

From the Editors

“The question we face before the new century is how long can we go on talking about “rights” without simultaneously focusing on the individuals “obligations”... The time is right for a “universal declaration of human obligations.” The fact of the matter is that it is meaningless to talk about rights without corresponding focus on each separate government and individual’s obligations?”

Jostein Gaarder

Starting from 2005, the Ecological Society Green Salvation publishes materials devoted to compliance with the Aarhus Convention in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The previous digest to the Forth Meeting of the Parties was issued in 2011. Three years after the Meeting of the Parties, social and ecological situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan got noticeably worse. This is seen from the materials published by the state officials, independent researchers, and international organizations. Main factors which determine the situation in the country can be identified as: lack of a clear environmental policy; economic growth based on increase of extraction of natural resources; increase of dependency of the economy on extraction industries; weakening of legislation in favor of polluters; limitation of public access to impartial environmental information, decision-making process, and justice in the matters related to the environment, corruption.

For the Fifth Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention, we publish the new issue which begins with a brief review of social and ecological situation in the country. This material prepared based on researches made by international organizations, national statistics, and work experience of the Ecological Society Green Salvation, gives an overview of the conditions facing the public when claiming compliance with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

State officials try to brighten up the real situation, and this is clearly seen on the example of the National Report of the Republic of Kazakhstan about compliance with the Convention. Critical review of this document is presented in the next material of the digest. In spite of the report’s abundance of information about round tables, conferences, seminars, it is obvious that the authors have only very general idea about application of the Convention in practice.

This conclusion can be made based on, first of all, legal proceedings of the Ecological Society Green Salvation. Their brief review roughly introduces readers with the deficiencies of the system of justice and obstacles facing the public when trying to access justice on matters related to the environment.

Secondly, a bright example of “practical ignoring” of the requirements of the Convention is how state officials treat opinion of the public who started a campaign “Protect Kok-Jailau!” aiming to defend Ile-Alatau National Park. Two final articles of the digest tell the history of the campaign and describe consequences which can be caused by construction of a mountain ski resort on the territory of the national park.

Editorial staff of the herald hopes that it attracts attention of international organizations, scientists, and wide public to the difficult situation around compliance with the Convention in our country.