Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1190 (1999)[1]

Environment protection as a provider of employment

Parliamentary Assembly

1. At a time when many countries in Europe are plagued by high unemployment, greater efforts to protect the environment can create new employment opportunities through new industries, technologies and expertise, for use in Europe itself and as exports to other continents suffering from increasing environmental problems. Policies encouraging greater environment protection – if pursued with due concern for economic realities and in particular the situation of small and medium-sized enterprises – may therefore not be harmful to the economy over the longer term, but may instead help it to adapt to meet new challenges, and indeed help mankind survive potential disasters, such as global warming.

2. The job creation potential of environment protection has been greatly increased in recent years through technological breakthroughs resulting in much greater cost-efficiency. Council of Europe member states should tap this potential through high environment standards, environmentally-oriented tax and pricing policies, the phasing-out of subsidies to polluting industries and enhanced international co-operation as regards environmental data collection and analytical tools.

3. Environment protection takes on a new significance as European economies move in the direction of an ever-greater role for services, including the particularly labour-intensive tourism sector. Council of Europe member states should therefore consider the protection and conservation of the environment as an integral part of this effort and of that of combating unemployment, as also emphasised in Assembly Resolution 1148 (1998) on the need to accelerate the development of tourism in central and eastern Europe.

4. Several central and east European countries in transition face particular difficulties owing to the legacy of the communist era. Polluting industries, often still in state hands, are kept in operation out of a fear of increasing unemployment and social tension, thereby posing a threat to the health of present and future generations. The Assembly therefore calls on Council of Europe member states to increase – through international institutions such as the European Union, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank – assistance to the countries in transition for the necessary modernisation of these industries.

5. Finally, Europe also has a special duty to assist the developing countries to protect their environment against such threats as soil erosion and deforestation, and thereby help preserve employment there. The Assembly therefore calls on Council of Europe member states to give environment protection its due weight at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial summit to be held in late 1999 and in the forthcoming WTO "Millennium Round".

1. SeeDoc. 8374, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr González Laxe. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 26 May 1999.