. Thus we will create more favourable initial conditions for improving the environment, building a knowledge society, and securing sustainable development and green growth in the Slovak Republic and the whole European Union by 2050 and for the rest of the 21st century.



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