



## General Assembly

Nineteenth Special Session

**3**rd plenary meeting

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Official Records

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### Agenda item 8 (continued)

#### Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

**The President:** The Assembly will first hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine.

**President Kuchma** (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text furnished by the delegation*): The five years since the Rio de Janeiro Conference have proved the historic and practical value of the decisions taken there. For the first time ever, the ecological dimension of ensuring peace and further economic development was upgraded to a level commensurate with the key problems facing mankind. actions, and to take concrete practical measures. The state of the environment on our planet today is still a matter for serious concern.

We have inherited from the former Soviet Union an economy that wastes resources and energy, dating from a time when natural resources were considered to have no cost and to be practically inexhaustible. It is worthwhile to mention that the resource consumption of Ukrainian products is two to three times higher than that of world standards, and its level of energy waste is six to nine times greater than the world level. The technological pressure on Ukraine's territory exceeds by six to seven times that in the developed European countries.

Equally disturbing are the following figures: 80 per cent, and in some regions even 90 per cent, of Ukraine's agricultural lands have been subject to ploughing. More than 25 billion tons of accumulated waste cover 130 thousand hectares of the world-renowned Ukrainian soil.

for Ukraine Agenda 21 is not simply an abstract idea with an indefinite implementation period, but the very concept of and strategy for our survival. With this in mind, we are aiming our efforts at the true integration of the environmental protection policy into the social and economic development strategy. Ensuring ecological security and maintaining ecological balance on Ukrainian territory is one of the priorities of State policy determined by the Constitution.

We have begun the transition from administrative to market methods of managing environmental protection activities. Paying for the special usage of natural resources and for the pollution of the environment, and a new system of funding and credits to protect nature, have been introduced.

Protecting nature has become one of our major priorities. During the last three years alone, the size of the reserve areas has been increased by 1.5 times. This is a sort of "golden fund" for our nation. Active measures are being taken to harmonize national and international legislation in ecological matters. At present, Ukraine is a party to 17 international conventions on environmental protection and 15 protocols to them. The next step will be the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable development of Ukraine, which is to be approved by the Government in the near future.

Today, we have every reason to state that in Ukraine we have laid the foundations — structural, scientific, methodological, legal and economic — of a new State policy based on the principles of sustainable development typical of countries with market economies. It has become economically unprofitable for the State to pollute the environment and to engage in excessive consumption of natural resources. That is the main result of our efforts.

That is why the time has come today for us to start drafting a universal international legal instrument aimed at guaranteeing global ecological security, an instrument that would establish norms of permissible ecological behaviour for every country in the interests of the survival and prosperity of our civilization in the twenty-first century.