



MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



# STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT SLOVAK REPUBLIC 2005





## FOREWORD

**Suitable living conditions** represent one of the basic conditions for human existence on the planet Earth. The ever increasing public pressure to exploit natural resources as well as to increase environmental quality calls for an adequate reaction in the form of environmental protection that would eliminate loads from the past, maintain existing values, and minimize potential negative impacts in the future. Human life is what we consider the greatest value.

Development of **environmental care and protection** builds on the rights and responsibilities set forth by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, obligations of the Slovak Republic within international conventions, and the country's membership in international organizations, specifically the European Union. Accession of Slovakia to the European Union made it possible to adapt to our legal system a number of **legal provisions in the area of environment**. We have carried out the implementation process, applying these provisions at our regional level, sometimes struggling with local challenges in some cases. New legislation has been enforced, including, for example, the law on integrated pollution prevention and control, on the system of major industrial accidents prevention, on environmental managerial systems and audit, on the process of environmental impact assessment of strategic documents, etc. These documents also contribute to the improvement of environmental quality – as there has been an improvement to air, water, and soil conditions. Notwithstanding a number of undesirable intentions and trends, we have made a progress in the area of nature and landscape protection, waste management, nuclear safety, flood protection, and other areas. We call to our witness a number of facts and data found in the document you are holding in your hands - **State of the Environment Report in the Slovak Republic in 2005**.

In 2005, there was a longer-term trend in reducing total volumes of produced emissions of air pollutants, which resulted in **improved air quality**. However, there still exists an adverse situation caused by exceeded limit values for suspended particles. This problem is also known in other EU countries.

The situation in **wastewater balance** has taken on a positive trend. It relates especially to the reduction in total volume of discharged wastewater. We are still far from being satisfied, although there has been a slight increase in the number of inhabitants connected to the public sewerage system, as well as a slight increase in the length of the sewerage network. We believe that construction of this **basic environmental infrastructure** must therefore become one of the priorities of the national environmental strategy.

Overall **production of waste** has been uniform over the recent years. There was a slight reduction in the volume of produced municipal waste, compared to the previous time period. Waste reclamation has also experienced a positive trend, both in the increased proportion of reclaimed waste, as well as in the increased number of capacities built for this purpose. Development of the recycling industry is greatly beneficial as well.

The long-term reduction in air pollution resulted in a stabilized **health condition of our forests**, with improved average defoliation in most tree species.

Notwithstanding a number of improvements to the environmental situation in Slovakia as mentioned in this **State of the Environment Report in the Slovak Republic in 2005**, we still face a number of challenges. One of the reasons for this is that not in all regions and municipalities, and across all the components of environment, does the quality of environment reach the level determined by pertinent legislation. There are weak points, especially in the area of the environmental infrastructure construction, with a number of transitional periods and exceptions set by the European Union. To reach a full harmonization of the infrastructure with the European standard is going to be much demanding and financially consuming.

**The Slovak government in its strategic program statement** set out priorities for the area of environmental care and protection for the following time period. The program considers environmental care and protection to be a decisive instrument in securing sustainable development, based on the integration of three equal pillars - economic, social, and environmental, in line with the European environmental legislation. Domestic financial sources including the Environmental fund and the business Recycling Fund, as well as international sources, should serve to define priorities and solve identified problems. We expect a substantial assistance from the European Union funds. Currently, we are creating an important document - **Environment Operation program**, which builds on the **National strategic reference framework of the Slovak Republic for the years 2007-2013**. This operation program builds on the analysis of environmental situation, on obligations of the Slovak Republic within the Integrated approximation strategy under the chapter of Environment, agreed transitional periods, as well as on tasks resulting from the newly adopted European environmental legislation. At the same time, it sets out high-priority sectoral goals for the European Union funds, streaming into environmental care and protection. We will try to advocate such market mechanisms and other economic instruments that would become an impulse for the **development of small and medium business activities in environmental area**, and meanwhile will try to consistently implement the „polluter pays" principle.

The Slovak government will also make efforts to **raise public environmental awareness**. **Periodic information campaigns on environmental situation** will also contribute to this goal. It helps to create an objective opinion poll and a good background for decision-making that will lead to improved environment, sustainable development, better control and assessment of sectoral strategies, as well as reaching a **higher level of environmental safety and adequacy** in Slovakia. In the past, we neglected this fundamental condition for quality of human life with its demands on man's immediate environment. For this reason the Slovak government in its strategic position statement also puts emphasis on **cultivating the environment and beautifying towns and villages**. Objective of the government is for each citizen to have conditions conducive to a life in a safe and suitable environment. This will require considerable costs to eliminate old environmental loads and causes of excessive pollution, deterioration, and damage to the environment in a number of impacted areas and municipalities. In other areas it will be necessary to maintain the existing or improved environmental quality and eliminate effects of any detrimental activity.

This **State of the Environment Report in the Slovak Republic in 2005** represents an effective way of spreading environmental information pursuant to Act no. 17/1992 Coll. on environment, as amended. The Report also includes comparisons with other European Union countries, together with development trends. I hope that this Report becomes your valuable source of information and will help you not only in your professional life, or satisfy your desire to know more objective facts about the environment we live in, but will also become an inspirational reservoir of ideas in your quest for a better environment in the Slovak Republic.



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