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**GEO ALAVERDI.  
ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

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## INTRODUCTORY

### *From the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia*



The policy and legislation of Armenia in the environmental protection field have been basically formed and improved during the last 15 years. According to the 15<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution of Armenia the State ensures protection and recovery of environment, and the reasonable use of natural reserves. Armenia actively participates in the international cooperation processes, has signed and ratified a number of international and European

conventions and agreements in environmental protection field.

In the framework of those agreements and conventions Armenia aims to prevent or restrict harmful impacts on human health and environment, liquidate over norm pollution of environment, lighten the dangerous consequences of global climate change, protect the biodiversity, ensure the necessary volumes of reproduction of renewable natural resources and conditions for maintaining the natural balance and support the natural and effective use of nonrenewable natural resources.

The environmental and natural resources protection and management issues of the Republic of Armenia mostly exist in the Lori Marz as well. In particular, effective management of forest resources, issues on domestic waste removal and management of harmful industrial wastes, effective management and use of water resources, prevention of land degradation, decrease of anthropogenic factors stimulating the desertification, improvement and effective use of grasslands.

This “GEO Alaverdi: Environment and Urban Development” report covers the abovementioned problems in Lori Marz of Armenia, describes the legal responsibilities of various stakeholder organizations in the given field, at the same time suggests and presents the best development scenario for Alaverdi town, and required means for priority issues.

The importance given to the implementation of the project “GEO Alaverdi” is proved by the fact that the ecological issues and challenges of Alaverdi town by their character and sizes have big influence to the whole ecological system of the South Caucasus, as the transboundary Debed River flows through the Alaverdi town and the forests of Alaverdi spread to the Georgia and Azerbaijan by forming entire ecosystem.

**VACHE TERTERYAN**  
**First Deputy Minister,**  
**Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia**

*From the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia*

The study “GEO Alaverdi: Environment and Urban Development” is one of the activities under the *Global Environmental Outlook for Cities Program* that started in 2000 in response to call by the United Nations Environmental Program’s (UNEP) Governing Council. “GEO-Alaverdi” was supported by the Environment and Security Initiative ([www.envsec.org](http://www.envsec.org)) with the special involvement by two organizations: UNEP/GRID-Arendal and OSCE Armenia Office. It aims

at integrated urban environmental assessment that analyses environmental conditions, and it’s cause analyses so called pressures on the environment, the policy of reaction towards those pressures and the tools thereof, the trends and solutions for development. The special attention is given to development of scenarios of urban environment. The specialty of the Program that being of environmental nature, it performs on the discussion of the issues and makes its questions with consideration of the socio-economic factors, and demonstrates alternative options for solutions to the situation and development of the city, in parallel with protocol conclusions. We can say from the beginning that the study is not a goal of itself, but a systematized approach to development of recommendations for the solution of the existing problems.

The ecological situation of Alaverdi has always been in the center of attention of the local population. Especially, after the operationalization of the copper processing plant, the expediency of it has been continuously discusses in the context of environmental and health related issues; the population has faced the challenge of decision making and choice. The developments of last several years, the worsening of the socio-economic conditions and the existence of a limited number of employment vacancies do not leave any choice. The main employer for the city is the Plant, thus the issues of selection has become harder.

Some new problems have been added to the mentioned ones, as well, especially related to the management of waste and water resources. The quality of life degrades; serious danger awaits the human health. The data from the public health center of the city, for 2004-2008 is of significant concern, if compared to the analogical data from other settlements. The city needs support in developing an environmental strategy. The study “GEO-Alaverdi; Environment and Urban Development” is a warning to all of this and focuses the attention of both the public and the private sectors to the present and the future of the city.

The study has been performed in participatory manner, discussed with the public/community authorities of the city and the general population. It provides for a collective activity and can play a role in further developments.

The study is a result of constructive work performed by UNEP/GRID-Arendal and OSCE Yerevan, thus it would be preferable to have it play a role in other cities and communities of the Republic.

**VICTOR MARTIROSYAN**  
**Director of “Center of Environmental Programs” SNCO,**  
**Coordinator of “Environment and Security Initiative”**

*From the Alaverdi municipality*

Since April 2009, Armenia started the implementation of GEO-Alaverdi Program with the support from OSCE-Yerevan and funding of UNEP/GRID-Arendal. The purpose of the program was to prepare an Integrated Assessment Report for Alaverdi, with consideration of worldwide environmental perspectives, which was aimed at supporting the process of decision-making related to the city planning and increasing the public awareness on the environmental issues of Alaverdi.

Despite the short period of Program operation, it managed to play a significant role in correct expression of the real environmental picture and development of practical recommendations.

Initially, a Working group of interested experts was formed for the defined purpose. The group involved representatives from the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration, RA Ministry of Nature Protection, Alaverdi municipality, NGOs, industries and Alaverdi Aarhus Center. At the first session of the Working group, held on the 1st of May 2009, the members of the group presented their opinions and attitudes towards the existing environmental issues, and discussed the positive and negative developments of the city.

The result of that meeting emanated the development of the Report “GEO Alaverdi, environment and urban development”, which was then reviewed and amended by the experts of the Working Group and afterwards adopted thereby on the 28th of August. I think that this Report is crucial both for the Municipality of Alaverdi and other structures and agencies involved in public administration, for performing practical steps aimed at streamlining of future programs, understanding of urgent issues and improvement of the current ecological condition. Alaverdi faces a hard choice today – an everyday worsening environmental condition on one side (which strongly impacts the human health and quality of life of the population) and the danger of further aggravation of the socio-economic situation in the community, related to the closure of the ACP Armenia Program and lack of any other employment opportunities. Even though, since 1770, Alaverdi exists as a settlement and then as a working community due to a plant established therein, and is considered a metallurgical center, the work and the report of the Team of Experts show that the optimistic scenario is possible only in case of diversification of economic risks, and development of alternative sectors, based on the local resources and rich cultural heritage. Alaverdi must do its best to avoid the pessimistic scenario and take the road to the optimistic one.

Alaverdi must be observed by the international community as a complete and demanded touristic site, as well as a center for industry, culture and sports.

Alaverdi must have such a system of environmental and health care norms, which will be released from the condition of maximal burden and overload, with our support, to be afterwards transferred to the next generations, without significant alterations.

**ARTHUR NALBANDYAN**  
Mayor of Alaverdi



Dear Reader,

Environmental concerns have been on the OSCE's agenda since 1980s and comprise an important part of its comprehensive concept of security. The OSCE recognizes that environmental degradation, unsustainable economic development, and unequal access to natural resources can have a direct impact on the stability and security of states. Therefore, OSCE

participating States have committed themselves to promote international cooperation on environmental matters, abiding by principles of sustainable development and to exchanging information on the state of their environment.

To address multifaceted character of environmental sources of human insecurity, three organizations with different mandates, expertise, and networks — the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — joined together to form the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC).

At the national level in Armenia, ENVSEC was urged by national authorities to address the impacts of the legacy of the Soviet mining industry. The revitalization of the mining industry offers excellent opportunities for employment and wealth creation, yet mining also poses considerable danger while polluting streams and rivers with dangerous contaminants. Abandoned and orphaned mining sites present particular threats to the health of ecosystems in Armenia.

I must underline that the major driving force behind the success of ENVSEC is partnership. It was with this understanding in mind that the ENVSEC, OSCE Office in Yerevan, with the UNEP financial contribution in partnership with the Alaverdi Municipality, Ministry of Territorial Administration and the Ministry of Nature Protection conducted the “GEO-Alaverdi: Environment and Urban Development” study in 2009. The study is suggested to be instrumental for decision-makers, civil society in their quest of find the solution to difficult problems. The academic community and civil society organizations were involved in consultations, making part of the working group and contributing to the study.

Alaverdi is located in the North-Eastern side of Lori province of Armenia. The area is

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