



How can we help the Planet's 'second lungs' breathe easier? The answer was given at an environmental awareness workshop held jointly by IIB and Wetlands International

February 5, 2018

The workshop entitled "Current Issues Related to the Preservation and Restoration of Wetland Resources" that was devoted to current topics concerning the preservation and restoration of marshlands of our planet, was held in Moscow on February 2, 2018 under the aegis of the IIB.

This environmental awareness event was timed to coincide with World Wetlands Day, which is celebrated annually on February 2 pursuant to a decision of the Ramsar Convention's Secretariat. The purpose and the goal of this international event is to draw the attention of both governments and society in general to the special value of wetlands in the global ecosystem.

Experts from the international non-governmental organization Wetlands International (WI) and the Institute of Forest Science of the Russian Academy of Sciences gave presentations during the workshop. They spoke in detail about the importance of preserving wetland ecosystems - the 'second lungs' of our planet, and also about implementation of the project "Restoring Peatlands in Russia - for Fire Prevention and Climate Change Mitigation". In 2016, the IIB issued a grant supporting the implementation of this environmental initiative.

In his opening remarks to workshop attendees, the Chairman of the IIB Board, **Nikolay Kosov**, talked about the development of 'green' financing and environmental priorities in the Bank's activities, as well as the hurdles and challenges that face mankind in the vast area of preserving water resources. He also underscored the need to expand the Bank's 'green' portfolio within the context of implementing the new Strategy of a multilateral development institution, which pertains, in particular, to the compliance of environmental interests of member states.

The project coordinator of the WI's Russian programme, Irina Kamennova, the coordinator of the WI project "Restoring peatlands in Russia - for Peat Fire Prevention and Climate Change Mitigation", Tatiana Minaeva, and director of the Institute of Forest Science of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Andrei Sirin, analyzed in their speeches the most effective approaches to developing environmental preservation activities, restoring wetland ecosystems, and maintaining the health of the planet. The speakers highlighted the need to strengthen the close relations between multilateral development institutions with relevant state authorities, international environmental protection agencies, and the scientific community.

The main discussions at the workshop were devoted to issues surrounding major global wetland resources. Nowadays, as a result of human activities, millions of hectares of wetlands have been turned into parched and abandoned peat bogs, which often become source of fires

and release greenhouse gases.

In addition, wetlands, without exaggeration, may be rightfully considered the riches of our Earth. It is no coincidence that they are called the 'second lungs' of our planet. They possess the unique ability to extract carbon dioxide from the air and reserve it in the peat. One hectare of these areas is 10 times more effective in extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than a forest covering the same area. Wetlands also help maintain the planet's water balance. By accumulating water, they prevent flash floods. Compared to mineral soils, peat sedimentation possesses greater moisture-holding capacity and greater moisture retention capacity.

The speakers noted that without financial support from such institutions as the IIB, charitable subsidies and target grants it would be impossible to reach the current significant results in restoring Russia's wetland resources.

"The IIB's decision to support the Wetlands project is a valuable initiative for us. It shows other financial structures that the preservation of wetlands is a beneficial long-term innovative investment in sustainable development, which could become a permanent practice in the future", Tatiana Minaeva pointed out.

The organizers of the project "Restoring Peatlands in Russia - for Peat Fire Prevention and Climate Change Mitigation" accepted congratulations after winning a competition of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and a copy of the honorable award was also handed to the IIB's Chairman of the Board.

This workshop was the first in a series of awareness events staged by the IIB, aimed at making the Bank's employees, as well as its shareholders, observers, and the representatives of partner organizations better informed about the key factors of sustainable development and their corporate social responsibility.

Those interested are invited to read the presentations of [Irina Kamennova](#) and [Tatiana Minaeva](#).