

Man and Global Environmental Change: an Agenda for the Humanities in Russia.

International workshop

On November 13, an international workshop on “Man and Global Environmental Change: an Agenda for the Humanities” was held, under the chairmanship of Academician N.A. Simoniya, in the IMEMO within the framework of the national partnership “Global Change and Man”. The partnership functions under the auspices of the International Human Dimensions Program on Global Change Research, IHDP.

In the past decade, Russia has radically changed socio-economic, legal and political components of its approach to the problem of global environmental change, including such issues as global climate change, energy security, protection of natural resources and biodiversity, reducing the risk of natural calamities and gaining access to high-quality water resources. A new vision of environmentally sustainable development has been formed. As a result of globalization and integration into the world system, Russia has joined over 120 international agreements on environmental protection and nature conservation. For the past decade, due to the development of social science in Russia, there has emerged awareness that those problems (caused, largely, by an anthropogenic impact on the environment) have an immediate effect on the quality of life and on the pattern of economic development to be chosen. However, so far there are no answers, including those offered by the academic community, to the questions concerning the formation of effective policy and measures aimed at the adjustment of Russian society and economy to the global environmental challenges. Neither have there been found optimum ways of interaction between science and practice.

The main subject of the discussion at the meeting of Russian and international experts was the assessment of the approaches and the major results of the development of social science in Russia in terms of tackling the problem of global environmental change. The future dialogue between theoreticians and practitioners should combine an ad hoc approach (energy security, climate, water, natural calamities) with the search for “end-to-end” decisions and innovation tools to reduce the risks associated with global change, both on the international, national and local levels. The practical value of the meeting consists in the discussion and formulation of possible ways to strengthen the international authority and to shape a new image of Russia through making use of the available potential of the “environmental factor” in the current international economic and political relations. The discussion of the priorities in the joint action taken within the framework of the national partnership “Global Environmental Change and Man” in Russia assists in forming a new vision of and approaches to the interaction between science and practice.

