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## **LITHUANIA**

### ***Case Study on National Planning for Sustainable Development***

Final Report

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WHO Temporary Adviser

A project of the  
World Health Organization Headquarters  
and the United Nations Development  
Programme in collaboration with the World  
Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

1994

EUR/HFA Target 18

## TARGET 18

### POLICY ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

*By the year 2000, all Member States should have developed, and be implementing, policies on the environment and health that ensure ecologically sustainable development, effective prevention and control of environmental health risks and equitable access to healthy environments.*

#### Abstract

The aim of the project was to investigate and demonstrate the approaches to ensure that health and environmental issues are included as integral parts of national plans for sustainable development and also to strengthen the process of incorporating health and environment consideration in the development of national plans for sustainable development. The approaches followed were: that development plans should consist of sections dealing with the major development sectors, it should consider major socio-economic items that are important to health and environment, it should reflect the national health development strategies and focus on national issues and priorities etc. Visits to Lithuania were undertaken by WHO Headquarters and WHO Regional Office for Europe Environment and Health staff and by a temporary adviser to provide Lithuania with a comprehensive document on healthy sustainable development planning which are spelled out in the recommendations in this report. This project was undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

#### Keywords

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
CAPACITY BUILDING

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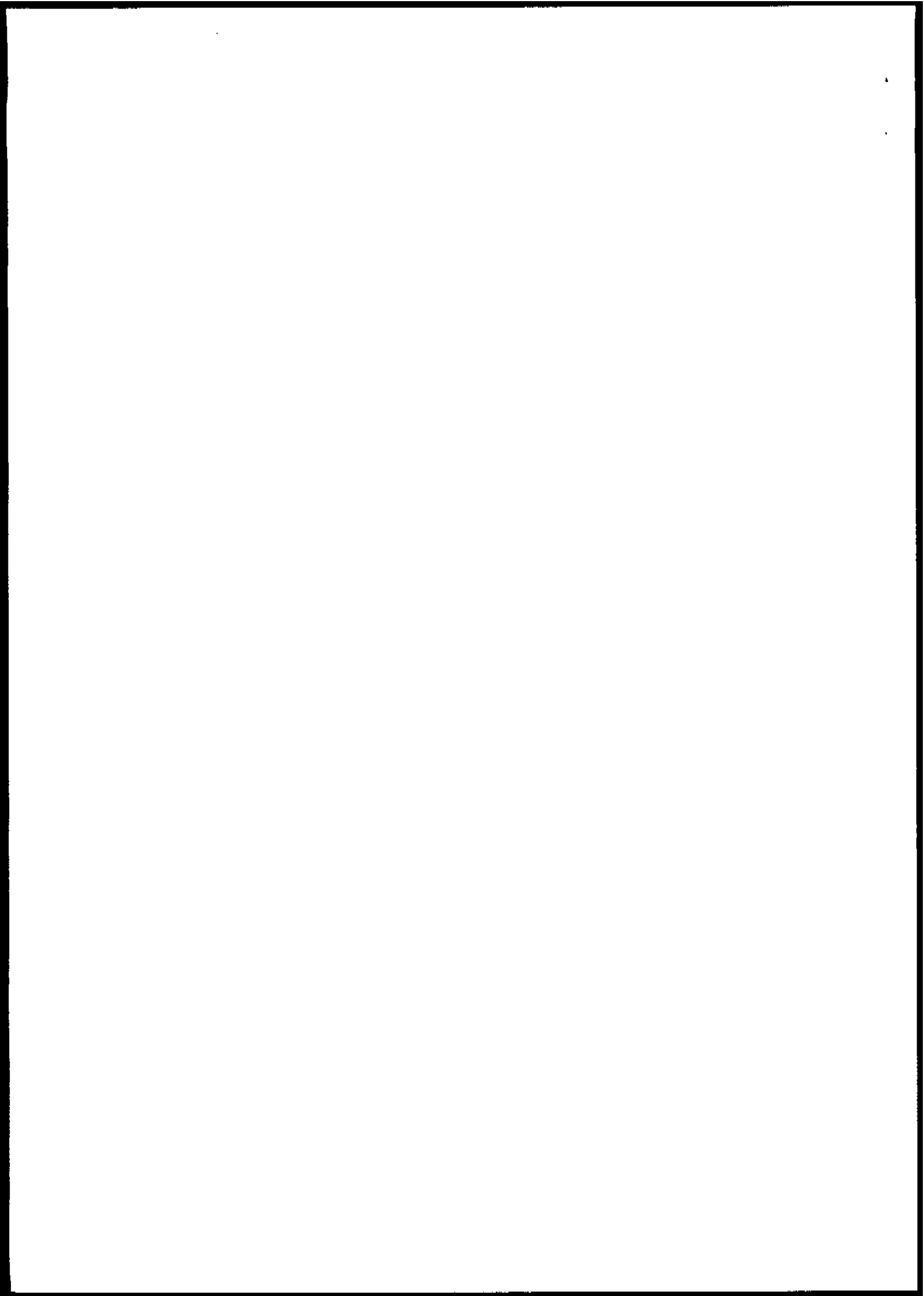
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## PREAMBLE

1. Following an initial contact in November 1993, the assignment as Temporary Adviser of the World Health Organization was confirmed by letter, dated 30 December, 1993, from Mr. Xavier Bonnefoy, Regional Adviser, Environmental Health Planning/Ecology, Regional Office for Europe, WHO. The initial assignment was for a total of 18 days including a six day mission to Vilnius, Lithuania (10-15 January, 1994) followed by 12 days' desk work culminating with the transmittal of the Draft Final Report to WHO on 24 April for, subsequent, onward transmission to the government.

2. The January 1994 mission to Vilnius, in the company of Dr. R. Slooff, Division of Environmental Health, WHO Headquarters and Mr. X. Bonnefoy, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, (see "Mission Report-Second Organizing Visit - EHE H11/370/4) was, in and of itself, a follow-up to the Preparatory/Organizing Visit of 22-27 July, 1993, by the two afore-mentioned WHO officials.

3. The second organizing visit (see above) ended, on 15 January, 1994, with a synthesis meeting with Dr. Julius Ptashckas, MD, Director, Centre of Environmental Medicine, Institute of National Hygiene (national Coordinator), and the National Experts: Ms. Giedre Kapturauskiene (DEP) and Ms. Skirmante Zhlabyte (IOH), at which time the Purpose of the Assignment was formalized, as well as the roles of, respectively, the National Coordinator, National Policy level Experts and National Experts (see annexes III to V of the above-cited Mission Report). For the record, the Purpose of the Assignment, on which this Final Report is based, was defined as follows:

*- To identify the existing policies and strategies (development plans) in Lithuania in various ministries and analyze them to check or determine how sustainable development is approached and how the health dimension is considered;*

*- To analyze what are the planning processes in Lithuania and provide advice on how Lithuania could improve these in order to develop more sustainable and healthy development plans or strategies; and*

*- To provide Lithuania with a comprehensive document on healthy sustainable development planning, consistent with the WHO Draft Terms of Reference for Case Studies.*

4. The WHO Mission Report, on the January 1994 mission, as a *caveat* to and in amplification of the above statement of Purpose, under "5. Arrangements for Project Continuation" made the following key guiding statement and conclusion:

"...the project's objectives cannot be concerned with the integration of health and environment goals in national sustainable development planning, mainly for lack of developments that could put such planning processes in place for the foreseeable future. The aim of the project should therefore be geared towards rendering the development process more sustainable by strengthening the capabilities of the Health and Environment sectors in exteriorizing their efforts into the planning processes of other sectors. This aspect of the project should be concerned with processes. Another aspect of the project could be aimed at specific planning units in government in order to promote the creation of feasible master plans, such as those needed in some priority areas, eg. : (1) wastewater treatment, (2) water resources management, (3) waste management and (4) radiation safety. However, it is too early to determine whether these are the exact components of future capacity building, as identifying these is the objective of work still remaining to be done."

5. Hence, it is recognized that the specificity of the Lithuania Case Study is a departure from the scenarios outlined in the WHO "Draft Terms of Reference for Case Studies" and, in this context, specifically with reference to Approaches, section (5) dealing with national plans. Further to the Mission Report's guiding statement, the principle thrust of this report will relate to "processes".

6. An innovative aspect of the Lithuania Case Study, which proved to be highly effective, was the nomination of a team of National Experts (Ms. Giedrė Kapturauskiene, Chief Advisor, Foreign Relations Division, Environmental Protection Department and Ms. Skirmante Zhlabyte of the Centre for Environmental Medicine, Institute of Hygiene) to interact with the external consultant. The reports of the National Expert team were cogent and of high quality and responded well to the formal Terms of Reference and, specifically, what was expected of them in terms of contributions. Interaction between the National Expert team and the consultant, in his opinion, was effective. The consultant's high appreciation is a matter of record. Finally, and clearly most importunately, the National Experts, drawn from the two Lithuanian institutions most directly interested in and responsible for ensuring a heightened awareness and the critical importance of the adoption of sustainable and healthy development strategies, will be available to support whatever follow-up action the Lithuanian authorities may decide upon with respect to this reports' findings, conclusions and recommendations. It could, therefore, be considered that these National Experts, from two separate institutions, working together as a team, are a symbolic reflection of the fundamental thrust needed in future government policy.

7. As had been provided for under the Lithuania Case Study, the international consultant undertook, with the following Terms of Reference, a second mission to Lithuania, in the company of Dr. R. Slooff and Mr. X. Bonnefoy of WHO, during the period 9-13 May, 1994:

*- To present and discuss the draft mission report with government representatives from all relevant sectors, with particular reference to the Ministry of Health and the Environmental Protection Department;*

- *On the basis of these discussions, to reach concurrence on conclusions and recommendations to be incorporated in the report;*
- *To prepare summary recommendations for endorsement before departure; and*
- *To finalize the report before 31 May, 1994.*

8. This Final Report is the culmination of this process plus a distillation of a summary of government comments received subsequent to the mission and ultimate consultations with WHO. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report reflect, therefore, a large consensus in the discussions that were held with the authorities as well as selected External Support Agencies during the 9-13 May mission.

## THE HEALTH DIMENSION

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### DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES

*"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature."*  
**(Principle 1 - Rio Declaration on Environment and Development)**

*"- Integration of environment and development is a guiding principle in Lithuania's efforts to restructure its economy enabling the attainment of **sustainable development**. In existing environmental legislation as in proposed future regulations, the concept of a **precautionary principle** is secured. This concept shall be implemented through the institutionalization of an Environmental Impact Assessment for future projects, and on the other, through the **"polluter pays" principle** for existing operations...measures introduced to ensure sustainable development do not obstruct economic and technological progress, but, rather they stimulate development in harmony with environmental needs."*  
**(Lithuania - National Report UNCED - page 102)**

*"Human health should be seen in a physical, social, behavioural and ecological context. In this holistic model, promotion of health plays a prominent part. ... Health promotion activities should involve other sectors making a contribution to health, such as education, food, nutrition, and environment."*  
**(WHO - Document EB89/1992/Rec/1, Annex 9)**

*"The nations of the world gave their full commitment to adopt and implement Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development in the 1990's and into the 21st Century. Human health has to be at the forefront of these national and international efforts and it must be taken into account at all levels from policy planning to project implementation and evaluation. This entails consideration and development of all aspects of the promotion of human health in the context of sustainable development as a primary goal of Agenda 21."*  
**(WHO - Council on the Earth Summit Action Programme for Health and Environment, Geneva, 13-14 January, 1993)**

*"to promote awareness and commitment among concerned authorities, the general public and specific target groups to the close and fundamental relationship between health, the environment and sustainable development,  
"to convince governments of the essential need for political commitment to integrate the trinity of health, the environment, and sustainable development, through innovative and holistic approaches,"*  
**(Recommendations from the Copenhagen CSD Intersessional Workshop on Health, the Environment and Sustainable Development, February 23 - 25, 1994).**

9. This Case Study on Lithuania reflects, as was recommended by the WHO Council on the Earth Summit Action Programme for Health and Environment, the proposal that WHO should attach the highest priority, in capacity building at country level, to active and early concertation with the UNDP initiative "Capacity 21", a catalytic fund supporting countries in their implementation of Agenda 21, with the specific purpose to "...build capacity to manage the environment and natural resources in the context of economic and social development" (UNDP document DP/1993/11).

10. Implementation is predicated on the development of human resources and institutions as well as enhancing the enabling environment through, as flagged by Agenda 21, a "retool"ing of the decision-making processes. Specific issues which need to be addressed, appearing to be particularly relevant to the Lithuanian context, include: heightening the awareness among decision makers of the need to incorporate sustainable development factors into policies, strategies, plans and programmes and to identify the potential benefits of so doing; establish appropriate processes and mechanisms for consultation, coordination and management, both among relevant government units and between government and non-governmental entities; facilitate access to needed technical knowledge, global experience and advice, including studies, information and analytical tools; expand and strengthen national technical institutions; and establish and strengthen mechanisms for facilitating broad participation by major groups in the national dialogue and by community groups in decision-making at the local level. (DP/1993/11).

11. In pursuance of the Terms of Reference for this Case Study, the following paragraphs will, in a succinct and focussed fashion, "...identify the existing policies and strategies in Lithuania in various ministries (based on data and documentation provided by the National Experts) and analyze them to check or determine how sustainable development is approached and how the health dimension is considered". This analysis will take into consideration the fact that although sector plans or strategies are useful development tools in and of themselves, to be particularly meaningful in terms of formulating overall strategies, they need to relate to a framework. Furthermore, decision or policy makers must be in a position to determine the appropriate place, goals and form for sector plans within such a framework. Principal emphasis will be placed on the degree to which the health dimension has been addressed by the sectoral ministries.

#### Ministry of Industry and Trade -

12. Lithuania's industrial structure and its scale is not a reflection of national comparative advantage but rather, as is the case with the other Baltic countries, that of a centrally-planned USSR industrial strategy. It is noted, however, by UNIDO, in its Report *Lithuania - Industrial re-orientation* that the "...less pronounced priority accorded to heavy industry could make the restructuring task easier and less cost intensive than in the other two Baltic countries and the CIS."

13. Industrial production has been based, principally, on imported raw materials from the Soviet Republics, processing within Lithuania and reexport to the Soviet markets. In late 1980's, USSR absorbed 93% of Lithuanian industrial production, while 83% of "imports" came from the USSR. The loss of FSU markets is compounded, in the search for and the ability to respond to new markets, by, *inter alia*, inadequate infrastructure and physical plant. On the other hand, Lithuania's comparative advantage and, therefore, export market potential, is based on the overall skill level of the labour force and, consequently, higher productivity than other FSU republics plus highly competitive wages in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries. In addition, Klaipeda is the most important ice-free port in the eastern Baltic region and could play an important role in East - West trade thereby further enhancing Lithuania's advantage as an industrial base.

14. The World Bank, in its Report *Lithuania - The Transition to a Market Economy* has stressed that, in addition to basing industrial policy on inherent considerations of comparative advantage, that "...Government's most important role in the short term will be to create a stable macroeconomic environment and to take steps toward improved public enterprise management."

15. With respect to environmental issues, UNIDO indicates that approximately 1 million tonnes of hazardous substances are emitted annually into the atmosphere, 60% by automobiles and the remainder by other sources presumed to be principally industry or utilities. Transboundary sources play, as well, a significant role. The most important atmospheric pollution sources by industrial sector, with practically no reliable treatment, are: construction material production (principally one large cement producer), oil processing and chemical production. Fossil fuel power utility production is also a major source. The Report *Environment and Health in Central and Eastern Europe* prepared in the context of the Environmental Action Programme for CEE indicates, with respect to ambient air quality, that, while not minimizing the level of the problem, there are "...no large areas in Lithuania which compare with Northern Bohemia or Silesia in the scale of environmental degradation or the intensity of airborne exposure." On the otherhand, it is noted that in Kaunas "...98,000 people live in areas where average dust levels exceed the daily maximum allowable concentration by 1-4 fold and a further 28,600 live in areas where it is exceeded by more than 4 fold."

16. UNIDO, furthermore, indicates that in 1990, the discharge of wastewater from industries and municipal sewerage amounted to 4.040 million cubic meters, of which flow 11%, which would appear very low, was contaminated. It is noted that Vilnius and Kaunas, a major industrial centre, which are among the six urban centres most affected by air pollution, are responsible for some 50% of pollutants discharged into water bodies. The extent of the problem at national level is underscored by the fact that according to UNIDO only 58% of all water treatment facilities operated effectively in 1990. Furthermore, the Department of Environmental Pollution, in 1992, reported that 70% of the rivers are polluted by organic substances and that, with respect to groundwater, 51% of shaft wells do not meet health requirements. The World Bank indicates, however, that 77% of the shallow wells used by more than one million people in rural areas are above established limits for bacteriological and nutrient contamination, with some polluted by oil spills. The Report *Environment and Health in CEE* flags the need for critical evaluation, in terms of human health, of the life threatening problem of methemoglobinemia and nitrates in drinking water. The issue of contaminated

water and the 1000-2000 reported cases of salmonellosis, shigellosis and, *inter alia*, hepatitis A is also stressed, as is the problem of microbiological contamination of food in processing plants. Generally, the contamination of groundwater by leachates from combined municipal and industrial waste disposal sites contaminated by heavy metals is a matter of considerable concern.

17. In the above context, it is pertinent to mention the issue of waste management, with particular reference to hazardous wastes. Prior to 1991, there was practically no management of wastes of any category. While a realistic assessment of the actual situation under these circumstances is problematical, it is estimated that approximately 5 million cubic meters of solid wastes have been, as of the end of 1993, deposited in 326 landfills located in rural and urban areas. Redressing the situation in the Kaunas region, with respect to solid and hazardous wastes, is considered to be particularly critical. Until recently, it is reported that hazardous wastes were deposited in domestic landfills, with the inevitable serious consequences of badly contaminated groundwater. With the generation of approximately 170 thousand tonnes of hazardous wastes annually, the government has formally approved a Programme for Hazardous Waste Management. This programme is receiving, in the form of a feasibility study, the assistance of Denmark for a central hazardous waste collection, treatment and management system and facility. With 20% increments a year, it is intended that 100% of hazardous wastes would be collected after seven years of activity. Proposed disposal would involve both incineration and landfill. The area of Vidugiris in Trakai County is one of three sites found to be adequate nationally. It is understood that subsequent to the WHO mission in January 1994 that the initial exclusive focus on hazardous wastes has now been expanded to include attention on domestic and municipal wastes. This recent decision by the ministry to undertake the Programme on an integrated basis is applauded.

18. It is significant and encouraging to note that the Dept. of Investments, Ministry of Economics indicates that with respect to priority projects for external financing under the environment sector that wastewater treatment plants in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda and Siauliai have the highest priority. Other projects in the Energy and Transport sectors, being, with Environment, the two other sectors with the highest investment priority, have major environmental spin-offs in meeting the problems mentioned above. Specifically, under Energy: reconstruction of Mazeikiai Refinery, Klaipeda Oil Terminal and pipeline, Elektranai Power Station modernization and safety measures at the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. Under Transport, the modernization and development of the Port of Klaipeda also fall into this category.

19. Diminished industrial production since 1990 and, *ipso facto*, decreased levels of environmentally unfriendly techniques has, from a pollution abatement perspective, been, as is also the case for agriculture including agro-industry, an advantage. This provides a "breathing space" for a more environmentally sensitive restructuring in conjunction with the progressive applications of the 1992 law on Protection of Environment and its two regulatory mechanisms: E.I.A.'s and "polluter pays" principle. The role of the Dept. of Environmental Protection, in this context, will be discussed later.

Ministry of Transport -

20. Comments in this section are based principally on the CEC/ PHARE Programme report *Institutional Support Programme to the Ministry of Transport of Lithuania (Environmental Protection)*, December, 1993. This very broad-based and thorough report purports "...to provide the Lithuanian authorities with recommendations concerning the improvement of the Lithuanian legal and institutional framework in the field of environmental protection linked with transport."

21. The report stresses that the transport sector is directly responsible for approximately 60% of atmospheric pollution, with road transport being the principal culprit. It is noted, however, that there has been a considerable decrease in transport activity since 1990. In addition, freshwater resources and soil are polluted by both rail and road traffic, while maritime traffic, in coastal waters, is responsible for pollution of the marine environment on, the report states, a chronic basis. Specifically, 85% of Kursiu Bay and 45% of the Baltic Sea coastal area are polluted as is, to even a greater extent, the Strait of Klaipeda and the port itself.

22. The transport of dangerous cargo, including, apparently, Russian military transit from the Kaliningrad Oblast, constitutes a clear threat to populations. Movement of fuel oil by rail, with frequent spills, as well as pesticides and other chemicals, is singled out as a particularly serious problem both for the physical environment and populations. The insufficiency of ecological monitoring by the authorities, in respect to both quantitative and qualitative factors, impedes an accurate assessment of the effects of transport on environmental pollution in Lithuania. In addition, UNDP and IAEA, with respect to the transport of radioactive materials crossing Lithuania on route to neighboring countries, has fielded, in the region, a series of missions. These missions are also reviewing conditions and consequences of the disposal of such materials. UNDP/IAEA are currently assisting Lithuania in the preparation of a coherent radiation protection strategy.

23. With respect to remedial action, it is noted that FSU environmental standards, still largely in effect, are so restraining and unrealistic that they constitute an impediment to effective enforcement and have, in fact, been an important contributing factor to the general disregard for environmental laws and regulations. The CEC/PHARE report notes that enforcement by government agencies has also been hampered by shortages and inadequacies of field staff, with inadequacies in or the absence of equipment necessary for monitoring and control. On a more subjective basis, authorities have to contend with the hostility of the management of many enterprises, faced with the problem of immediate survival, to decisions on law enforcement.

24. Pragmatic remedial measures, which, in some respects, are in the process of being implemented, include better maintenance of vehicles, restricting import of vehicles to those meeting anti-pollution standards thereby progressively renewing the motor vehicle park, as well as the supply of the market with unleaded gasoline plus low sulphur diesel fuel. The latter would require action with respect to the operations of the Mazeikiai refinery. Comments made earlier in this report have underlined that atmospheric pollution is the major determinant in the health of the population.

25. The PHARE consultants conclude, in addition to the proposals made above, with recommendations that European Community and international

standards and regulations be adopted and implemented and that environmental structures within the Ministry of Transport be restructured and strengthened. A principal recommendation is also that the Department for Environmental Protection be transformed into a Ministry of Environment and that there be a rationalization of responsibilities between the Department and the Ministry of Health including major devolution of decision-making to the regional level. These issues will be dealt with in subsequent sections of this report.

#### Ministry of Agriculture -

26. The "National Agriculture (Farmers) - Activity Development Programme" approved by Parliament in September 1993 states, as an introduction, the intent to "...develop farming activities taking into account ecological limitations...", as well as emphasizing and reviving "ethnocultural traditions". These guiding principles are in the framework of agrarian reform emphasizing manageable and economic and ecologically sensitive structures and sizes, in the overall context of privatisation.

27. With respect to agricultural production policies, it is stated that leguminous plants should constitute approximately 10% of the total acreage devoted to crops. Importantly, mention is made, as a justification for such a policy, the fact that leguminous plants, in perennial legume fields, do not require nitric fertilizers.

28. In the agro- food industry, the necessity to establish an effective system of testing and control "...of the quality of nutritive raw materials and their products..." is recognized. With the establishment of a "Law on Food", which will "...determine the responsibility of producers and salesmen for providing consumers with adulterated, low-quality or dangerous foodstuffs", and the establishment of a Lithuanian Food Institute, internationally recognized standards will be maintained.

29. The National Programme, with respect to social infrastructure in rural areas, stipulates, with respect to households and rural communities, that the provision of facilities and systems for water purification are of critical importance. Specifically, the goal is that all farms, or farming communities, on a group basis, will have installed systems for potable water supply and sanitation. It is noted that this will require, from a technological point-of-view, the production of low-capacity water and sanitation systems. On a related basis, the Programme also recognizes the necessity to improve public health care in rural areas.

30. Finally, while the National Agriculture Programme of the government touches on environmental considerations including environmental health, the CEC/PHARE funded projects in agriculture for the period 1992-93 do not appear, with the notable exception of the project "Food Quality Control System", to emphasize environment and particularly environmental health considerations.

#### Ministry of Energy -

31. The report "National Energy Strategy" financed by EU/PHARE (December 1993) underlines significant environmental impact on air and water;

significant thermal pollution of lakes from cooling water and pollution from liquid effluents; and some low-level radioactive contamination around the Ignalina nuclear power plant. Key issues in the energy sector include: old and inefficient systems for energy supply and conversion; extensive subsidies and cross subsidies; excessive reliance of fuel imports from Russia; structural inefficiencies in district heating systems; lack of nuclear safety from a technological standpoint, including no secured nuclear fuel cycle and inadequate storage facilities for spent nuclear fuel; centrally controlled energy industries; and lack of adequate cooperation on a regional basis.

32. The Communique of the International Conference on Restructuring of the Lithuanian Energy Sector, 10-12 November, 1993 underlined "...distorted prices...major cause of energy waste, environmental damage and mis-investment." Negative GDP since 1989 (1990 - 3%, 1991 - 13.5%, 1992 - 32.8%) has resulted in a decrease by 40-60% of the production of energy-intensive industries, eg. cement and mineral fertilizers. It is noted, however, that as of the beginning of 1994, the most reasonable scenario is a renewed increase of GDP. This is based on indications of recovery during 1993 by certain industrial sectors. In this context, it is interesting to note the statement in *The Wall Street Journal Europe's "Central European Economic Review"* (Spring 1994) that "Lithuania's GDP is expected to register from zero growth to a 3% rise this year, according to the most optimistic forecasts, compared with last year's 16% decline."

33. The recommended sectoral strategy has as a leitmotif rehabilitation of existing plant as an absolute priority, with no investment in major new facilities until the year 2000. Emphasis on rehabilitation will save energy, defer major budget outlays and ensure the implementation of measures of an environmental nature.

34. Specific recommendations concerning an environmentally related energy strategy include: substitution of natural gas for HFO in power stations and CHP plants; import of low sulphur crude via Klaipeda as refinery feedstock or desulphurisation of Russian crude at Mazeikiai; refurbishment of existing CHP plant as opposed to power only generation plant + combustion controls in all power stations and CHP plants; review of oil loading, unloading, storage and wastewater treatment at Mazeikiai refinery; and upgrading monitoring system for radioactive discharges at Ignalina. In addition, other specific recommendations include the undertaking of environmental audits of all major power plants as well as oil storage and distribution centres and thereby to identify ways to minimize waste discharges to air, water and soil. Other recommendations concerned the development, on a regional or local scale, of environmentally-friendly renewable resources, which also would respond to considerations of supply security of particular importance to a country largely dependant on external factors. The intent would be to increase the share of renewable energy sources from 3% to 6% by the year 2015 by the following: mini-hydro, combustion of wood chips, aeolian power, geothermal from Klaipeda region, biogas from landfills, farm biogas and peat, passive solar heating in buildings; and, finally, and more controversial in view of historical and present management and control issues, incineration of municipal wastes.

35. Finally and the key recommendation is the strengthening of the capabilities of the Department for Environmental Protection as central to successful environmental management. It was noted that this measure was of

strategic importance at a time of Lithuania's transition to a market economy implying closer integration with Europe.

#### Ministry of Construction and Urbanization -

36. The population of Lithuania is anticipated to increase from 3,708 million in 1990 to 3973 million in 2005 - an increase of approximately 7%. Presently, 50% of heating for buildings is wasted and comparatively 2.0 to 2.5 times more fuel is consumed for heating of a building of the same volume than in Finland, FRG and Sweden. The goal of the Ministry is to insulate all dwellings in urban areas by 2005. The government indicates that it will rely principally on its own resources for renovation and improvements of building/housing programme with, notwithstanding this, external technical cooperation assistance.

37. An important initiative of a cross-sectoral nature by the Ministry concerns the programme for the establishment of a Geographical Information System (GIS). This will be an indispensable tool for the undertaking of physical and comprehensive planning. Another key initiative of a regional and international nature under the leadership of the Ministry relates to participation in the programme "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010" promoting multisectoral sustainable development in the Baltic region based on placing local, national and regional development perspectives in a common framework. This initiative, initiated at the Ministerial Conference in Karlskrona, Sweden, 20-21 August, 1992, should culminate in the preparation of a comprehensive development "vision" 2010 for the Baltic Sea region.

#### Ministry of Forestry -

38. In 1993, the Ministry of Forestry Economy has elaborated a programme on forestry economy and timber industry development. This programme is based on advice from Sweden taking into account the current state of Lithuanian forests. forest exploitation and preservation, on a basis of sustainable development. The Forestry Act of 1993 defines policy as follows: "The forest land and the forest is the Lithuanian nature resource which shall be managed with the aim to provide highest possible benefit to the country and citizens on the basis of sustainability and multiple-use by diversity of ownership and environmental considerations."

39. Forestry policy and management would appear to be coherent and responsive to policies reflected in the Earth Summit at Rio. One distinctive aspect of Lithuanian forestry policy and management is its stated role in support of recreating a more traditional physical environment in agricultural landuse.

#### State Geological Survey -

40. The Survey's role in the evaluation of groundwater quality and quantity is of particular relevance to this report. In this context, special attention is given to those areas where groundwater is polluted or badly protected from pollution. The document *Programmes of State Geological Investigations - Geology for Society* (1992) states: "The subsurface is the basis of man's ecological

system, which needs to be conformed to and protected, it is necessary to strive to the least violation of the balance of nature, while using its' resources. This however is possible only having sufficient geological information."

41. Lithuania utilizes only groundwater for drinking water purposes. Presently, less than 50% of the total theoretical resource is utilized but the Survey underlines the intensive withdrawal underway as well as the progressive pollution levels of groundwater resources. Groundwater from shallow wells, the source of potable water for one third of the population of Lithuania, is especially subject to pollution, and it is proposed to define a land use policy for rural areas. Certain urban centres (Kaunas, Klaipeda, Jonava, Joniskis and Varena) and regions (middle and northern regions or what is referred to as "waterless regions") need, because of increasing pollution of existing sources of groundwater, to explore alternative sources.

42. The State Geological Survey is proposing the creation of a Geological Information System as part of the G.I.S. already referred to. There is a perceived need to enhance ecological monitoring including the present lack of capacity for "radiological monitoring". Finally, in 1993, Lithuania became a member of GEMS/Water. Observation stations are in the process of being established and will be part of the network GEMS "WorldNet".

#### Environmental Protection Department (EPD) -

43. EPD, established in 1990, was a State response to the prevailing situation and problems, inefficiencies and major incoherences in the management of the environment and natural resources. EPD, subordinate to the Supreme Council or legislative branch of The State structure, is the primary institution regulating environmental administration. It has, as described in the paper by Mr. Arunas Kundrotas of EPD, the following goals: to create a legal system corresponding to international norms of environmental protection; to establish a system of environmental standards reflecting European Community norms; to develop an effective monitoring system; to develop the system of market-based incentives; and to improve the situation of regulatory measures. It is, furthermore, stated that in fulfilling these goals, ten Laws and parliamentary decisions including the key Law on Environmental Protection of January 1992, four Government decisions and 48 EPD Ordinances, constituting the foundation of the environmental protection system, have been adopted since 1990.

44. The Department has broad jurisdiction including the determination of emission standards, setting limits for natural resources exploration, issuing permits in conjunction with the institution of Environmental Impact Assessments (E.I.A), control protected areas, monitor emissions, submit environmental assessments, as well as, *inter alia*, the right to restrict and suspend activities as well as imposing fines upon violations or non-compliance with environmental regulations. Enforcement is principally, with the exception of municipal environmental units in certain cities, the operational responsibility of inspectors from eight Regional Environment Protection Agencies (REPA).

45. EPD, because of its special status, can initiate an appeal to Parliament for the repeal of a Government ruling if it concludes that an activity or

decision does not conform with environmental standards or regulations. In providing the rationale for the status of EPD, Lithuania's National Report to UNCED (1992) stated: "In keeping the main regulatory agency for environmental matters independent of government policies, legislators hoped to avoid conflicts of interest. Because the operation of all main industries remains the sole jurisdiction of the Cabinet of Ministers, legislators felt that the main regulatory agency determining restrictions on the activities of those industries should be free to act without interference from controlling ministries. Once privatization of the majority of industry is complete, the EPD will be elevated to ministerial rank." It is now anticipated that State approval of the creation of a Ministry of Environment is imminent.

46. The World Bank in its report *Lithuania - The Transition to a Market Economy* (1993) and other External Support Agencies (ESA's) active in Lithuania have made the following recommendations with particular respect to the enforcement of environmental standards including institutional factors:

- upgrading of the Department to ministry level, which would result in earlier and more direct involvement in cabinet-level policy decisions. It would have the added advantage of integrating control functions under the Government. (The transition to ministerial status is officially underway, with a decision foreseen in the immediate future);

- a reorganization and rationalization of the internal structure to enhance, *inter alia*, enforcement of environmental standards;

- a clarification and rationalization of responsibilities between EPD and the Ministry of Health particularly with respect to the roles and organization of the Institutes of Health at central and regional level. The World Bank, specifically, recommends that "Enforcement responsibilities of the hygiene network should be restricted to the drinking water supply, food surveillance, and occupational health protection. Ambient air and water quality standards should be set and enforced by the Department of Environmental Protection.";

- The Ministry of health and EPD, in consultation with specialized institutes and local authorities, should develop a plan for priority health studies, evaluate the use of existing databases and review health monitoring requirements. Furthermore, the training of environmental health personnel in the design, conduct, evaluation, and application of studies needs to be strengthened;

- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's), unlike the present situation where the interested party takes the initiative, should have participation by independent experts with participation of the public, at a time when the result can still be influenced on behalf of the body politic;

- the development of a comprehensive national environmental strategy. In this context, a review of the Ministry of Economics report "Investment Projects" (1993) as well as the report of the Aid Coordination Unit (PHARE Programme of The EC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania: "Data Base-Environment - ongoing, proposed and completed projects in Lithuania" demonstrates, as previously noted in this report, an impressive number of investment and technical cooperation projects, for which financing is already approved or is in active pipeline, in the environment sector or closely interrelated

to the sector. In view of this and while not diminishing the priority given to moving forward on meeting specific problems (eg. projects) requiring national and external financing, the preparation of a comprehensive and integrated (!) national environmental strategy, to be undertaken in 1994 with external financing from EU/PHARE, will be a critically important management tool for the government. It will enhance its ability to achieve necessary cohesion and identify issues of cause and effect between projects of a complementary or interlocking nature, identify gaps in or between projects as well as, which, based on a review of the document "Database-Environment" would appear essential, prioritize and coordinate pipeline projects. In this context and in pursuance of this objective, the recent highly innovative decision for a Public Investment Programme (PIP) under the responsibility of a PIP Unit within the Ministry of Economics goes a long way to meeting these requirements by subjecting all investment projects to an intensive review not only in terms of their intrinsic merits but, particularly, in the context of sectoral and national priorities and strategies;

- maintenance of the State Environmental Protection Fund, with the establishment, as proposed by The World Bank, of a council formed of representatives from ministries, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations to govern the operation of the fund.

47. The above recommendations, which will be re-addressed in a subsequent section of this report reflect, principally, The World Bank's recommendations (see Chap.19, pp. 279-284).

#### Ministry of Health -

48. The World Bank, in its Report *Lithuania - The Transition to a Market Economy*, in its introduction to The Health Sector, would appear to reflect a broad consensus, both within Government and external observers, on the prevailing situation with respect to the health care system.

"Lithuania's health care system is faced with several major problems, which to a large extent are a legacy of the highly centralized health care system of the FSU, which put all its emphasis on quantity and allocated its health budget accordingly. The present structure and organization of services reflect the traditional budgetary priorities, placing an emphasis on the number of hospitals, beds and staff at the expense of quality and efficiency in health care. As a result, Lithuania's health service system is poorly maintained and equipped, overspecialized, overly staffed, and inadequately coordinated.

"The Government of Lithuania is well aware of the inherited problems in the health care sector and has recently adopted new guidelines for the implementation of reforms. The old concepts of centralization and emphasis on treatment have been replaced by principles of decentralization, quality of care, strengthened education of professionals, prevention, health promotion, and attention to broader environmental issues in health protection. However, the pace and coverage of these changes critically depend on the availability of funds and the ability to reallocate resources to strengthen priority areas. Some international humanitarian aid has been forthcoming, but has fallen short of addressing even the

majority of basic emergency needs for effective drugs and appropriate technology for medical care." (Chap.18, p.253)

49. The health status of the Lithuanian population has deteriorated since the 1970's, with an increase in the crude mortality rate and a decrease in life expectancy. The prevalence of environmental pollution is among the principal risk factors, with some 50% of infant mortality attributed to inadequate sanitary and nutritional conditions during pregnancy. The incidence of hepatitis and other infectious diseases among children is another indication of the degree of inadequacies. Earlier comments in this report under, *inter alia*, the Ministry of Agriculture touched on the causes for this situation, which reflect, as well, a historical imbalance between curative and preventive interventions.

50. The existing health status and the clear inadequacies of the system of policy formulation and management and the resulting lack of major support from the external donor community was addressed starkly by the Minister of Health at the time of the creation of the Health Reform Management Bureau (SARB). He stated that the "...drawbacks of Lithuanian...public health care (are) evident to foreign specialists; to mention experts of The World Bank and EC (PHARE) - they estimate the situation quite critically and refuse to finance projects if they do not relate with real reforms and restructure of health care system."

51. The Bureau(SARB), established by The Ministry of Health, on 14 September, 1993, provides institutional support to coordinate and support the work of the Health Reform Management Group (HRMG) and its working groups. The mandate of this Group, with a membership of some 120 respected specialists and clinicians, it is to carry out a comprehensive diagnostic of the present Lithuanian health care system, on an independant basis, or, as the Minister himself put it, from below not from "the top". In this context, the necessity to enlist the communications media to mobilize support for this initiative not only by members of the national medical society but also the general public is clearly noteworthy. Furthermore, it has been firmly underlined that while civil servants from the Ministry of Health can be co-opted to serve on the Board, the policy impetus will come from the independant members of the Board itself.

52. The work programme of the HRMG, which is receiving active support from external donors including UNDP and EU/PHARE, is concentrating, as already mentioned, on issues related to ministerial policy development and implementation, with particular emphasis, at present, on health financing, primary health care (PHC) and rationalization of hospitalization. It is understood that while the issue of environmental health is on the working agenda of the Board that it does not constitute, at this time, a major priority. A representative of an External Support Agency indicates that, pending further consultations with the Minister of Health, a donor's meeting on health care could take place in the latter part of 1994. This assumes that the work has sufficiently progressed. Specifically, it is reported that the Health Reform Management Bureau (SARB) intends to organize and host a G-24 Health Care Sector Meeting to present to potential donors, based on a sector strategy and rational policy framework, requirements for external support including in the area of capital investment.

53. With respect to policy development and implementation, the issue, raised, *inter alia*, by The World Bank, concerning coordination on and rationalization of environmental protection and hygiene networks (EPD and MOH)

at regional level needs continuing attention, in addition to reported action taken by the Ministry of Health this year to establish five regional centres and, thus, to facilitate, theoretically, necessary interaction with EPD's regional network of eight regions. In this context, it is interesting to note that the WHO Regional office for Europe *Health Sector Review Report* (October 1991), co-financed by CEC/PHARE, underlined the following critical issues and problems at regional/municipal level: data collection, while relatively efficient, and monitoring or surveillance at local or regional level doesn't feed in to or support decision-making including inadequate analysis and lack of communication to centre; unbalanced staffing in decentralized hygiene centres, where professionals are solely MD's to the exclusion of sanitary or chemical engineers; and, finally, the lack of critical mass in human resources in decentralized hygiene centres, some 52, as well as the inadequate level of coordination and collaboration between the EPD Regional Centre's and the Hygiene Centres of the Ministry of Health, would justify an integrated EPD/MOH network at regional level.

54. In addition to the above comments on the effectiveness of the system at regional level, which in spite of the time that has transpired since the WHO Health Sector Review, would appear to remain basically pertinent, The World Bank has made the following observations on internal institutional coherence between the decentralized network and the Hygiene institutions at central level:

"Another obstacle is found in the organization of the agencies of the Ministry of Health. The local hygiene centres report to the Republican Hygiene Centre, which is responsible for policy and standard setting. There is another group, the Research Institute of Hygiene, that initiates studies of environmental and public health problems. Both the Republican Hygiene Centre and the Research Institute of Hygiene report to the Ministry of Health. However, the Research Institute of Hygiene has no formal relationship with either the Republican Hygiene Centre or the local hygiene centres. Thus, its health study priorities are dissociated from the regulatory process and its expertise is not seen as a resource to the local hygiene centres."

55. The above issues, according to information received, are still, from an institutional perspective, relevant, although it is underlined that many of the problems in working relations and channels of communication are overcome on a pragmatic basis. Incidentally, it is understood that the above institutional structure is unique in CEE countries.

#### Synthesis - Overall Findings and Conclusions -

56. In addition to reviewing existing strategies and how they relate to the health dimension, planning processes in specific ministries have been addressed under previous sections of this report. In conclusion, the following paragraphs will assess to what extent they contribute towards developing more healthy and sustainable development strategies.

57. The sectoral ministries, in varying degrees and by necessity, address environmental and, in this context, health dimensions in their activities

and strategies. Certain, such as the Ministries of Transport, Energy and Industry, directly identify their activities, programmes and proposed investment strategies on environmental and, to a certain extent, on environmental health benefits that will accrue. Nevertheless, issues are principally addressed on the basis of internal responsibilities of individual ministries rather than on a horizontal integrated basis. There would appear to very little sustained dialogue on a policy or working level between sectoral ministries. This can be considered, *inter alia*, to be a reflection of obvious historical factors. In addition, there has been, manifestly, a lack of effective dialogue and collaboration, at central or regional level, between the Ministry of Health and EPD.

58. No sectoral ministry, based on information available, would appear to have a division or unit dealing with or responsible for environmental aspects of their activities, with the notable exception of the Ministry of Health, which established a Division for Environmental Health in a 1993 reorganization. Significantly, EPD does not have a unit responsible for environmental health, in spite of the thrust of "Principle 1" of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

59. There is little question that the immediate imperative of rebuilding an independent economy and establishing financial equilibrium has not facilitated priority being given to environmental considerations much less environmental health. Mr. Nitin Desai, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, in his statement to the *International Workshop on Health, the Environment and Sustainable Development*, Copenhagen, 23-25 February, 1994 stated cogently that: "When we think of environment and development issues, our first thoughts do not automatically go to the health sector, in fact it is very often an after thought."

60. This being said, it is instructive to note that, at least, in the following domains, inter-ministerial cooperation, involving, specifically, the Ministry of Health, is operative: territorial planning and housing, transport, Commission on the Consequences of Russian Army Occupation, Commission on Waste Management Programmes (hazardous waste transport) and the National Register on Toxic Chemicals, which MOH chairs.

61. The Ministry of Health, capitalizing on the fundamental, indeed, visceral relevance of environmental health, needs, in addition to reforming its own structures and strategies, now in process thanks to the HRMG initiative, and rationalizing its collaboration with the EPD, to establish, perhaps, through or in conjunction with EPD, horizontal linkages with the sectoral ministries *via* the proposed Inter-Ministerial Committee for Health.

62. While sector plans may, indeed, be very useful development tools, they need to relate to a framework and decision-makers must be able to judge the appropriate place, goals and form for sector plans within a sustainable development context. Development cooperation, since the Rio Earth Summit, is predicated on the achievement of sustainable development and, therefore the degree of attention by government to environmental considerations in development plans and strategies. Lithuania, relying, in addition to its own efforts, on external assistance to support its development efforts, will necessarily hone its awareness in policy formulation to these factors.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**FOR**  
**HEALTHY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

63. In concert with WHO's Council on the Earth Summit Action Programme's recommendation that WHO should give highest priority to capacity-building at country level in conjunction with the UNDP initiative "Capacity 21", which has as its objectives:

*To assist developing countries in formulating development goals, plans and programmes that lead to sustainable development in economic, social and environmental terms, and*

*To enhance the capacity of developing countries to continue to formulate and implement their own sustainable development policies.*

the following recommendations are formulated:

Policies -

- The development of a national environmental strategy, closely linked to the strategy guiding the economic reform process, is essential. This is a precondition to the passing of effective legislation including that pertaining to environmental health. It is understood that, with the support of EU/PHARE, the development of a national strategy is underway;

- The Terms of Reference for the newly established Public Investment Programme (PIP), managed and coordinated by the Ministry of Economics, and based on the "trinity" development priorities of the Lithuanian government: Energy, Transport and Environment, should include Human Health considerations in its decision-making processes. Rather than adding a fourth development priority, this should be achieved by fully integrating human health criteria in the environmental component. This would require close working relations between the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Health, for example through the proposed Intersectoral Committee on Health;

- Environmental health to be made into a separate thematic working group under the Health Reform Management Group (HRMG), supported and coordinated by the Health Reform Management Bureau (SARB), and allowed to function as long as necessary to ensure a solid integration of health and environment within primary health care and public health. Furthermore, the organization and harmonization, at central level, within the Ministry of Health, of the Hygiene Institutes, should be reviewed by SARB;

- Utilize the SARB mechanism as an entry point to mobilize public support including the reinforcing or organization of citizens' groups to actively support health care with emphasis on prevention and, in this context, environmental health;

- In conjunction with the implementation of Environmental Impact Assessments (E.I.A.'s), issues of key concern to environmental health should be incorporated, by a joint working party, to be established, between MOH and EPD. It is considered that such a procedure would have more effect than the establishment of separate EHIA's themselves;

- Utilize primary health care (PHC) as an appealing (!) entry point for environmental health. It is considered that this would enhance the ability of mobilizing external resources;

#### Structures -

- The early approval, on which action is underway, of the transformation of the Environmental Protection Department into a Ministry of Environment;

- The creation, within each relevant sectoral ministry, of a division or unit responsible for monitoring and liaising, on an intra- and inter-ministerial basis, on environmental issues including, necessarily, environmental health. It is recommended that the WHO Regional Office for Europe be requested to finance a consultancy preparatory mission. As a complement, the establishment of a standing inter-ministerial group, at expert level, to maintain liaison and prepare reports to Cabinet on intersectoral issues on the environment requiring decision at the level of government;

- Early approval by Government of the proposed Intersectoral Committee on Health, which includes a Commission on Environment and Health. This Committee, which will have as its main functions the coordination of State and governmental intersectoral policy on health as well as inter-ministerial coordination of local health policy, is closely related to the preceding and following recommendations as well as the HMRG;

- The establishment of formal linkages of cooperation between EPD (or the Ministry) and the Ministry of Health at central and regional level. This should entail the establishment of a unit for environmental health in EPD and a review, on a cost-benefit basis, of the possibility of integrating both the EPD structures at regional level and the MOH Hygiene Centre's, at an equivalent level. Consideration

could also be given to a division of responsibilities, at central level, as proposed by The World Bank;

- Ensure participation in the proposed Sustainable Development Network (SDN) for Baltic States to be based in Estonia. Pursue, especially important, on a parallel basis, the establishment of a capacity, at national, regional and municipal service level, for data analysis and dissemination in the environment and environmental health by the creation of a national network through support from WHO and the European Union;

#### Activities -

- The organization of a G-24 Health Care Sector Meeting, including the addressing of environmental health issues, prior to the end of 1994;

- The proposed EU/PHARE Project on Environment and Health Management development should be reformulated in light of recently introduced or proposed policy and structural development (eg. HRMG/SARB, PIP, Intersectoral Committee on Health, change of status of EPD, proposed Intersectoral Committee on Environment, as well as in light of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report);

- To include into the sectoral planning of relevant ministries (eg. Transport, Energy, Urbanization) the establishment of an air quality monitoring programme through fixed and mobile observation stations, and to analyze the data to be collected in formats which respond to the needs of decision-makers;

- Develop a plan for priority health studies and evaluate the use of existing databases and review health monitoring requirements. The training of environmental health personnel in the design, conduct, evaluation, and application of studies needs to be strengthened;

- Develop human resources (involved in and sensitive to issues of environmental health), in a capacity-building context, thereby placing HRD in a framework involving the strengthening and rationalization of institutions and the creation of an enabling environment. This should, based on an assessment which could be undertaken with external financing, respond to requirements at national, regional and municipal or community levels. A demarche to UNDP in the "Capacity 21" context could be envisaged;

- To enhance access to global research on water supply, sanitation and waste management, promote, *inter alia*, participation in the Global Applied Research Network (GARNET) through the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council;

- Organize case studies to demonstrate problem-solving in implementation of national policy. It is suggested that Klaipeda, Lithuania's "window" to the west, a key element and participant in major international and regional efforts for The Baltic Sea and a major urban, industrial, transit, portuary and, potentially, tourism centre, with serious problems with respect to the environment, but where there would appear to be encouraging efforts, at municipal level, to organize themselves to manage environmental including environmental

health issues on a rational and integrated basis, be selected. Secondly, the Trakai district, a vulnerable (actual repository for Vilnius and potentially the national repository for toxic solid wastes), scenic and historical district between Vilnius and Kaunas, be selected. In this case study, it would be useful to confront the options in the future for this rural district acting presently as a "green-lung" between the two major urban centres. Furthermore, it would be interesting, in the context of both case studies, to assess how municipal/district authorities manage and respond to the "problematique";

- Apply to the Division for Global and Interregional Programmes at UNDP headquarters for participation in the initiative for undertaking Water Resources Assessments. It is believed that financing from non-country IPF sources at a level of US\$50,000, to finance such an initiative, would be forthcoming. Such an Assessment would be the foundation for and lead logically to the preparation of an integrated national Water Resources Management Plan, which should address, with respect, particularly, to surface water, transboundary considerations; and

- Apply for support from the WHO-based International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) for the mobilization of external resources for the improvement of chemical safety in Lithuania. It is understood that IPCS, if requested to do so, would be willing to assist in the identification of a suitable international consultant who could work with the national authorities in drawing up a Chemical Safety plan for the country. This consultant should work closely with the Ministry of health, the (future) Ministry of Environment and other interested sector ministries. Priority issues to be addressed should include the problem of dangerous goods, *inter alia*, of unknown origin being transported overland in transit to and from neighboring states, as well as the use, storage and safe disposal of banned, restricted or obsolete pesticides.

64. These recommendations are, in some respects, complementary to findings and recommendations outlined in previous sections of this report. The basic "leitmotif" is that considerations and initiatives on environmental health, no matter how valid in their own right, from a tactical and strategic point-of-view, particularly in the present economic situation of Lithuania, could best be integrated into an overall environmental context. This includes such initiatives as Environmental Health Impact Assessments or the WHO proposals for the establishment of facilities or institutions specific to environmental health. An integrated approach, with respect to the environment including environmental health, would appear more rational in terms of limited resources, potential national and external impact and support and coherence with principles of sustainable development.