

Foreword

Although this year has been the year of natural disasters, it has also been a year of repair of the consequences of the previous earthquake and floods; indeed, the latter have not stopped causing trouble to the inhabitants as well as to the Ministry. It has become increasingly important that we should not only eliminate the consequences in a thoughtful, thorough and well planned manner, but also improve a complex and long-term security strategy against earthquakes and floods.

Among other ministerial projects I wish to stress the establishment of the national housing saving scheme on July 1st as a State incentive for long term saving through primes and more attractive long-term bank loans. In accordance with our legislation and the international law, this is one of the measures of the new housing policy which is supposed to enable every citizen, although still not without substantial efforts, to acquire an apartment. In that respect I also wish to mention the adoption of amendments to the Housing Act at the end of May, since it produced a co-ordinated housing and social policy. But the State should still play a more active investing role in regard to the construction of social housing.

In July the Nature Protection Act was accepted as the last important regulation still missing in the area of nature protection in Slovenia. In accordance with legal solutions in other European countries, the Acquis Communautaire and international conventions which have already signed and ratified, the Act encompasses measures for the preservation of biodiversity, natural balance and the protection of natural features.

This year as well, the activities related to the EU accession process have been seen as a priority. The latest EC report underlined that Slovenia has progressed in the adoption of environmental legislation, although the situation varies from one particular area to another. We have been effective in the areas of water protection, nature conservation and waste treatment, but in areas of industrial pollution and risks, chemicals and genetically modified organisms there still remains a lot to be accomplished. One of the future priorities will certainly be the development of administrative and financial instruments for the implementation of the Acquis. The National Environmental Action Plan was adopted in September, which defines goals, directions and the strategy of environment protection and use of natural resources for the next ten years. That way, the environmental policy will become included in other sectoral policies.

There are still legal proposals that we will continue to work on next year: the Surveying and Mapping Act, the Water Act, the Construction Act, the Spatial Planning Act etc.

New Year's Eve is getting close and let me use this opportunity to wish you the success and energy that we will definitely need in the coming year.

Pavel Gantar, Ph.D. the Minister

Feature

REAL ESTATE REGISTRATION MODERNISATION PROJECT

The implementation of an appropriate real estate policy requires an efficient estate registration as one of the bases for the functioning of the real estate market and as a pre-condition for a more successful transition to a market economy. Various protagonists and individuals in Slovenia have been striving for some time to have real estate registration regulated at the national level and within a joint co-ordinated project. The foundation of the Programme Council for the Implementation of the Real Estate Registration Modernisation Project, appointed on October 1st last year by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, represents the start of a successful co-ordination of activities. The Programme Council under the leadership of the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning Pavel Gantar, Ph.D. will form an opinion on the proposal for modernisation and a uniform concept of real estate registration.

Last spring, the joint project of four ministries and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia was in its final preparation stage. After a five-year implementation period it will offer better foundations for the functioning of the real estate market and the harmonisation with European standards in the area of real estate administration, as well as provide a master plan for an efficient and just system of real estate taxation. The efficiency of functioning of the real estate system will be improved, since the registers of the land cadastre and the land registry will be modernised within the framework of the project; a system of declaration of agricultural land use will be established in accordance with the criteria of the European Common Agricultural Policy; and a market-oriented system of real estate taxation will be set up and tested.

After the successful completion of negotiations between the Slovenian government and representatives of the World Bank in Budapest the project proposal was confirmed on June 22 of this year at the meeting of the World Bank Executive Management Board in Washington. The Act on the IBRD Loan for the Real Estate Registration Modernisation Project (O. J. RS No 89/99) was adopted and the Loan Agreement for the Real Estate Registration Modernisation Project finally signed on November 17 in Ljubljana.

The Project Identity Card

Participants:

Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; Ministry of Justice; Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia and the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia, within the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning

Sub-projects:

- the land cadastre and building cadastre,
- the land registry,
- development of housing registration system,
- the scoping and follow-up of agricultural land use,
- the development of systems for real estate taxation and evaluation,
- the funding of housing construction and the reform of mortgage banking,
- draft legislation in the area of real estate ownership,
- support to project co-ordination and strategic studies.

Project Value:

\$ 28,9 million, of which: an EU PHARE donation of

\$ 3,2 million, IBRD (World Bank) loan of \$15 million, Slovenian national budget \$10,7 million

Project Duration:

January 1 2000 - December 31 2004

Co-ordination of the project implementation:

Programme Council for the Implementation of the Real Estate Registration Modernisation Project

Project Manager:

Aleš Seliškar

Executive Manager and Project Co-ordinator:

Božena Lipej, Ph.D.

Sub-project co-ordinators:

Anton Kupic, Alenka Jelenc-Puklavec, Ema Pogorelčnik, Ljudmila Avbelj, Igor Bevc, Matej More, MA, Nives Marinšek, Martin Smodiš

The following results should be achieved in the framework of the project implementation: digital cadastre plans in a uniform system of co-ordinates, so that the entire national territory shall be covered; scoping of all buildings in the country; reduction in delays in regard to the

land registry, in accordance with the adopted time schedule for the maximal duration of the entering procedure from 90 working days at the end of the year 2000 to 6 working days at the end of the year 2004; procedures for housing registration and their partial implementation; improved legislation in the area of ownership and other actual rights; mortgage banking regulations; the system of scoping and follow-up of agricultural land use in operative stage by the end of the year 2002.

The real estate registration modernisation project is committing and binding for all the participants and the responsible institutions. Numerous activities, continuous co-operation, the operative and testing work have been planned. A lot of institutional activities will need to be completed by the end of this year. The real estate registration modernisation project is a great challenge for all participating representatives and the responsible institutions. The passage to the third millennium will thus be marked by a project, which will represent a great test for all of us and at the same time, an obligation to improve the system of multi-purpose registers and cadastres.

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Conventions

5th CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION

From October 25 to November 5 in Bonn, Germany, there took place the 5th Conference of the contracting parties to the Framework UN Convention on Climate change - the COP5. Approximately 5000 participants - members of government delegations from the contracting and observing countries, as well as specialised, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations etc. took part at the conference. The meeting was chaired by the Polish Minister of the Environment Jan Szyszko, as the representative of the regional group of countries of Central and Eastern Europe, whose turn it was for the presidency in accordance with the UN rules. Mr. Szyszko will be chairing the conference of the contracting parties until its next session, COP6, which will take place in about a year in the Hague, the Netherlands.

The Slovenian delegation was not complete since the Minister Gantar could not participate at the conference for health reasons. The delegation was thus composed of Dušan Hržek, the Director, and the author of this article, both working at the Hydrometeorological Institute of RS.

Before and even during the conference there was a substantial doubt among the participants and observers whether the meeting would end successfully. It was underlined several times that it was important for the initiative not to get lost, otherwise the destiny of the Kyoto protocol itself would be endangered.

The opening speeches clearly demonstrated the will for to achieve a progress leading to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and thus an actual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Most impressive was the speech given by the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who stressed that it was important for the Protocol to come into force at the 10th anniversary of the Rio summit (Rio + 10) in 2002. This means of course, that a sufficient number of annex I countries should ratify it at least before the middle of the year 2002. The same determination was expressed by a number of ministers during the ministerial part of the meeting. Among them were the Finnish minister Satu Haasi in the name of the EU and

the ministers of the particular EU countries, with the British Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment John Prescott having been particularly eloquent. The chairman of the American delegation, the Vice-Secretary for Global Affairs Frank Loy also stressed the need for a prompt implementation of the Protocol.

The President, the working bodies and various working groups received a clear mandate to prepare all that was necessary so that the Kyoto protocol implementation regulations could be adopted at the COP6, especially the implementation of mechanisms. In a wider sense that shall mean the realisation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. What was simply an intention a year ago, has now become an obligation, and this represents the greatest success of this conference.

Together with the representatives of other associated countries, our delegation participated at some meetings with the EU representatives, where we discussed particular topics at the conference and agreed on co-ordinated viewpoints. The Slovenian delegation launched an initiative for a meeting with the US delegation, where we discussed the possibility of American assistance for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol for Slovenia and the new Balkan states in the framework of the Stability Pact using Slovenian mediation. The American delegation showed a great interest in the initiative and further steps in this direction should soon follow.

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THE 11th REGULAR CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE BARCELONA CONVENTION

The 11th regular Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (the Barcelona Convention), took place in Malta on 27-30 October. The Republic of Slovenia has been an equal party to this Convention since 1993. The Convention is the legal framework for the implementation

of the Mediterranean Action Plan under the co-ordination of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with its head office in Athens. At 25 years old, it is the longest running co-operation of countries, non-governmental organisations and research institutions organised around a regional sea with the purpose of its conservation. UNEP intends to employ this co-operation model as an organisational scheme also around other regional seas.

At the Conference the member countries reported on the work done in the last two years and adopted a budget for the functioning of the Action Plan in the period 2000-01 with some priority tasks.

The report by the Slovenian delegation was well accepted, with its main emphasis being:

- the Republic of Slovenia, on that northernmost point of the Mediterranean Sea which is shared by three countries, implements the principles of sustainable development with the spatial planning - among other things one quarter of its coast was proclaimed a nature protection area, including the Sečovlje salt-pans as a Ramsar site and the Reka river basin with the Škocjan caves as a UNESCO heritage site,
- we started public preparations of the water management master plans for the Dragonja river, as an instrument for implementation of the sustainable development in nature protection areas

- the Regional Development Agency in Koper will make its development plans taking into consideration the capacities of the environment in accordance with the directives of the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP). It will also consider the recommendations of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development,

- the Port of Koper has started to carry out the activities related to the study "Increase of safety in regard to liquid chemicals' treatment" - the methodology for the study was prepared by the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEK). The Port of Koper should also check the possibilities for PHARE funding,

The conference ended with an appeal to all the member countries to ratify as soon as possible the amendments to the existing protocols. These bind the contracting parties to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in coastal areas.

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MEETING OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS

At a meeting on October 25 at the Government office for European Affairs, the participants adopted several proposals for the improvement of co-operation between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the process of EU integration, and also adopted a conclusion that the proposal is to be transmitted to the Government of RS. Special attention was given to the establishment of co-operation with all the ministries and to the definition of minimal rules for this co-operation. Non-governmental organisations also drew attention to the problem of funding, on the basis of which a decision was adopted that in the framework of the Government office for European Affairs all possibilities for non-governmental organisation funding within programmes of foreign assistance (PHARE, SAPARD, ISPA) will be examined.

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SLOVENIAN DELEGATION VISITS THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

On November 11-14 a delegation of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, consisting of seven members under the leadership of the Minister Pavel Gantar, Ph.D., visited the Republic of Macedonia. An invitation by the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Toni Popovski was the reason for this visit.

The Macedonian representatives were most interested in discussions on the harmonisation of Slovenian legislation with the Acquis Communautaire, the organisation of public services for environment protection, project funding and EU structural funds, and the policy of prices in the area of local public services. At the same time in the Republic of Macedonia an international conference on waste and wastewater took place. The Slovenian contributions were presented on the "Slovenian day", inaugurated by the opening speeches of both Ministers of the Environment, Pavel Gantar, Ph.D. and Toni Popovski. Altogether, the Slovenian representatives contributed seventeen topics for discussion, eight of them by the

members of the official Slovenian delegation. At the end of the visit Minister Gantar invited the Macedonian minister to an official and amicable visit to Slovenia that will most probably take place in the Spring.

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In brief

NORTH ADRIATIC CHARTER

On October 14 the Government considered the North Adriatic Charter by which local communities are being required to contribute to the realisation of goals of sustainable development in this European macro-region.

Experts from the fields of economic planning, spatial planning and cross-border co-operation believe that the territory of the states and regions of the North Adriatic is a special area of economic and social development which could become competitive in the larger European area if it developed an appropriate synergetic organisation of economic and spatial systems. That is why they have suggested to the states, regions and local communities of the North Adriatic that they adopt the above-mentioned charter. In spite of differences among particular legal systems and with the consideration of differences between the natural and urban arrangement of space, intensive tourist exploitation and high traffic density, by this Charter the states and regions of the North Adriatic will engage themselves to pursue the following goals:

- enforcement of the activities of local institutions according to the principle of subsidiarity,
- co-ordination of planning, development and protection policies through international co-operation and common programming,
- promotion of economic and social development including the consideration of specific requirements of particular local units and
- sustainable use and protection of natural resources

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15th SEDLAR MEETING WITH AN INTERNATIONAL

On October 21-23 the Town and Spatial Planning Association of Slovenia organised the 15th Sedlar Meeting with an international seminar in Maribor. The Sedlar meetings are traditionally organised for Slovenian and foreign experts in the field of urban and spatial planning. Their purpose is to inform the larger expert public about relevant topics and to enable a discussion about those issues. The title of this year's anniversary 15th Sedlar meeting was "Key levers for town and spatial planning at the turn of the millennium: the current situation and trends".

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Resource

NGO DATABASE

The Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe has set up a database on the motivation of non-governmental organisations for co-operation in the sectors of environment protection, nature protection and sustainable development in Slovenia. The database should contribute to a more efficient liason and co-operation of the Ministry and other governmental institutions with the non-governmental organisations. The database is accessible on the homepage of the Regional Environment Centre: <http://www.rec-lj.si>

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Calendar

- **November 26**, Brussels: informal meeting of Ministers of the Environment from the EU associated member countries. The Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning Pavel Gantar, Ph.D. will attend the meeting.
- **November 29-December 1**, Göteborg (Sweden): 17th meeting of the Executive body of the Convention on Long-range Trans-boundary Air Pollution. The Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning Pavel Gantar, Ph.D. will attend the meeting.
- **December 1**, Ljubljana (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planing): meeting of the Slovenian EU Accession Working Group 22 for the Environment.
- **December 8**, Ljubljana (Academy of Administration, Kotnikova 8): seminar entitled Administrative procedures in the area of environment protection, spatial planning and nature conservation. The seminar is intended for the state administrative units.
- **December 15-18**, Konstancin, Warsaw (Poland): IUCN seminar "Natura 2000, Rural Development and Ecological Networks"