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**Remediation of Sarkandaugava will be done within the framework of Latvian-Swiss Cooperation Programme**

On Thursday, March 17, Gabriela Nützi Sulpizio, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Latvia, and Aleksandrs Antonovs, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance on EU Funds Issues, signed Latvian-Swiss cooperation project “Remediation of historically polluted site Sarkandaugava”.

The Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation said: *“The year 2011 is a very special year for Latvia and Switzerland since it marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of official Latvian-Swiss relations. The signing of this project agreement is therefore an excellent opportunity for us to celebrate this anniversary. In recent years, both Latvia and Switzerland have demonstrated an excellent record in sustainable environmental development, and this project is another step to ensure the protection of our natural resources.”*

In the result of the project five sites in the total area of 77'000 m<sup>2</sup> will be remediated from the pollution. Total project expenditure is planned 15.3 million Swiss francs (~ 8.2 million lats), including 2.3 million Swiss francs (~ 1.2 million lats) of Latvian national co-financing. The project will be implemented by 2017 and it will be implemented by the State Environment Service.

The Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance on EU Funds Issues Aleksandrs Antonovs expressed satisfaction: *“This is the second largest project of 10 projects to be financed by the Swiss Contribution. In current economic situation the Swiss support to Latvia is especially important because by helping to clean up one of the most polluted territories in the state it invests in the future of Latvia.”*

The project will improve quality of soil, ground, groundwater and surface waters in the territory of Sarkandaugava by stopping oil product pollution inflow into the Daugava River and the Baltic Sea thus eliminating the threats caused to human health and NATURA 2000 protected territory – seacoast park territory Mangaļi Island and Mīlestības Island.

*“Remediation of historically polluted areas is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and I am satisfied that one of such places will be arranged within the framework of Latvian-Swiss cooperation programme. With the implementation of this Project the environmental quality of this polluted area will be renewed and improved and threats to human health will be prevented,”* explained the Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development Raimonds Vējonis.

Historically polluted territories in Sarkandaugava are among the most polluted areas in Latvia, which have also been included in the register of polluted and potentially polluted territories, therefore they were chosen for remediation within the Latvian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

Sarkandaugava territories were historically used for storing and handling oil products. The pollution caused by oil products in Sarkandaugava appeared in 60-ties and 70-ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the territory was managed by the Soviet Union army. Now the flowing layer of oil products is more than a metre thick.

At the event a project implementation agreement was also concluded between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development as a line ministry, State Environment Service as an individual project implementer and Central Finance and Contracting Agency.

Swiss financing in amount of 56.88 million Swiss francs or ~ 30.7 million lats is available to Latvia from 2007 till 2012. In total with the Swiss contribution it is planned to implement ten projects; the signed Sarkandaugava project will be the seventh launched project

By signing the Sarkandaugava project the commitment for Latvia already constitute approximately 45 million Swiss francs or 80% from the total funding available for Latvia.

Competent Swiss institutions have already approved implementation of another project – Swiss researchers' activities in Latvia. The project will be launched on July 1, this year. The remaining two projects – “Support for youth policy development in remote or undeveloped Latvian regions” and “Micro loan programme” – will also be launched in 2011.

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