

ECOLOGY. PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

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Since ancient times Nature has served Man, being the source of his life. For thousands of years people lived in harmony with environment and it seemed to them that natural riches were unlimited. But with the development of civilization man's interference in nature began to increase.

Ecology is the study of the relationship of plants and animals to their physical and biological environment. The physical environment includes light and heat or solar radiation, moisture, wind, oxygen, carbon dioxide, nutrients in soil, water, and atmosphere. The biological environment includes organisms of the same kind as well as other plants and animals.

The problems facing the environment are vast and diverse. Destruction of the world's rain forests, global warming, and the depletion of the ozone layer are just some of the problems that will reach critical proportion in the coming decades. Their rates will be directly affected by the size of the human population.

Large cities with the thousands of smoky industrial enterprises appear all over the world today. The by-products of their activity pollute the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we grow grain and vegetables on.

Every year world industry pollutes the atmosphere with about 1000 million tons of dust and other harmful substances. Many cities suffer from smog. Vast forests are cut and burn in fire. Their disappearance upsets the oxygen balance. As a result some rare species of animals, birds, fish and plants disappear forever, a number of rivers and lakes dry up.

Air, water, and soil are necessary for existence of all living things. But polluted air can cause illness, and even death. Polluted water kills fish and other marine life. On polluted soil, food cannot be grown. In addition environmental pollution spoils the natural beauty of our planet.

Pollution is as complicated as serious problem. Automobiles are polluting the air but they provide transportation for the people. Factories pollute the air and the water but they provide jobs for people and produce necessary goods. Fertilizers and pesticides are important for growing crops but they can ruin soil.

The pollution of air and the world's ocean, destruction of the ozone layer is the result of man's careless interaction with nature, a sign of the ecological crises.

The most horrible ecological disaster befell Ukraine and its people after the Chernobyl tragedy in April 1986.

The Chernobyl power plant was considered to be at that time the best example of the new engineering technologies and their implementation into the usage of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. One little mistake caused a global disaster. We hope that it was the last time, because the third time might be the last one.

The consequences of this explosion at the atomic power-station are tragic for the Ukrainian, Belarusian and other nations.

Environmental protection is of a universal concern. That is why serious measures to create a system of ecological security should be taken. Some progress has been already made in this direction. As many as 159 countries — members of UNO — have set up environmental protection agencies. Numerous conferences have been held by these agencies to discuss problems facing ecologically poor regions including the Aral Sea, the South Urals, Kusbass, Donbass, Semipalatinsk and Chernobyl. An international environmental research centre has been set up on Lake Baikal. The international organization Greenpeace is also doing much to preserve the environment.

To protect nature people should change their attitude to it. Man should stop taking from it everything he needs and give it his love instead. Otherwise the payoff will be too high. It is good that at last people started to realize that they should keep air and water clean by establishing strict pollution control. We have a moral duty to look after our planet and hand it on in good order to future generation. That does not mean trying to halt economic growth. We need growth to give us the means to live better and healthier lives. Where there are real threats to our planet we have to take great care. Prevention can often be better and cheaper than cure.