



## Recommendation 1495 (2001)<sup>1</sup>

# Environmental impact of the war in Yugoslavia on South-East Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly notes with concern the serious environmental impact of military operations over the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 24 March and 5 June 1999 as documented, inter alia, by the United Nations:

- 1.1. air, river and underground transfer of pollutants have affected the whole of Southeast Europe, particularly Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Ukraine;
- 1.2. effects on health and quality of life will be long-lasting, and future generations will likewise be affected, notably as a result of the targeting of industrial and storage sites containing substances hazardous to health and Nato’s use of ordnance containing depleted uranium;
- 1.3. direct and indirect damage has dramatically worsened the condition of the natural environment, which was already very poor.

2. As was the case for operations in Bosnia and Chechnya, states involved in these operations disregarded the international rules set out in Articles 55 and 56 of Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 intended to limit environmental damage in armed conflict. In the Assembly’s view, these rules should be strengthened and enforced in order to prevent or at least lessen such violations of fundamental human rights in any future conflict.

3. Further to its [Recommendation 1452 \(2000\)](#) on the parliamentary contribution to the implementation of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, the Assembly considers:

- a. that the means available to affected countries are inadequate to protect and rehabilitate the environment;
- b. that those countries should be provided with special technical and financial assistance for emergency environmental rehabilitation measures and for monitoring the health and living conditions of their populations;
- c. that rehabilitation of the environment should be included in programmes for economic, social and transport rebuilding; that these programmes should adopt an integrated approach to socio-economic and long-term ecological issues, in keeping with acknowledged principles of “sustainable development” as set forth in the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 14 June 1992); and that the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe should be reinforced by a special protocol on the repair of the environmental damage caused by the conflict;
- d. that non-governmental organisations are making important contributions, not least to increasing public awareness, that the international community should give them greater support; and that the Stability Pact should also be used for this purpose.

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1. Assembly debate on 24 January 2001 (5th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8925](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mr Kurykin). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 January 2001 (5th Sitting).



4. The Assembly accordingly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
  - a. initiate joint discussions with the OSCE on drawing up a convention on the prevention of environmental damage as a result of military force and crisis-defusing measures aimed, in particular, to ensure compliance with Articles 55 and 56 of Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949;
  - b. consult with the European Union on drawing up a protocol to the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe to tackle the region's environmental problems;
  - c. use its own resources to support non-governmental organisations in the region, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which are engaged in repairing environmental damage caused by military operations and in rehabilitating the natural environment;
  - d. call for a ban on the manufacturing, testing, use and sale of weapons containing depleted uranium or plutonium;
  - e. demand that Nato and the UN implement a medical surveillance programme for civilian populations in the Balkans, soldiers having taken part in operations, members of humanitarian organisations and journalists having worked in the area.