Russia's New Environmental Policy in the Context of "Green" Transformation

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Abstract. Russia has the world's richest natural capital. It holds 6% of the world's oil reserves, 17% of natural gas, 18% of coal, 15% of iron ore, 4% of copper, 10% of nickel and 17% of rare earth metals. Also important are renewable resources, which have gained strategic importance in the 21st century. About 20% of the world's fresh water is located in Russia (mostly in Lake Baikal) and 20% of the world's forest resources. Russia accounts for about 9% of the world's arable land, but this area has decreased by more than 12% since 1990. Despite the fact that the catch of fish resources has decreased by about half since the end of the Soviet era, Russia ranks 6-7th in the world in this indicator and has shown the highest growth rate in the world over the last decade following reforms in the fisheries regulatory sector. Fishing catch. But more importantly, the ecological capacity of the Russian ecosystem significantly exceeds the ecological footprint of the Russian economy, making Russia one of the world's largest environmental contributors.

1 Introduction

Russia is the record holder among all countries in the world in terms of absolute greenhouse gas emission reductions since 1990: about 2 billion tons CO2-eq. - If the absorption of Russian forests is taken into account, this figure is actually twice as high. While it is recognized that this result was achieved as a result of the economic crisis and the consequent restructuring of the economy rather than specific measures, its importance cannot be underestimated. As a result of this restructuring, a relatively favorable energy balance has emerged in the Russian energy sector: natural gas (46%), low-carbon nuclear (19%) and hydro (18%). This energy balance is more favorable than many developed countries, including China and India, which have traditionally used coal as an energy source, as well as Germany and the United States, which have been identified as low-carbon leaders. However, in terms of the carbon intensity of its economy, Russia lags far behind developed countries. Firstly, the high share of heat and electricity generation and secondly, the low energy efficiency of the economy. There is potential to reduce emissions in the near future in the area of energy efficiency. Thus, all the key elements necessary for a regulatory framework in the area of climate change are either in place or will be in the near future. This will happen faster than in many other countries around the world. Thus, only 28 states have adopted

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official low-carbon development strategies. A similar document has been prepared and published in Russia and may soon be officially approved. However, the content of this regulatory framework is unclear. In our view, Russia's targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are insufficient. In particular, the above-mentioned presidential decree suggests that emissions could increase by around 40% above current levels by 2030. There is no provision in the Law on State Regulation of Emissions to put a price on carbon or limit the emissions of companies. The Low Carbon Development Strategy indicates a willingness to increase emissions by 2050. This is contrary to the goals of the Paris Agreement on the one hand and global trends on the other. Many countries (including China) have declared that they will not only reduce emissions but also achieve carbon neutrality by mid-century. Of course, there is no need to set overly ambitious targets and engage in a symbolic race to see who can reduce greenhouse gases faster and more. Moreover, many of the targets declared by the partners may not be achieved. But active nature conservation, including emission reductions, is necessary. However, it is worth noting that there was no consensus on this issue during the discussions in the field analysis. Some experts argued that the parameters set out in the relevant regulatory documents are optimal in terms of balancing economic growth, improving the welfare of the population and protecting nature. According to this view, if Russia announces stricter emission targets now, it will be deprived of opportunities for economic growth and will have to go for more stringent emission reductions in the future in accordance with the requirements of the Paris Agreement. Meanwhile, the West will continue its sweeping criticism of the Russian Federation and accusations of 'backwardness' in the fight against climate change.

2 Research Methodology

Despite references to environmental issues in foreign policy concepts and other documents, environmental cooperation remains a relatively peripheral foreign policy area. For Russia, cooperation on environmental and climate issues is not a priority area of interaction in international organizations of importance to Russia, such as the SCO, BRICS and EEU, and even at the global level, instead of proposing its own environmental protection agenda, Russia has so far been a passive participant in the tail of the Western narrative. As a result, Russia has failed to capitalize on one of its main competitive advantages on the international stage - its rich and diverse nature and its role as a provider of global environment and climate. This has deprived it of many international political and economic benefits. It is necessary to increase the priority of international cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Russia's main foreign policy documents and, most importantly, to start pursuing an active policy in this field. This will strengthen Russia's international prestige and influence, bring significant economic benefits and improve the quality of life and well-being of its citizens. International cooperation on environmental issues should be promoted as an important unifying issue that can resolve geopolitical contradictions and strengthen cooperation between rival countries. In particular, this enhanced cooperation could improve relations between China and India to Russia's benefit and become an important part of the SCO agenda, which is now clearly stalled. Russia would find it appropriate to promote environmental issues both within the SCO framework and within the RIC and BRICS frameworks. But most importantly, in cooperation with other SCO and BRICS countries, Russia can offer developing countries, and indeed the entire world, a broader and fairer common environmental agenda than the West is currently proposing.

3 Results and Discussions

The Russian environmental agenda we propose to the world is based on five fundamental principles: 1. Environmental problems - not only pure environmental problems, but also, for example, infectious diseases - are one of the main challenges of the 21st century. 2. The degradation of nature and its consequences have traditionally been mainly a global security problem, but this is especially true today. The global problem of nature degradation should not be seen as secondary to economic growth, just as traditional security problems are not. Ignoring global problems now will result in significant losses in the future, including loss of economic growth and material well-being - the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrates this.2. Environmental issues must be addressed as a whole. Combating climate change is an important issue, but far from the only one, especially for developing countries. Tackling air, water and soil pollution, deforestation, waste and biodiversity loss is important not only in the context of climate change mitigation, but also in its own right. Addressing environmental issues requires restructuring the global economy, but the corresponding 'green' transformation must be inclusive and consistent with the interests of developing as well as developed countries. This is especially true given that it is the processes taking place in developing countries with their superior populations, volumes of economic activity and growth rates that will determine the future of the planet. The approach to environmental issues, in particular the fight against climate change, currently promoted by Western countries is at odds with many other sustainable development goals, notably poverty eradication and the reduction of inequality. It is difficult, if not impossible, for developing countries to simultaneously develop 'green' technologies and provide food, water and electricity to the poor. This is particularly difficult in countries that specialize in the export of traditional natural resources and carbon-intensive products. The transfer of 'dirty' industries to developing countries shifts the responsibility for solving local environmental problems in developed countries to developing countries without solving global problems. There is a need to develop rules and instruments of international economic relations and global governance that will move all countries of the world from rich developed countries to 'clean' development through joint efforts, and to provide real support for this transition. This is not about 'international development assistance' or aid policies, but about jointly determining the future trajectory for solving environmental problems.4. The consumer society economy is unsustainable. This policy, which has supported the economic development of Western countries as well as most non-Western countries, has led to the scale of environmental problems we see today. Attempts to solve environmental problems by introducing 'clean' technologies without changing consumer behavior patterns are doomed to failure. Consumers are as responsible for environmental problems as producers of 'dirty' products and should be jointly and severally responsible for their solution. In particular, the rich, who are concentrated in developed countries and are also present in developing countries.1 The focus of policies supported by Russia should be on the individual, his or her general well-being and security, not material consumption. Many participants in CITANAIDS agree that special efforts are needed to create a new model of economic growth through a world community effort, mainly for developing countries that cannot use the consumption behavior model of Western countries due to environmental regulations.5. It must start with the least costly. For a real fight against climate change, it makes no sense to raise huge sums of money to reduce 9% of global emissions, ignoring what happens beyond borders, as the EU has done. A global green finance system is needed that links funds made available to rich countries for low-carbon development with low-cost emission reduction projects, especially in developing countries. The elements of such a system should be uniform standards for 'green' finance, mutual offsetting of emission reductions between different national regulatory systems, and an active role for international development agencies in directing research and development of 'green' financial flows to developing countries.

Developing countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America appear to be important potential allies of Russia in promoting the new global environmental agenda and cooperation in the field of environmental protection in general. They are interested in a more equitable global environmental regime consistent with their own economic and social development goals, and in particular in the provision of 'clean' technologies. However, to ensure their broad support for Russia's approach, including the new environmental agenda proposed in this report, it is necessary to more actively promote it at the international level and engage in a qualitatively focused expert dialogue on environmental and climate issues with developing countries based on the results and assessments developed by Russian basic science. This is necessary. This will allow Russia to compete more confidently in setting the global agenda with Western countries that have large-scale scientific capacity to prove environmental issues, including climate. A comparable analytical and conceptual level is needed to refute and correct their claims. Another important area of cooperation between Russia and its BRICS, SCO and other developing country partners is climate change adaptation. The Paris Agreement includes the thesis that emission reductions and adaptation should be given equal priority in each country's approach to climate change. In reality, however, adaptation has always been overshadowed, despite its importance for developing countries. There is a need for a professional dialogue with developing country partners on this issue, as well as an exchange of experience, including at regional and municipal levels. It would also be useful for developing countries to further strengthen their dialogue with developed countries on the importance of adaptation as one of their global priorities.

4 Conclusions

According to many experts, the drop in pollutant emissions during the pandemic (the largest on record) was short-lived and emissions will return to average levels faster than the pandemic and related regulations will continue. Moreover, the authors of numerous studies and expert group reports predict that by the end of 2020, energy demand and consumption will increase compared to last year's figures, and global emissions will increase accordingly. As most countries have not yet moved to the concept of economic decarbonization89 (low carbon economy), no significant changes in emissions, pollutant concentrations or air quality are expected in the medium term (unless there are extreme events on a planetary scale affecting economic and social activities).

However, the 'zero' principle, which was not questioned by the field analysis participants, relates to Russia itself. It is only possible for Russia to propose its own environmental agenda to the outside world if real and tangible changes are made in this area within the country. Russia's environmental problems have been accumulating for decades and have no immediate solutions. But in terms of leading the world in this area, it is not the current level of the environmental situation that matters, but its dynamics and, most importantly, the decisive power of the measures being implemented. This is clearly evident in China. In less than a decade it has gone from being the 'sinner' of the world's environmental problems to one of the main engines of the global 'green' turnaround. Germany is another example: Despite having a more 'dirty' energy balance than Russia, this has not prevented it from being recognized as the leader of the 'green' agenda in Europe.

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