Armenia's experience on harmonizing national policy, programs, strategies, goals for climate change and sustainable development goals

The Republic of Armenia has at the highest level emphasized the need of harmonization of the principle of environmental protection and sustainable development. Article 12 of the Constitution lays down that the state promotes the protection, improvement and restoration of the environment, the rational use of natural resources, guided by the principle of sustainable development and taking into account the responsibility before future generations.

In June 2018, Armenia ratified the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the European, by which the parties committed to respect the principles of sustainable development, to develop and strengthen their cooperation on environmental issues, thereby contributing to the long-term objective of sustainable development and greening the economy.

One of the main and most important goals of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth. From June 2018, the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia has taken responsible mission to integrate environmental protection policy into economic, social and other policies, as laid down in Agenda 2030, in particular, in paragraph 8.4 of 8th Goal.

This policy will be carried out with a comprehensive involvement of all stakeholders - public authorities, non-governmental organizations, private sector (large, medium and small enterprises), citizens and others – to deliver everyone the idea that green economy and environmental protection component only promotes economic growth and prosperity, rather than hindering it. This commitment was also undertaken by the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU, which laid down that cooperation between parties shall also aim at integrating the environment into policy areas other than environmental policy.

In spite of the limited resources and geographical location, in particular, landlocked status, the Republic of Armenia does not avoid to set ambitious goals, as it is defined in point 78 paragraph 2 of Agenda 2030 and these goals are in harmony from the point of view of sustainable development and climate change.

This is evident by, for example, the ambitious goal to drastically increase, up to double the forest areas in the Republic of Armenia, which is a good example of achieving the 13-th Goal of Agenda 2030 and Article 4 of Paris Agreement.

On 10 September 2015 the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted Nationally determined contributions/NDCs under UNFCCC, which outlined the basic approaches of the Republic of Armenia in the sphere of climate change policy, NDC principles and other regulations.

In this document also we can find approaches, which are in harmony from the point of view of climate change and SD goals. In particular, the document states that climate mitigation actions should not lead to social and economic degradation, but should contribute to the socio-economic development of the Republic of Armenia, and ecosystem approach should be the basis for them.

  These examples, I have mentioned, are, of course, positive. These will be the basic principles on which Armenia's harmonized policy in the sphere of SDG and climate change will be developed, including the adaptation policy and taking into account the country's peculiarities.

Therefore, we also recognize the fact that there is still much work to be done, and from this point of view we find necessary to underline that Armenia is ready to extend harmonized activities in the sphere of SDG and climate change and to set more ambitious goals by reviewing nationally determined activities and regulations or by adopting new ones taking into account Country’s peculiarities, needs and capabilities.

SDG Lab is one of the successful examples for us. It is the world’s first National SDG Innovation Lab that is a joint initiative of the Government of Armenia and the United Nations. The Lab was set up in 2017, to draw up on innovative methodologies from across the world to support and accelerate the SDG implementation and nationalization process in Armenia. The main purpose of the lab is the identification of the implementation and funding gaps, introduction of prototype solutions and new models of funding as well as measurement of the impact and raise country profile and public awareness. One of the first steps taken by SDG Innovation Lab was consultation related to preventing plastic bags and initiation national media outreach. Currently the legislative initiation on new environmental tax is under development.

 Climate Change Technology Accelerator (CCTA) was launched on September 5, 2018.

 The core mission of CCTA is to establish a sustainable mechanism for the promotion of innovations and replication of technological solutions in Climate Change adaptation and mitigation activities related to agriculture and forestry sector. CCTA will come to help start-up teams, innovators, scientists, engineers, researchers, and entrepreneurs to move their products to the market, create new ventures, and promote innovation and entrepreneurship.