

APPENDIX 7: THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PORTION OF THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME OF PRIME MINISTER MATTI VANHANEN'S GOVERNMENT ON 24 JUNE 2003

10 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The aim of Finland's environmental policy is to consolidate Finland's status as an information and skills-based society known for its high level of environmental protection, whose competitiveness derives from fulfilment of sustainable development criteria in consumption and production.

Finland is an active participant in international cooperation to solve global environmental problems and to promote international environmental policy. Environmental values must be taken into account in developing the rules of international trade. Finland is in favour of a strong UN environmental organization. The principles of sustainable development are fundamental in Finland's action related to the management of globalization.

In order to slow down climate change, the commitments of the Kyoto Protocol will be implemented in accordance with the National Climate Strategy, and rapid ratification of the Protocol will be promoted. Finland will play an active role in launching a new round of negotiations aimed at halting climate change and involving all countries.

The Baltic Sea Protection Programme will be continued. Efforts will be made to have the Baltic Sea designated a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). The Government aims to enhance the significance of the Baltic Sea within the European Union, particularly in the Northern Dimension Action Plan and the Environmental Partnership Fund. Eutrophication will be curbed, for instance by reducing pollution loads from agriculture and communities and by investing in the reduction of harmful emissions and discharges from neighbouring areas. Risks caused by oil and chemical shipping and other hazardous transportation must be reduced. Efforts will be made to speed up the preparation and enforcement of international technical regulations, particularly regarding shipping in winter. Inputs will be made to improve preparedness to combat oil pollution in neighbouring areas. A new multi-purpose icebreaker equipped for oil and chemical pollution control will be acquired to improve oil pollution combating capacity. Ways and means of setting up a centre of expertise in oil pollution control will be investigated.

Practical implementation of the action plan formulated at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg will be promoted. A national intersectoral programme of ecologically, socially and economically sustainable production and consumption patterns will be drawn up. Environmental education will be promoted in this programme. Finland will play an active role in preparations for an international framework programme for sustainable production and consumption. The aim is to increase efficiency in the use of materials and energy throughout the life cycle of a product. Production and expertise based on environmental technology will be promoted.

The structure of taxation will be revised so as to promote sustainable development. Ecological tax reforms will reduce the use of non-renewable natural resources and prevent environmental damage. At the same time, the recycling and ecological efficiency of products, their consumption and energy use will be promoted. Ways of cutting subsidies detrimental to the environment and to sustainable development will be explored.

The total volume of municipal waste will be reduced, and waste should increasingly be used as raw material and as a source of energy. Both economic and technical incentives will be used to reduce the volume of waste.

An environmental guidance system based on excise tax will be developed for beverage packagings.

The adverse effects on the environment of the final disposal of non-recyclable waste will be minimized. The polluter-pays principle will be extended to more product groups, and the responsibility of the trade sector for packaging waste will be increased. The recovery and use of landfill gas for energy will be improved and expanded. A comprehensive system for the separate collection and treatment of biowaste will be introduced.

A national programme on hazardous chemicals will be drawn up. The precautionary principle will be emphasized in order to minimize any unforeseen adverse effects of new products. A Government resolution on a national noise abatement action plan will be issued.

The quality of groundwater will be maintained and the restoration of contaminated soil will be promoted.

The environmental quality of cities and other urban areas will be improved, with particular attention to the health of children and other special groups. To this end, fine-particle emissions from traffic and incineration will be curbed more effectively. Nearby natural environments and recreational areas will be made more easily accessible, for instance by setting up city parks. In land use planning, measures promoting the preservation of valuable natural and cultural environments will be highlighted.

Nature protection programmes will be implemented in accordance with the funding programme approved in 1996. Nature protection funding will be re-evaluated in 2005. The action plan for forest biodiversity conservation in southern Finland will be implemented. Nature reserves will be properly managed. Nature tourism and outdoor recreation will be diversified to create jobs.

The designation of areas to be included in the Natura 2000 network will be completed in cooperation with the European Commission. The management and use of Natura 2000 sites will be promoted in cooperation with landowners and local actors. The maintenance of valuable natural and cultural environments created by traditional agriculture will be safeguarded as part of agricultural policy.

Regional environment centres will have a more prominent role as regional development experts. Permit and other administrative procedures will be speeded up, and services will be made more customer-oriented.

The National Action Plan for Biodiversity will be revised in 2005.

Finland will contribute actively to the tightening of legislation to prevent cruelty to animals and its enforcement in the European Union. Animal protection monitoring and enforcement of legislation will be intensified in Finland.

Testing on animals will be reduced. Animal protection organizations that respect the rule of law will be supported.