

Implementation of the UNFCCC in Bulgaria: An analytical review

Antoaneta Yotova – National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Sofia 1784, Bulgaria; E-mail: antoaneta.iotova@meteo.bg

Martha Djourdjin – International University Bremen, College Ring 7, PO Box 73, 28759–Bremen, Germany; E-mail: m.djurdjin@iu-bremen.de

Abstract

Climate change is one of the most complex and controversial issues of the contemporary global environmental change agenda, so the international community pays great attention to it. The efforts to cope with climate change resulted in variety of actions, in particular - agreements like the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 being the most important from point of view of practical steps undertaken internationally. The Bulgarian Parliament ratified the UNFCCC in 1995 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2002 which put the country 's policy to address climate change on stable ground. The process to meet the commitments and obligations under these international agreements - as multi-level, multi-actor and cross-sectoral in its very nature, is also a kind of "green policy" integration because it relates to almost all types of societal activities and requires collaboration between diverse interested parties. In the paper, review of (i) what is being done within this process in Bulgaria, (ii) what are the results and (iii) the problems is made so that to analyze whether or not it is successful. Documents like National Communications to the UNFCCC, National Action Plans on Climate Change, etc. as well as related projects/activities (Bulgarian National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management Project) are discussed to answer such questions and to look for ways how to better proceed in the future. Special attention is paid to characterize the main interested parties, with emphasis on the Non-Governmental Organizations, and their role in the process of policy development and implementation.

1. Introduction

Climate change appears to be one of the most complex and controversial issues of the contemporary global environmental agenda, so the international community pays great attention to it. Practical steps undertaken internationally to cope with problems related to climate change start after the establishment in 1988 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), then the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 being the most important milestones of the efforts in this respect. In parallel, national activities are underway in most of the countries worldwide.

With ratification by the Bulgarian Parliament of the UNFCCC in 1995 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, the national policy to address climate change is on stable ground. The process to meet the commitments and obligations under these international agreements -

as multi-level, multi-actor and cross-sectoral in its very nature, is also a kind of “green policy” integration because it concerns almost all types of economic and societal activities, and requires collaboration between diverse interested parties. In the paper, review of (i) what is being done within this process in Bulgaria, (ii) what are the results and (iii) the problems is made so that to analyze whether or not it is successful. Documents like National Communications to the UNFCCC, National Action Plans on Climate Change, etc. as well as related projects/activities (Bulgarian National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management Project; Capacity Building for JI activities, etc.) are briefly discussed to answer such questions and to suggest ways how to better proceed in the future. Attention is paid to characterize the main interested parties, especially Non-Governmental Organizations active in climate-related issues, and their role in the process of country’s policy development and implementation.

2. Milestones of the UNFCCC implementation in Bulgaria

2.1 National Inventories, Communications and related reports

As one of the first signatories and Annex I Party to the UNFCCC, Bulgaria regularly submits corresponding documents to the Convention’s Secretariat, as following:

- the I-st National Communication on Climate Change – in 1996; the II-nd National Communication – in 1998; the III-rd National Communication – in 2002;
- annual national Green House Gas (GHG) Inventories for the years from 1988 to 2002 are prepared in accordance with the IPCC/UNFCCC guidelines and requirements, and the respective reports are submitted (10 reports up to now, the last one – GHG Inventory for 2002, submitted in June 2004);
- the Ist National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) is adopted by the Bulgarian government in June 2000 and then, within the project “Updating and Extending the National Action Plan on Climate Change”, second NAPCC for the period 2005-2008 is prepared and now discussed;
- within the last project, Institutional and Stakeholder Assessment Report [1] is produced, too, to provide “insight in the institutional setting, in the roles and capacity of the various stakeholders in the field of climate change policy development and implementation in Bulgaria”.

2.2 Main interested parties

Due to the nature of climate change issues, a great number of interested parties are involved in processes to deal with them, but the main ones are the legislation power, the executive power, the local authorities, scientific community, business organizations, non-governmental organizations and the general public [2]. In Bulgaria, the legislation power is the Parliament – “the state institution that has the responsible task to adopt and approve the national policy”, and the executive – the government represented by Ministries, agencies, and other bodies. For climate change issues, the government is represented by the Ministry of Environment and Water, its Executive Agency and local branches, but

relevant units in almost all other Ministries are responsible for tasks “to elaborate, perform, control and improve the policies and the measures at national and regional levels”. Then, “the local authorities are the most directly responsible for implementation of policies and measures on the climate change at settlement and municipality levels” [2].

Amongst research organisations where systematic studies on climate variation and change at different spatial scales are carried out, the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology to Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is the one to play leading role. In respect to more complex issues like mitigation and adaptation policy-oriented studies, other institutes within and outside the Academy are active, too. Unfortunately, the collaboration between the research organizations themselves as well as between them and other interested parties, especially the legislative and executive bodies, is neither active nor effective enough.

The business organizations – “those that mainly suffer the burden of the national policies and measures on the climate change through setting their activities with respect to the requirements of the international and national legislation in this field, in Bulgaria are the enterprises of the following industrial branches: stationary installations for production of electricity and heat power using coals, black oil and natural gas as fuel; metallurgical and chemical enterprises, factories for production of cement and lime” [2].

The non-governmental organizations working for “distribution of information and widening of the public awareness on climate change from one side, and from the other side they serve as linkage between the decision-makers in relation with the national politics and measures in this field and the affected by these politics and measures institutions” [2]. A great number of the Bulgarian NGOs are active in issues related to climate change, but some are to be specially mentioned. In particular, the Centre for Energy Efficiency (EnEffect) - a non-profit NGO, working for energy conservation throughout society by its active involvement in activities to improve energy efficiency.

2.3 Projects

As a good example in searching for integrative environmental practices, the project "Bulgarian National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) for Improved Global

Environmental Management" [2] has to be mentioned. It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Environment and Water and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started in December 2002. Within a period of 24 months, the project aims to enable an in-depth assessment of the existing capacities of Bulgaria to fulfill its obligations under three UN Conventions (the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification) and to support an analysis of further capacity building needs at the systemic, institutional and individual levels.

Another examples promising to be of use for the process of the UNFCCC in Bulgaria are the study for the Implementation of "Scheme for Green Investments" in Bulgaria performed by a World Bank team (June 2003-May 2004) and "Study for Capacity Building on the Mechanism for Joint Implementation in Bulgaria" (01.01.2004-31.12.2004). However, these studies/projects have not been realized in a transparent and widely publicized way thus not being really examples of the "greening the policy" type.

3. What else is necessary

For more successful and complete implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bulgaria as a "greening policy" tool, still a lot needs to be done because in Bulgaria it is entirely true that "... the traditional organization model of bureaucracy ... based upon specialization and division of work ... successful in a number of ways ... fails, however, in addressing the needs of cross-cutting problems such as environmental protection." (call for papers for the 2004 Berlin Conference). In particular, one and the same team deals with and produces the National Communications, Inventories, National Action Plan on Climate Change and almost all the official documents to the UNFCCC which means that these are not free of subjective views and biases. On the other hand, Bulgaria is also a party to the UN Economic Commission for Europe' Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (adopted on 25th June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus) [3]. The Aarhus Convention, as a new kind of environmental agreement focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context and it is forging a new process for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. In the light of country's commitments to the Aarhus Convention, the Article 6 of the UNFCCC and the New Delhi work programme on it, etc., the public awareness, education and training in climate change issues is an important policy option that needs to be respectively considered, but this is not yet the case in Bulgaria.

On the other hand, it is now very important for Bulgaria to take full advantage of the process to join the EU in sense to learn and apply the best practices, to adopt European legislation and related measures, activities, etc. In respect to the policy addressing climate change, the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) is the most important document: "The ECCP led to the adoption of a range of new policies and measures, ... which will start its operation on 1 January 2005, will play a key role. ... The European

Commission organises Stakeholder Conference on the EU's approach to the international co-operation against climate change after 2012 - "Post-2012 climate policy for the EU", 22 November 2004, Brussels" [4].

As seen in the above and as a major conclusion from this brief analytical review, it is the active involvement and partnership between all the interested parties in the country to be the key for future much more effective and successful implementation of the UNFCCC. However, it is of special importance for the NGOs and scientists to be much more active and play much more essential role in this process, so that to ensure its practical results.

References

1. <http://www.bluelink.net/climate>
2. <http://chm.moew.government.bg/ncsa/> : BASELINE REPORT - CLIMATE CHANGE (SUMMARY), 2003;
3. <http://www.unece.org/env/pp>
4. <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/eccp.htm>