Climate Policy of Belarus

Global climate change largely determines the direction of modern economy and society's development. The Independent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) **confirmed the link between climate change and human activity**. The main cause of climate change is the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), and others. A significant portion of emissions is attributed to the use of fossil fuels - oil, gas, and coal - in energy, transportation, and industry.

- Emissions in Belarus in 2021 amounted to 92.0 million tons of CO2 equivalent per year.

- The largest share is attributed to energy and transport - 58.5%.

- Significant contributions come from agriculture (21.1%), industry (6%), waste management (6.0%), construction, and building operations.

Climate change is exacerbated by the reduction of natural mechanisms for absorbing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere due to deforestation, wetland drainage, and changes in land use patterns.

Climate change leads to catastrophic consequences such as droughts, heatwaves, floods, drastic weather fluctuations, hurricanes, and other natural phenomena. In the European region, including Belarus, climate changes are occurring at higher rates compared to other regions of the world. In 2022, the EU reported around 15,000 deaths linked to heatwaves, and the total damage from adverse weather events exceeded 2 billion dollars.

Why does Belarus need a national climate policy?

1. Belarus experiences **damage** from droughts, winds, and increasing impact of heatwaves on vulnerable groups like the elderly and children. These impacts are projected to worsen over the coming decades due to ongoing climate system changes.
2. Belarus undertook **international commitments** by signing the Paris Agreement in 2016; however, the national commitments do not align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting temperature rise to no more than +1.5°C/+2°C by the end of the century. The target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2030 from 1990 levels implies an actual increase in emissions, and national strategies for achieving carbon neutrality and adapting to climate change have yet to be developed.
3. Climate policies of other countries **will significantly affect Belarus's carbon-intensive economy** through the introduction of "carbon levies," new eco-friendliness and circularity standards for production, mandatory ESG reporting for companies to access stock markets and investments. This will reduce the demand for petroleum products, fertilizers, products from companies like MTZ, BELAZ, MAZ, BMZ, and other enterprises, as well as agriculture.

As an integral part of Europe and aspiring to become a developed European state, Belarus aims to **create a model of green growth and transition to low-carbon development**, preparing new green drivers for economic and social progress **similar to the principles of the European Green Deal**.

It is necessary to establish an internationally recognized national carbon regulation system, including a carbon market and carbon tax, ensuring its transparency and sustainability, and providing guarantees to investors that decisions taken will consistently promote the country's low-carbon development.

Benefits for Belarusians

The national carbon regulation system will avoid billion-dollar export charges and channel funds towards the development of our country's green economy. New jobs will be created in science, education, management, finance, public relations, and the growth of green production and services. Climate policy will help minimize the damage from climate change and adapt to them, ultimately aiding in preserving our planet for human habitation.

What Should Belarus's Climate Policy Be?

In global practice, climate policy encompasses both reducing GHG emissions and enhancing their natural absorption, as well as adaptation to climate change at all levels.

Climate considerations should be integrated into all policies and economic development plans as new developmental conditions. Achieving carbon neutrality requires efforts across all sectors of the economy, government, society, business, and the scientific community.

Goal	Practical Implementation
1. Ambitious Climate Policy	
- Development of a **national climate change adaptation strategy**/plan **- Harmonization** of national legislation and goals with Green Deal objectives **- Capacity-building** in management, education, and information dissemination	- Develop and adopt a strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 - Establish state institutions for climate policy development and implementation - Create green economy development plans for different sectors - Organize training and internships for scientists, officials, businesses, politicians, and support research - Conduct awareness campaigns about climate change and implement educational programs at all levels - Collaborate with civil society and the public in developing and implementing climate policy
2. National Carbon Regulation System	
- Establishment of a **national** carbon regulation system - Alignment of the national system with Green Deal goals and instruments	- Develop and internationally recognize a carbon regulation system including a carbon market and carbon tax - Develop methodologies for assessing the current carbon intensity of exported goods - Establish a methodology and regulatory framework for implementing emissions monitoring, reporting, and verification
3. Support of Green Economy	
- **Economic liberalization** and creation of market mechanisms - Development of **sectoral strategies** for the green economy - Creation of a favorable **investment climate** for green sectors - Integration of the economy into **global markets**	- Remove restrictions on the development of green economy sectors - Develop an Investment Plan for the green economy - Implement financial mechanisms: green investments, subsidies, green fund - Implement a green taxonomy (activity classification) - "Green" the economy by introducing new standards and innovations - Ensure the implementation of international SEA and EIA principles for project and plan assessments - Support the development of domestic production in Belarus - Develop green energy, waste recycling, green transportation, organic agriculture, and ecotourism

Sources of financing for reform

The cost of developing and implementing climate policy should be weighed against the economic losses if the status quo is maintained.

> *- According to UNCTAD estimates, if Belarus does not establish a national emissions trading system, with a carbon tax price of $88 from 2026, there could be a 6.8% decline in exports and a $200 million annual income loss.*
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> *- World Bank data indicates damages from extreme weather events in the 2010s were approximately $100 million annually, and air pollution losses exceeded 5% of GDP.*

An economic assessment of climate change impacts on Belarus's industries is necessary to evaluate costs and benefits of emissions reduction and adaptation measures. The EU and international financial institutions could be sources of investment for climate action programs.

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