

CYPRUS TOWARDS EUROPE: THE ENVIRONMENT ASPECTS

PAPASTAVROS C.

Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Cyprus

ABSTRACT

The subject of the presentation is related with the long efforts, the Republic of Cyprus is doing in order to join the European family, and in particular, with the efforts to harmonize the environmental policies and practices with the *aqui communitaire*.

It is of great importance, to refer very briefly to the recent historical events that depict clearly the environment profile of the island

Since the summer of 1974 when Turkey occupied about 38% of the territory of Cyprus, an economic development boom is being carried out in the remaining free part of the country. The event of the invasion and the resulting impacts was the beginning of the transformation of the Cyprus agriculture life to urban one. At the same time it resulted to an uncontrolled development which coupled with mass tourism development leaded to land use conflicts, energy, water and waste over consumption, deterioration of habitats, and impacts on the social structure and cultural heritage.

It is admitted, however, that the invasion and occupation of the island by itself is considered as the biggest ecological and environmental problem of the country.

Main environmental problems which exist in Cyprus arise from the repercussions of the continuing occupation of part of the island of Cyprus, which, as a unique ecosystem, and cannot by force be divided, as this action is against the basic principles of the ecology, and democracy as well. Consequently, the existing situation, with its complex characteristics renders reunification of the two communities, and by extension, of the two economies and divided parts of the Cyprus ecosystem.

In 1990, Cyprus submitted an application for membership in the European Community, and accession talks initiated in 1996. Since that time, twenty two chapters were successfully accepted by the Commission, the Environment Chapter included. It is expected that by the end of December 2002, Cyprus will fulfill its obligations for the accession process.

The last years, during the accessions negotiations, concrete action has been taken in the areas of physical planning, sustainable agriculture, tourism and energy, water use, water, conversation, central sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants, reuse of treated effluent, water development, fertilizers and pesticides control, control of groundwater pollution, good agriculture practices, air and water quality monitoring control, industrial pollution control, environmental impact assessment, protection of habitats and species, environmental awareness and information, etc.

The adoption of EU's environmental legislation and policy, is more advanced in the fields of environmental impact assessment, pollution control, dangerous substances, water protection and nature conversation. The fields presenting the major weakness are the ones on waste management, noise pollution and ionizing radiation.

We know very well that the whole process towards the European Union is not an easy task, and in parallel of that, the response needed from our part is substantial. But, what more important is, it is the recognition that no more losses to our environment are excused.

We really like to thank again the organizers of the Conference for the honorable invitation to address this valuable meeting.