



Position

on the Environmental Conditions Affecting COVID-19 Pandemic

According to environmental experts, one of the root causes of **outbreak** of **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** disease is climate change and environmental imbalance mainly caused by human activities. Their researches suggest that an increase in animal-to-human transmission of disease (zoonotic diseases) and climate changes are closely interlinked.

Climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. Global researches (Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States, China, South Africa, and Kenya) have been conducted within the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to investigate the causes of emergence of zoonotic infections and their epidemic spreading (Spanish flu, SARS, Swine flu, Ebola, Zika, West Nile virus and novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) suggest that pandemics in the 20th and 21st centuries are not accidental and they are caused by human-induced systemic disruptions of ecological balance which are manifested in the following:

- Intensive unsustainable development of agriculture and extensive farming;
- Irrational use and exploitation of wildlife;
- Unsustainable use of natural resources, high rate of urbanization;
- Climate change.

Improvement of air quality due to the strict restrictive measures taken by a number of countries in fighting COVID-19 pandemic (industrial shutdown and quarant on the population) has only short-term and illusory effects. It is obvious that during economic recovery in post-crisis time greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂, NO₂ CH₄) will increase. Moreover, the medical waste accumulated on the earth (protective equipment for medical personnel and patient protpatients) that we received during the the pandemic should be counted and evaluated.

It is also noteworthy that the financial resources that the world has already spent and will spend to fight the pandemic exceed the funds needed to take preventive measures against the emergence and spread of epidemics and to stimulate long-term sustainable development.

Understanding that economic ties cannot be built without environmental impact, NGOs and experts in climate, energy, agriculture, health and urban planning urge the Government of Georgia to start working on a post-pandemic economic development strategy that will be based not only on economic benefits but also on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focused on meeting the basic needs of present and future generations** (based on the environmental protection, the rational use of natural resources). It will be logically reflected in fundamental reforms to be conducted in economic sectors, which are interconnected in terms of development, e.g., the development of agriculture, hydropower, tourism and other sectors of the economy depends on the health of forest ecosystems. agriculture, hydropower sector, tourism and other sectors of the economy depends on the health of forest ecosystems.

The government should pay close attention to the development plans for the following sectors:

1. Sustainable energy (in addition to hydro resources, wind and solar energy potential and geothermal water supplies should be used);
2. Reasonable use of water (water management, introduction of basin principles, water and rainwater treatment systems, inland water landscape);
3. Land use, land management (organic agriculture, urban forests and parks, forest development);
4. Clean transport (alternative fuel, public transport, hybrid and electric vehicles);
5. Energy security (sources of energy supply: coal, oil products, natural gas, biomass, hydro resources);
6. Biodiversity (environmental pollution, over-extraction, introduced species, habitat degradation);
7. Integrated coastal zone management (planning of sustainable use of marine resources);
8. Rational, sustainable extraction of mineral resources, use of modern/innovative technologies in mining.

When developing post-pandemic economic strategy the Government of Georgia will take into consideration our position and proposals to ensure welfare of the present and future generations.

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/146362/airborne-nitrogen-dioxide-plummets-over-china>
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