country as a whole there are 2.9 hectares of forest for
each inhabitant, here in the Belorussian Republic we have
only 0.7 hectares. To this sad list must be added the
alarming range of acknowledged ecological damage. Every
year, without sufficient grounds for doing so, all the new
forests of the general forest lands administered by the
State are confiscated for municipal and agricultural
building purposes. Foremost among these are forests
classed with Group 1 and fulfilling important nature
conservation and reforestation functions.

At the start of the current year the Collegium of
our Ministry adopted the Draft Plan for the Development
of the Forestry Sector in the Belorussian SSR
to the Year 2005. In essence, it deals with the
development of integrated forest use. Having regard to
existing State legislative documents and those being
prepared for approval by the parliaments of the country and
the republic, our strategy is as follows. In order to
satisfy in full the requirements of the economy and the
population for forest products, a radical change of policy
in forest management and regeneration is needed, which
means giving priority to this activity of Oblast forestry
associations and forestry enterprises.

Year after year we talk about the need for the
forests to be under a single manager, but even today the
sector controls only four-fifths of the total forest
lands. Hundreds of thousands of hectares are under the
jurisdiction of collective farms, other ministries and
departments which are unconcerned about the state of the
plantations and look upon the forest through the eyes of
the consumer. Is this wise? I recall how actively the
management of the agricultural industry opposed the
transfer to the State-Administered General Forest Lands of
the forests designated for use by collective farms. In
many oblasts, however, this transfer did take place and
convincingly demonstrated that concentrating forest lands
within the jurisdication of a single State agency made for
a more rational utilization of the forest resources.