Problems of organization sustainable channels for international environmental cooperation in terms of new challenges on the example of the Baltic region

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Abstract. The presence of existing potential sources of threat and the emergence of new problem areas inevitably retains the priority of the environmental factor as one of the key foundations for the formation of an approach to regional development. Today, the growing anthropogenic load on the environment makes it inevitable to renew the agenda of international cooperation and harmonize international environmental relations. The authors pay attention to certain aspects of environmental cooperation on the example of the Baltic region, where both the most effective practice of interaction between the countries of the region has been formed, and there are issues of environmental uncertainty. The problem areas have been identified that require not only expanding the boundaries of the application of a responsible environmental policy, but, taking into account dynamic processes and their expected consequences, to find the most acceptable solutions that meet the needs of the region's countries in ensuring environmental safety.

1 Introduction

In the modern world, there is an increasing understanding that growing anthropogenic or human activities can lead to the degradation of ecosystems that transcend political boundaries. The inability of the ecosystems of certain regions of the world to maintain their previous state even with a slight impact indicates that this trend, being one of the main reasons for the growth of environmental problems and leads to uncompensated interdependence or transnational external effects[1]. And today, comprehension of the prospects of environmental crisis situations, which are potential threats to environmental safety [2], is explained by the growing negative influence of these factors, the consequences of which become less controllable.

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The severity of considering this issue against the background of the persistence of potential sources of dangers and the emergence of new challenges, which, among other things, arise in the aftermath of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic [3], is of particular importance in the regional context. Today, at this level, environmental responsibility and the practice of applying new standards and procedures in this area becomes more and more obvious and this determines the formation of adaptation strategies for effective environmental protection. Effective regulation of environmental policy [4], which is associated with the tasks of ensuring collective responsibility, requires the development of the process of integrating this social value into the mass consciousness.

The practice of integrating this social value into the mass consciousness in the regional aspect makes it possible to bring to the fore the urgent problems of ecological orientation as the priority priorities of regional development. Promoting the values of preserving the ecological environment and natural resource potential, meeting the needs of the present and future generations requires new understanding to rationalize the process of greening interstate relations.

Recently, for the countries of the Baltic region, this process has become more and more relevant as they become aware of the significant negative consequences of environmental problems and the persistence of environmental tension, requiring new regulatory mechanisms and joint adequate actions. The dominance of the national specifics of environmental policy and the practice of introducing environmental responsibility [5] in individual countries of the region directly became a good incentive for the subsequent expansion of the boundaries of this practice and the creation of new efficient mechanisms of international cooperation in the regional dimension.

At the same time, the existing realities that have developed in recent decades largely under the influence of the dynamically changing trends of globalization and regionalization increasingly demonstrate the vulnerability and fragility of the regional environmental protection system in front of the existing variety of environmental problems. And this cannot but affect the Baltic Sea, which is also influenced by climate change [6]. Characterized by high sensitivity, the sea is exposed to anthropogenic impact from the adjacent territories. The influence of anthropogenic factors is caused, in particular, by an increase in the scale of production and consumption of nuclear energy, agriculture, energy transportation channels, problems of wastewater and waste disposal, etc.

Indeed, all this requires an understanding that to what extent the existing multifaceted practice of international environmental cooperation in the regional dimension is able to contribute to the maximum minimization of the influence of existing factors, as well as to effectively respond to new challenges. Of course, today there is an understanding that in a dynamically changing environment, not one country, not taking into account common problems, as well as the priorities and norms of behavior of the main participants in the region, is not able to independently rationally form and effectively implement a policy aimed at ensuring environmental safety as a whole. In turn, the constant updating of the consideration of the problems of common responsibility for the preservation and protection of the ecological environment at the level of the expert and practical community[7], being a growing objective need, requires focusing the attention of specialists, including on changeable trends and their consequences.

The focus of the authors' attention on such a topical topic is due to the need to expand the scope of scientific discourse in order to identify new trends in international environmental cooperation and study possible factors of influence and sources of threats on the ecosystem of the Baltic region.
2 Methods

The materials and research methods in this article include an interpretation of certain aspects of the existing practice of international environmental cooperation in the Baltic region and an indication of the need to improve and apply new approaches against the background of the growing anthropogenic pressure on the ecosystem. The research was carried out using historical, comparative, and other general scientific methods of cognition. In the analysis, consideration of traditional factors inherent in the territories of this region and the use of the listed methods of scientific knowledge allowed the authors to form scientifically grounded conclusions and reliable results in the context of studying some aspects of the ecologization of interstate relations in the face of growing challenges and risks.

3 Results and Discussion

The need to form interstate environmental cooperation in the regional aspect was due to the growing objective interests and needs of a group of states in the face of growing challenges and risks. Taking into account the modern nature of the multifaceted environmental problems, the practice of regional environmental cooperation remains the most demanded element of the system of international environmental relations. Environmental protection today is an integral element of human consciousness and an important imperative of cooperation between state and numerous non-governmental actors [8] in the process of greening interstate relations in the region [9].

An analysis of the materials and practice of these actors makes it possible to note that today there is a developed institutional hierarchy of environmental cooperation. The formed regional model of decision-making in the field of environmental protection is extremely difficult due to a number of circumstances in the region. The region has turned out to be a zone of geopolitical contradictions [10], and this, in our opinion, has a certain negative impact on the nature of regional cooperation in the field of ecology. At this level, problems can be solved only if there is an understanding of the need and importance of international cooperation in the field of ecology, based on the principle of subsidiarity [11]. This process is inevitably accompanied by the expansion of regional environmental cooperation channels with the participation of major international actors. An important element of regional environmental governance [12] is the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region as an institutional response [13] of the community of countries. The eco-systems approach, being a political principle and a management tool, has evolved in accordance with the progressive agenda in the field of environmental management. This model of cooperation undoubtedly needs to update the existing approaches and create new adequate institutional mechanisms that are able to increase the integration dynamics in the field of international environmental relations.

An extended analysis of the multifaceted activities of these structures is beyond the scope of this article, and in this shuttlecock it is advisable to pay attention to the key area of environmental cooperation. In this regard, we believe it is necessary to pay attention to the issues of the state of the sea space and the problem of its pollution (see Fig. 1).
Today, the maritime region is a place of long-term joint efforts for environmental protection and sustainable development [14], and is also the most important determinant of cooperation in the regional dimension. The direct interest and efforts of the countries of the region in solving the multifaceted problems of its protection expands the agenda of environmental diplomacy [15] contributing to the formation of a regional model of interaction. Specialists pay special attention to the problems of the Baltic Sea ecosystem [16,17], which continues to be influenced by both natural and anthropogenic factors. There is an opinion among experts that there are no scenarios that support policy development, which would systematically study both global, regional events and simultaneously influence the Baltic Sea region [18].

Efforts to find a solution to this complex problem have become an important part of regional cooperation, in which the problems of significant differences between coastal areas affect the development of multilateral relations [19]. This topic acquired particular relevance after the status of a special vulnerable sea area was assigned to the Baltic Sea. In accordance with this status, the guidelines for identifying and identifying particularly vulnerable sea areas were revised, and protective measures were implemented to prevent, reduce or eliminate threats, or identify vulnerabilities. One of the important reasons for determining this status was the fact that the water space is renewed slowly and it takes about 30-50 years. The self-purification process at this level and the especially high concentration of exogenous nitrogen and phosphorus cause eutrophication, and it continues to have a significant impact on the ecological situation in the region as a whole. The impact of eutrophication and other factors (for example, water pollution by oil, the accumulation of heavy metals, the presence of ship graveyards) on the state of the most vulnerable sea space is discussed in detail in the materials of one of the key mechanisms of regional environmental cooperation, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission - HELCOM).

The state of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea is of particular concern. Achieving a favorable state of biodiversity is one of the key priorities of HELCOM, but recent results indicate that many species are still under threat. According to the data, 4 out of 16 key indicators of its
biodiversity do not show a good state of the region, and only 3 out of 16 indicators have good indicators in all parts of the Baltic Sea [20]. Thus, proceeding from this, HELCOM, proposing recommendations [21] and developing new international standards, continues to purposefully initiate joint projects in the field of conservation of the Baltic marine ecosystems as a key priority. Considering the future of the Baltic Sea as a favorable environment for human health with a variety of biological components, along with other actions, finds a multilateral response in the event of major maritime incidents. Particular attention is paid to the problems of implementing new strategies and programs that are being implemented in the presence of certain factors and restrictions on Russia's participation in cooperation with this structure [22]. In this process, an important place is given to the issues of responsibility for strengthening dialogue with stakeholders, including capacity building and enhancement of the role of existing mechanisms in accordance with the requirements of HELCOM [23]. The fact that the Baltic Sea Action Plan and other projects have become a useful channel for the implementation of broader and more effective measures testifies to the desire of the parties to build up partnerships and find adequate solutions to existing challenges.

The results of this practice clearly demonstrate that such participation can guarantee the continuation of the process of creating a more sustainable model of ecological cooperation [24], and harmonizing interstate relations in the regional dimension. The continuation of this process, for which there are clear preconditions, will contribute to the implementation of effective standards and building new principles of regional environmental policy that meet the growing needs in the field of ecology. In this context, the issues of the perspective of the ecosystem of the Baltic region, as an important priority of cooperation between the countries of the region, requires further reflection and, consequently, the expansion of the boundaries of scientific discourse with the comfort of the influence of growing new sources of danger.

4 Conclusions

The analysis of materials reflecting certain aspects of the practice of environmental policy in the regional dimension testifies to the persistence of an extremely difficult situation and processes in the Baltic region. The states of the region have their own interests and priorities in the field of environmental security. And the persistence of this situation in recent decades is associated with both the presence of existing sources of pollution, risks and growth of factors of anthropogenic impact. The growing ecological interdependence [25], and the potential ecological vulnerability [26], especially of the sea area to anthropogenic impact, indicates that this becomes a consequence of the manifestation of negative consequences of dynamic processes.

Among the factors that could have a significant impact on the parameters of the region's ecosystem and adjust the existing environmental agenda for regional cooperation, the following should be highlighted:
- strengthening of intra-Baltic political and economic competition and its consequences for the ecology of the region;
- prospects for the implementation of individual large projects in the field of energy and transport and unilateral decisions that are dictated by the economic and political situation; prospects for the development of shale gas and oil fields in the region;
- the absence in individual countries of identical approaches, both legal and organizational approaches in the field of promoting the policy of greening the region;
- the preservation of the inertial and slow process of greening the mass consciousness, which in turn does not contribute to the Baltic unity in this area.

Thus, dynamic changes that sometimes give rise to new challenges and risks in combination of negative processes will inevitably lead in the future to an increase in the needs
of the countries of the region in the emergence of new areas of cooperation. Despite the efforts of numerous actors, the dynamics of negative indicators in certain areas speaks of environmental uncertainty and, accordingly, the inevitability of the transformation process of the existing model of regional environmental cooperation. The current state of the issue makes it necessary not only to enhance the role of acting actors, to take the most radical measures and mechanisms of environmental cooperation, but to expand the scope of scientific discourse around the prospect of implementing effective responsible environmental policy in the regional dimension.

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