

## Article

# Problems of Legal Regulation and State Policy Measures Related to Nature Management in the Framework of Achieving the SDGs: Examples from Russia and Kazakhstan

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**Abstract:** The paper considers the problems of legal regulation and environmental policy in Russia and Kazakhstan related to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The focus of this study is in the plane of studying the features of legislative regulation and the arrangement of political priorities in the two countries in order to determine their similarities and differences. The study intends to assess the current state of the legislative regulation of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of achieving individual SDGs. Taking into account the object of this study, the assessment of the readiness of countries to achieve the SDGs is carried out within the framework of such criteria as: (1) the current state of the relevant legislation in the field of environmental protection and natural resource management and the analysis of legislative regulation in terms of adaptability to achieve the SDGs, and (2) the role of programmatic-strategic documents in areas corresponding to the SDGs, covering environmental protection and natural resource management. A study of the experience of the Russian Federation gives grounds to say that the fragmented and inconsistent approaches enshrined in policy documents and Russian regulatory legal acts regulating nature management cause duplication of certain provisions of regulatory legal acts. Both Russian and Kazakhstani legislators avoid the universal application of the concept of “sustainable development goals” as a separate category in lawmaking, reserving the right to interpret this term at their own discretion. Formally, in the legislation and strategic and program documents of both countries there is no normative binding justifying the focus on achieving the SDGs, or tools for achieving them. However, on the part of Kazakhstan, strategic documents and national laws and regulations governing sustainable resource management are less diversified and more consistent with each other. The study gives grounds to say that in view of the presence in the Russian legal field of many inconsistent laws and political documents, harmonization of strategic documents related to the achievement of the SDGs is an urgent issue for the Russian Federation. For RK, this problem is less obvious. At the regulatory level, the instruments for achieving the UN SDGs and their indicators are not enshrined in the laws of both countries. References to the defining role of the UN SDGs are absent both in the text of the strategic documents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**Keywords:** environmental management policy; global climate change; Kazakhstan; laws, regulations, and natural resource management; Russia; sustainable development strategies



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## 1. Introduction

‘Sustainable development’ was first officially defined in ‘Our Common Future’, the 1987 report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, as a process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Further on, the issues of definition and detailed classification of sustainable development were raised on the sidelines of the Rio+20 UN Conference, held in 2012. The final document of the conference specified that socio-economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet's natural resources. In the UN's visionary documents, the long-term global development goals of the 21st century were presented as the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016–2030. In turn, they were approved by the heads of states and governments at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development, which was held in September 2015.

The Summit was followed by the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' as of 25 September 2015, which entrenches the intention of participating countries to gradually improve global resource efficiency in the manufacturing industry by 2030. The document mentioned the agreement of participating countries to make efforts to decouple economic growth from a parallel increase in the environmental degradation risks. Such steps should be consistent with the approved relevant policy documents, such as the 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) on the nationwide and regional scales. The 12th Sustainable Development Goal is to achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2030 [1]. In the context of the SDGs, sustainable management of natural resources corresponds to Goal 2 (ending hunger), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production), Goal 13 (combating climate change), Goal 14 (conservation of marine ecosystems), and Goal 15 (conservation of terrestrial ecosystems) [2].

Speaking about the SDGs, it is important to keep in mind their complexity and inclusiveness, as well as the mechanisms laid down in them for the formation of a new sustainable development economy based on other approaches of supporting and, at the same time, restrained, value-oriented economic growth in favor of people, communities, and the environment, and planets. All SDGs are interconnected. Measures taken to achieve one of the SDGs inevitably have an impact on the achievement of other SDGs [3].

Since its adoption in 2015, Russia and Kazakhstan have expressed their commitment to the SDGs. Based on the long history of bilateral relations, the countries are united by a strategic partnership in a number of areas, including the trade and economic component, energy, science, etc. Kazakhstan and Russia, despite objective and subjective problems, continue the difficult path of deepening regional integration. Both countries largely determine the vector of development of integration processes at the regional level. In both countries, national strategies are gradually being formed that combine the goals of achieving economic efficiency, social justice and environmental security. The goals of sustainable development are increasingly integrated into the policies of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. This is expressed both in the inclusion in the strategic and program documents of the country of individual goals and objectives in the logic of sustainable development, as well as some indicators reflecting the degree of their achievement, and in the formation of a full-fledged system of statistical recording of SDG indicators for their monitoring [4]. Among the root causes of the existing problems in the legal regulation of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, as in most post-Soviet countries, one can single out the conflict between environmental and economic interests, where the economic priority of needs formed by the Soviet past prevailed [5].

In Russia, industrial production, as the development of the country itself, is shaped by its natural resources in particular hydrocarbons, minerals and the energy industry. Obviously, it would be not rights to ignore Russia's position on global sustainable resource management, as this country has a large resource portfolio and is one of the world's major suppliers of hydrocarbons. Kazakhstan has always been supporting in-depth Eurasian integration. Kazakhstan is the second largest economy in the Eurasian Economic Union, with strong growth in trade with the Union's countries. However, to retain a strategic position in the region, the economies need to develop continuously, keeping in mind that

both countries are dependent on the export of natural resources, as they are largely resource-based economies. Kazakhstan's economy is poorly diversified. Despite the country's track record and growth opportunities in the production of minerals and hydrocarbons, the government has declared its long-term goal of a gradual transition to a green economy, planning to strike a balance between economic and environmental performance.

As major regional players on the Eurasian continent and the largest CIS countries, Russia and Kazakhstan are of interest to study in the context of their efforts and initiatives to achieve sustainable development goals. The problem of economic overhaul is relevant for both countries. Furthermore, both economies are described by common structural problems, including industries. The countries are trying to move to new, innovative industries, which is complicated by the specific features of the established economic model, due to the poor technological changes in many areas. This also includes the above-mentioned problem of economic diversification, more specifically the large percentage of raw materials in exports. All of these things require a revision of the resource and export policies [6].

This research involves studying the problems of legal regulation and environmental policy in Russia and Kazakhstan related to the achievement of the SDGs. The analysis within the framework of this article is based on the correlation of the priorities stated in the regulatory legal acts, national strategic documents, the current State programs of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the specific tasks of the SDGs. The main purpose of the work is to identify how fully and systematically the tasks of the SDGs are implemented in strategic documents and legislative acts that determine the main directions of development of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the short and medium term.

The paper determines the priorities of policies and regulatory issues in sustainable resource management; the dynamic pattern of legislative changes and prospective laws and regulations in this area in the case of Russia and Kazakhstan. The study seeks to determine the commonalities and/or differences in approaches to the above questions. The object of this study is the political and legal aspects, as well as the legal regulation of relations in the field of nature management, related to the achievement of the SDGs. The relevance of the topic under study is explained primarily by the increased public demand for objective information about the state of the environment and methods to counteract its changes in the context of global climate change.

## 2. Sources Overview

A review of relevant sources shows that at present there is research [6–8] devoted to the study of the issue of legal regulation of environmental management in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Due to the constant circulation of climate change issues on the international agenda at different levels of interaction (including growing significance of United Nations Climate Change Conference), the relevance of this issue in the near future will obviously only increase. At the same time, it should be recognized that less attention has been devoted to the issues of considering the practices of the two countries from a comparative point of view. In the case of Russia, modern theoretical developments are devoted to such issues as pilot innovative territorial clusters in Russia in the context of sustainable development [9], sustainable development and post-industrial transformation from the perspective of opportunities for Russia [10], sustainable development in the Russian Federation and greening of industrial enterprises [11], SDGs and green growth [12], legal aspects of the implementation of the UN sustainable development goals in the field of nature management in Russia [13], SDGs and certain functional aspects of the green economy in the Russian Federation [14].

Kazakh research on the development of environmental management in the context of achieving the SDGs is more limited. Kazakh studies are devoted to such issues as the socio-economic sustainable development of the regions of Kazakhstan in the context of demographic potential studies [15], green economy as a paradigm of sustainable development of the Republic of Kazakhstan [16], problems of sustainable development and

water resources management in a transboundary context [17], implementation of the SDGs in the agricultural sector [8], SDGs and the impact of financial development on energy consumption [18]. It should be noted that most sources consider the development of environmental management in the context of achieving the SDGs not from the point of view of legal regulation, but in the context of the consequences for the economy at different levels. At the same time, it should be recognized that today there are no exhaustive sources that consider these issues within the framework of comparative law, in particular from the standpoint of comparing legal regulation in Russia and Kazakhstan, which, in turn, creates a gap in research.

Relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan have a long history and go back to the common Soviet past. Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan is characterized by a desire to deepen regional integration, Kazakhstan is a participant in many integration projects in Russia, including the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Trade and economic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan are characterized by a high level of comprehensive partnership. In 2021, Russia once again became the main trading partner of Kazakhstan; the trade turnover between the countries last year increased by 34% to \$25.6 billion, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation said in a statement [19]. At the same time, interaction in the fuel and energy and mining and metallurgical complexes, agriculture, transport and communications, automotive, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, chemical and aerospace industries is especially active and large-scale. Both countries will continue to create favorable conditions for ensuring mutual transit of energy resources [20].

### 3. Materials and Methods

The study compared the approaches applied in Russia and Kazakhstan to strategic planning and regulation in the field of sustainable management of natural resources. This being the case, the study does not assess the practical implications of the implemented steps or planned strategies for implementing the practices of sustainable management of natural resources. The examples of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation are of interest, since both states are the largest countries in Central Asia in terms of area, united by a long history of close trade and political relations. At the same time, the two countries are characterized by different foreign policy guidelines in terms of achieving environmental priorities within the SDGs. The paper analyzes the domestic political aspects of the implementation of policy and legal steps in the above-mentioned area of regulation. Sustainable management of natural resources is discussed in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals—Goal 2 (ending hunger), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production), Goal 13 (combating climate change), Goal 14 (conservation of marine ecosystems), Goal 15 (conservation of terrestrial ecosystems), as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The methodological basis of this study is the method of political and legal analysis.

The latter is based on a meaningful analysis of regulations related to the regulation of certain legal relations as well as other official documents in which the unit of analysis is a legal norm and its officially documented interpretation. Such an analysis includes legal and political components. The most important properties of the method of political and legal analysis are that the political science research carried out using this method is completely informationally open and can be evaluated and verified by a wide range of researchers by repeating it, which corresponds to the general scientific rules for obtaining new knowledge [21]. Being a qualitative research method, the method of political and legal analysis is aimed at studying the legal regulation and actions of authorities in the context of considering certain legal relations and challenges. At the same time, the key component of the method is the study of legislative regulation in conjunction with the political priorities of the state. The objects of comparison in the framework of this study are

the legal regulation and national strategic documents, the current state programs of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of achieving the SDGs.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. SDGs and the International Environmental Agenda in the Political Dimension of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan

Since climate change continues to dominate the international agenda, the approval of sustainable development policies is a consistent and progressive process, especially in recent years, attributed to the wide promotion of decarbonization initiatives, the introduction of 'carbon neutrality' practices, and the promotion of green bonds. The strategy for the future of mankind, involving a step-by-step transition to the green economy, was approved in June 2012 [22]. Given the research interest and the global public outcry, the next stage in the affirmation of sustainable use of natural resources has not been long in coming—as of 1 January 2016, the 2016–2030 Sustainable Development Goals officially came into force. The global scope of these processes was due to the fact that the SDGs were endorsed by all countries attending the special meeting of the UN General Assembly held on 25 September 2015. In December of the same year, to clarify steps to promote the implementation of the SDGs for the well-being of humanity without harming the biosphere, a program to combat climate change and its effects after 2020 was adopted at the UN level, with specific targets for reducing environmentally dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and goals for avoiding a dramatic temperature rise in the context of the threat of global warming. Russia and Kazakhstan officially supported these development priorities and considers the relevant documents important in the long term [23,24].

At the same time, support for the SDGs has noticeably updated the issue of the state of the regulatory framework in the country in matters of environmental protection and nature management. Traditionally giving preference to the achievement of goals in the field of industry and energy, the possibility of finding a balanced approach of the proposed Agenda 2030 in the Russian Federation was usually perceived as secondary tasks [25]. The Agenda, in a sense, gave rise to rethinking the unspoken dominant paradigm of the priority of the economy over other areas of public life. In particular, the question arose of assessing the state of the regulatory framework in the field of environmental protection in terms of its adaptability to the SDGs.

Being one of Russia's main trade partners and often considering Russia as a landmark in many issues on public policy, Kazakhstan seeks to strengthen relations with Russia in all areas and considers cooperation with the Russian Federation to be one of the most important priorities of its foreign policy. At the same time, in matters of environmental protection and natural resource management, Kazakhstan focuses on Western countries, considering the green economy as the main alternative to the Russian resource-oriented model, including priorities for the SDGs. Based on official rhetoric, statements by government officials, as well as practical interaction with international organizations, Kazakhstan has a clear idea that promoting a green economy is the main and only way to support sustainable development. Furthermore, historically, Kazakhstan's major environmental problems are those that many countries have never faced—for example, closing the Semipalatinsk test site, where the remaining background radiation may pose a threat to the region's environment and the residents. Numerous industrial waste deposits should be kept in mind as well. Such waste amounts to more than 23 billion tons of which 9 billion tons are man-made materials from Soviet industrial enterprises that need to be disposed of. There is also the problem of access to water because the country is heavily dependent on borderline water resources, especially in the central and southern regions. Therefore, there is a bunch of environmental problems that the state has yet to solve [2].

Kazakhstan's resource-dependent industries are described by poor environmental performance. This well-established fact is due to the outdated infrastructure, technology, standards and methods approved under the Soviet Union, and that is why Kazakhstan has poor energy efficiency indicators. Therefore, to address fundamental environmental and

related economic problems, Kazakhstan has undertaken several international commitments relating to the solution of large-scale environmental problems, assuming that it would contribute to long-term economic and social development.

By becoming part of the Paris Agreement, Kazakhstan committed itself to the international community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2030 [26]. The country is developing a strategy to achieve carbon neutrality until 2060. The strategy aims to reduce carbon emissions and generate electricity using renewable energy sources. This will significantly reduce the harmful impact on the environment. Kazakhstan has established a Committee for Monitoring the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which is a consultative and advisory body under the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan [27].

Despite the fact that the SDGs were adopted only in 2015, it is obvious that, in a general sense, the Goals are not unique, and within the framework of the policy of a state, the achievement of such goals as improving the state of the environment, reducing the harmful impact on the ecology of exhaust gases, preserving biodiversity and etc. present in the profile political programs of many states. With the achievement of such goals, legislative regulation of the relevant direction is associated. However, it is the consistency and interdependence of the SDGs that has made them an object of consensus in almost all countries of the world, outlining their role for the future of the planet. Achieving the SDGs within national jurisdictions requires a strategic assessment of the possibility of their implementation, and, if possible, finding ways. Further, an assessment of the current state of the regulatory framework is required for the proper functioning of mechanisms for achieving the SDGs, or the development of a new regulatory framework. Obviously, the achievement of the SDGs may be associated with the emergence of new types of legal relations. Theoretically, the current legislative regulation in a given country can be so developed that the need for its adaptation to the SDGs in the relevant parts can be minimized. At the same time, the assessment of the state of adaptation of legislation for the implementation of the SDGs in any case requires its analysis both from the point of view of legislative mechanisms and from the standpoint of its compliance with political and program documents. For the purposes of this work, the assessment of the readiness of countries to achieve the SDGs is carried out within the framework of such criteria as: (1) the current state of the relevant legislation in the field of environmental protection and natural resource management and the analysis of legislative regulation in terms of adaptability to achieve the SDGs, and (2) the role of programmatic-strategic documents in areas corresponding to the SDGs, covering environmental protection and natural resource management.

It should be noted that at present, as part of the achievement of the SDGs, various countries of the world are adopting appropriate legislative regulation related to the achievement of the SDGs. At different levels, various kinds of legislative acts are adopted that provide for the resolution of tasks at the operational and strategic levels. In particular, we are talking about the development and legislative consolidation of systems for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. In the EU countries, in order to achieve the SDGs, a number of reforms were initiated aimed at the socio-economic transformation of individual state mechanisms, while the SDGs were integrated into public policy [28,29]. A number of countries have developed tools for parliamentary oversight of the achievement of the sustainable development goals. The EU has a structured approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The European Commission is committed to implementing the Agenda and has proposed a number of actions. As a consequence, the Commission has identified 10 policy priorities and created a high-level multi-stakeholder platform for the implementation of the SDGs. In order to monitor implementation in the context of the EU, Eurostat has created a dedicated website marking progress towards the SDGs [30].

#### 4.2. SDGs Covering Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Issues within the Legal Framework of the Russian Federation

An analysis of Russian laws and regulations related to the achievement of the SDGs suggests that some principles of sustainable development were enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and several environmental laws. Environmental interests are outlined in part 1, Article 9 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, according to which land and other natural resources must be used and protected in the Russian Federation as the key element of livelihoods and activities of the peoples living in the country (Constitution of the Russian Federation). These constitutional provisions are fundamental to environmental regulation and protection, which is also governed by paragraph 1, Article 72 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Initially, it should be noted that the term “sustainable development” has been present in the Russian legal field since the middle of the 90s of the last century, however, the term itself has a slightly different meaning than that present in the 2030 Agenda. If the latter case implies the synergy of the economy, ecology and social development, then in the definition of the Russian legislator it is rather about the stable development of the economy and industry. In 1996, a presidential decree approved an action plan for Russia’s transition to sustainable development. Thus, the concept of “sustainable development” entered the legal life of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the document mentions a normative reference to the recommendations and principles set out in the documents of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) [31]. The document provided for the development and adoption in 1996 of a draft state strategy for the sustainable development of the Russian Federation. However, this act was not subsequently adopted.

Six years later, by government decree No. 1225-r of 31 August 2002, the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation was approved. (Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 31 August 2002 N 1225-r “On the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation” [32]. It can be noted that the Doctrine included provisions that, to one degree or another, correspond to the SDGs in the field of environmental management and environmental protection in the understanding of Agenda 2030). Nevertheless, the document is more of a declarative nature, not providing for specific mechanisms for regulating core areas. The document notes that: “The implementation of the provisions of this document involves the development of action plans at the federal, regional and sectoral levels, as well as the development and implementation of measures of state support and regulation in the field of environmental protection and rational nature management” [33].

In 2002, a new federal law ‘On Environmental Protection’ was adopted, which in many ways borrowed the provisions of the previous federal law ‘On Environmental Protection’ [34]. Many of the provisions of the newly introduced document have been criticized for their generally declaratory nature [35,36]. Despite this, the Russian legal system continued to implement new laws and regulations, including codification. As a result, in 2006 a new Forestry and Water Code was adopted, which was also criticized from the perspective of forest and water bodies protection. They were primarily seen as resources. New changes to the Urban Planning Code of the Russian Federation made in the same year led to the abolition of the mandatory government-administered strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for most construction projects. The building commissioning process became less bureaucratic as a result. Eventually, a consolidated government-administered assessment was introduced. The Russian leadership has recognized the need to adjust to this situation, and in 2008 the president set the goal of creating the necessary prerequisites for the future growth of the Russian economy to be balanced with high environmental standards. This goal is entrenched in the Presidential Decree ‘On some measures to improve energy efficiency and environmental performance of the Russian economy’ as of 7 June 2008 [37,38].

Currently, new types of legal acts appear in the environmental law of Russia—the strategic political documents. Despite the fact that documents of this kind were present in

the legal field of the Russian Federation before, they did not affect the sphere of environmental protection [39]. From the point of view of the legal nature, Russian legal science classifies strategic and political acts as equal or close to the Constitution and classifies them as political and normative. Considering the vague legal nature of strategic documents, they are becoming increasingly important in the regulation of environmental relations, although the multitude of strategic documents creates some difficulties in terms of their interpretation and interrelation [25]. At the same time, considering the importance of strategic documents in terms of political expediency, one should take into account that their presence complicates jurisprudence, making it harder to determine their legal force and hierarchy. This forms an unusual relationship between the legislative and executive powers, where the former, despite their paramount role in the branches of public power and independence from the executive and judiciary, are practically obliged to pass laws that must at least follow, if not implement, the national policy declared at the executive level [25]. Nevertheless, such acts are usually considered an important milestone in the improvement of public administration and a tool for solving complex problems in various areas of public relations [40].

For Russia, 2008 was the year when a step-by-step overhaul of the national economy began, seeking to diversify exports and achieve strong and sustainable economic growth, with the progressive implementation of technological innovations. The 'Action plan for the long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020' has become a kind of guide for this policy. Subsequently, this action plan underpinned various federal and regional programs, specifically those supporting various sectors. Typical examples of such a policy include the 'Strategy for Innovative Development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2020', adopted in 2011, 'Fundamentals of the environmental management policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030', adopted in 2012, as well as 'Strategy of Environmental Safety of Russia until 2025', approved by the Presidential Decree No. 176 as of 19 April 2017 [41].

Regulatory arrangements for developing the green economy in Russia also include such documents as:

- The Federal Law 'On Industrial and Municipal Solid Waste' (1998);
- Environmental Principles of the Russian Federation (approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1225-r as of 31 August 2002);
- Presidential Decree No. 861-rp as of 17 December 2009, on approval of the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation;
- The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 (confirmed by Presidential Decree No. 537 as of 12 May 2009) [14].

However, at the moment, the 'Strategy for the development of the industry for the treatment, disposal and neutralization of industrial and municipal solid waste for the period up to 2030' No. 84-r as of 25 January 2018, is the main document governing public policy and, accordingly, laws and regulations in the field of sustainable management of natural resources. The document provides for the steps in the technology and structural upgrade of treatment, disposal and minimization of waste that is not subject to further disposal, using the global 3Rs principle (reducing waste, reusing and recycling resources and products).

The Strategy does not refer directly to the categories of the SDGs—that is, it does not formally correlate the SDGs and the priorities of national laws and regulations outlined therein. Yet, it would be a mistake to think that Russia excludes the SDGs from the political agenda. For example, the Interagency Task Force under the Presidential Administration is authorized to coordinate the activities of executive authorities related to SDGs and other issues related to climate change. The Federal State Statistics Service is responsible for monitoring and maintaining statistics on sustainable development goals for domestic use and international reporting purposes.

However, even after several years of work, the country has not developed a national strategy for sustainable development adapted to best practices, focusing on improve-

ment in the households' well-being without causing significant damage to the ecosystems. Currently, the following should be considered as the main documents regulating the achievement of the SDGs, environmental protection and natural resource management:

- Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 204 (2018) "On national goals and strategic objectives for the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024 [42];
- The Strategy of socio-economic development of Russia with low greenhouse gas emissions until 2050. This strategy contains several measures that, depending on the chosen scenario, will create settings in Russia for the maximum contribution to the preservation of the climate. Measures involve the introduction of low-carbon and carbon-free technologies, the development of carbon technologies, and the enhancement of forests and other natural absorbers to increase their absorption capacity.

Speaking of the latter, it should be noted that this Strategy refers to the strategic planning documents of the Russian Federation, is an intersectoral one and serves as the basis for including state policy measures in the field of limiting greenhouse gas emissions in other strategic planning documents of the Russian Federation, a strategy for socio-economic development of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, state programs of the Russian Federation, state programs of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, planning and program-targeted documents of state corporations, state companies and public companies with state participation. The provisions of the Strategy determine the content of the adaptation of the Russian economy to the global energy transition and the goal-setting of the relevant sectoral and regional adaptation plans. The strategy covers sectors of the economy and areas of public administration that are sources of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and their sinks, and provides for two scenarios for the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation—inertial and target (intensive), which differ in the level of technological development, structural changes (shifts) in the economy, absorptive capacity of natural absorbers and accumulators of greenhouse gases and other effects [43].

The strategy involves the development of a plan for its practical implementation. The plan for the implementation of the low-carbon development strategy was developed by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation together with industry departments, the presidential administration, leading Russian companies and experts. The document assumes the achievement in 2030 of a level of greenhouse emissions of 1.524 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent, which is comparable to the figure for 2021 (1.522 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent), and also 3.8% lower than the indicator of the "starting" 2019.

It was assumed that in accordance with the plan, the departments will finalize the targets of the strategy, taking into account the goal of achieving carbon neutrality no later than 2060. It was planned that by the end of 2022 Russia would complete the formation of national climate regulation: systems for the circulation of carbon units would be created, as well as standardization and verification of carbon reporting, a regional experiment was launched in the Sakhalin Region, and a state energy efficiency program was approved. Consideration of the draft document is currently on hold [44]. In this case, attention should be paid to the fact that although these documents contain the wording "sustainable development" in their title, however, in this case it is not intended to refer to the "Agenda 2030", and the term itself is considered only as set word combination.

During the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, the Russian Federation was criticized for insufficient efforts in combating climate change. At the same time, the approval by the government of the Russian Federation of the Strategy for Social and Economic Development with a Low Level of Greenhouse Gas Emissions can be called a conditional success. The document declares the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 [43].

Considering all the above acts, it is important to understand that from a formal point of view, their role in achieving the SDGs presented in Agenda 2030 is indirect, since no document explicitly indicates the link to the UN SDGs. In fact, Russian legislation contains

goals and political priorities that correspond to one degree or another with the UN SDGs, but formally the legislator avoids being tied to them.

All of these acts, except for strategic ones, have the character of a normative legal act. Speaking of strategic documents, one should note their special status. It is unlikely that any of these documents can be considered in a purely political aspect, apart from the legal component, although by and large they are used to express the general policy of the state in a particular area of public relations and (or) public administration. However, the main means of implementing state policy, regardless of its scope, is legal regulation. Therefore, in planning documents, political aspects are always presented in legal terms in which “purely” political theses are accompanied by a statement of the elements of legal policy [45].

So far, the Federal State Statistics Service develops and harmonizes the system of indicators for monitoring the SDGs. The agency regularly monitors 90 indicators related to SDGs, which primarily embrace socio-economic factors, including health, education, social protection levels, etc. Current indicators are used during Russia’s involvement in relevant international platforms. Federal State Statistics Service’s data are provided for analysis at international panel discussions and conferences, such as the UN Conference of European Statisticians, on SDGs Statistics [46]. At the same time, the legal basis for this activity is Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 204 (2018).

Speaking of those countries that supplement their strategies with SDG practices, those states are developing new strategies, initially providing a place for the SDGs therein. This approach allows SDGs to be embedded both in specific sectors of the economy and in the overall policy and economy [47]. For example, the European Green Deal is the latest EU strategy that is an integral part of the steps undertaken to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Agenda 2030 outlines 17 SDGs seeking to prevent climate change through better management of natural resources. The European Green Deal assumes that sustainability and the well-being of individuals are at the center of economic policy, while SDGs are at the core of EU policies and actions [48].

At the moment, many developed industrial economies have provided reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on a nationwide scale, including France, Germany, Switzerland, China, Republic of Korea, Norway, Finland, etc. [47]. However, Russia is not on the list of these countries. Even though Russia has great opportunities for developing the green economy, due to the excellent water resources, air quality, low levels of heavy metal pollution, and high biodiversity, Russia is known for a low level and slow pace of green economy development. The key challenges in building the green economy in Russia are the critical state of forests and fisheries, inadequate management of nitrogen emissions in agriculture, and the adverse impact of the energy sector on the environment [14]. Poor environmental awareness of Russians is mentioned in the ‘Strategy of Environmental Safety of Russia until 2025’ [41].

Currently, the green economy amounts to 4% of GDP (Federal State Statistics Service, 2018), that is, RUB 3894.41 billion [14].

Analysis of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the possibility of their adaptation to the Russian context in the designing of long-term policies has revealed certain differences in the interpretation of the sustainable development vision:

1. For Russia, the term is used in the context of enhancing sustainable economic growth and is applied in strategic documents of domestic industries;
2. For most of the global community, the term is used as part of a fundamental process seeking to balance the social, economic, and environmental initiatives of human development.

The latter interpretation has been formalized in the documents of many international organizations, as well as on a nationwide scale in the development strategies of all developed economies after the adoption of Agenda 21 at the UN conference in 1992, which recognized the limits of sustainable development through stable economic growth and long-term prospects for the implementation of successful innovative projects [23].

However, despite the regulators’ obvious attention to the development of the green economy in Russia, a scattering and inconsistency of regulatory documents in this area

are observed. Such documents define only the general principles of the green economy in Russia, without proposing any clear strategies (goals, objectives, tools, indicators, etc.). Still, the environmental situation is subject to special national monitoring reflected in the annual reports of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation. The 'Environmental Protection' section of those reports is the foundation of the environmental rating of the Russian regions. No requirements for environmental performance in corporate accounting were provided [14]. The green economy prospects in Russia are attributed to the adoption of an appropriate national strategy and its consistent implementation, as well as meeting the challenges by tightening government-administered standards of natural resource management, agriculture, and energy production and use [14].

#### *4.3. SDGs Covering Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Issues within the Legal Framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan*

The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the basis of the environmental legislation of the Republic, proclaiming the basic principles of legal protection of the natural environment, which were further developed in laws and by-laws. In addition to this norm, the Constitution of 1995 established the following environmental legal provisions:

- Paragraph 1 of Article 31: "The State aims to protect the environment favorable for human life and health";
- Article 38: "Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan are obliged to conserve nature and treat natural resources with care";
- Paragraph 3 of Article 61 refers to the competence of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan "that regulate the most important public relations, establish fundamental principles and norms relating to [...] environmental protection [49]".

Kazakhstan's numerous laws and regulations address resource management issues under sustainable development goals. These include the Land Code, the Water Code, the Environmental Code, the Law 'On Subsurface Resource Management', the Law 'On Supporting the Use of Renewable Energy', etc. [7,50].

The year 2013 can be considered as the starting point for Kazakhstan's transition to a green economy when the 'Action Plan for Kazakhstan's transition to the green economy' was adopted. The following year, a schedule for its implementation was adopted. At the institutional level, the Council for the Transition to a Green Economy under the President of Kazakhstan was set up for coordination purposes. Reforms brought the existing laws and regulations in line with the Action Plan, resulting in the adoption of the following laws:

- Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Pieces of Legislation on Kazakhstan's Transition to the Green Economy';
- Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Pieces of Kazakhstan's Legislation on Environmental Issues';
- Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Pieces of Kazakhstan's Legislation on Nuclear Power Issues';
- Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Pieces of Kazakhstan's Legislation on Environmental and Subsurface Resource Management Issues'.

These legislative acts, among other things, introduced amendments to the Land and Water Codes, the Law 'On Subsurface Resource Management', etc. The changes concerned issues surrounding the introduction process of green incentives, including the calculation methodology and the procedure for allocation thereof among the entities collecting, removing, disposing of, recycling and burying municipal solid waste [51]. The concept of 'extended producer responsibility' was also specified, along with requirements regarding the annual analysis and accounting of water consumption, water losses in the water supply networks, water consumption points, and the possibility of reducing the volume of water withdrawn from water bodies, etc. [52]. The second Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2022) talks about the prospects for the approval of the new Water Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan [53].

Especially noteworthy is the timeliness of the codification of social interactions in the field of environmental protection. The adoption of the Environmental Code has been instrumental in arranging the rules for the management and use of natural resources under the sustainable development policy, which was emphasized in Articles 3 and 4. Furthermore, the concept of sustainable development has even been mentioned as one of the principles of the country's environmental laws and regulations (paragraph 6, Article 5) [54]. Resource management within the country is expected to be administered through:

- A clear distribution of powers between the central and regional authorities and relevant agencies (Sections 2 and 3);
- Wide use of environmental quality targets to provide a true picture of the state of the environment (Article 36) [54].

On a global scale, Kazakhstan also continued to be consistent with the problem's open nature. During the High-Level Political Forum on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which was held in New York in July 2019, Kazakhstan presented the first Voluntary National Review of Kazakhstan [55,56].

To comprehensively assess Kazakhstan's readiness to implement and monitor the SDGs, a November 2016 visit by a group of experts from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in cooperation with competent national agencies, revealed a high degree of inclusion of SDG targets in strategic plans—61% of the SDG targets are already covered by national strategic documents approved at the highest level. By 2019, this figure was 79.9% [35].

Just as in Russia, regular subsidies channeled to energy consumers in the government-controlled energy market are among the main obstacles to the growth of the green economy in Kazakhstan. This policy reduces interest in efficient energy use and does not promote the desire to invest in green technology [57,58].

At the same time, the implementation of SDG 7 within the framework of national policy initiatives (shown in the Voluntary National Review on the achievement of SDGs for 2022) provides for an increase in the share of renewable energy sources (RES) in total electricity generation. Gradual reduction of fossil fuels, transition to electricity and heat instead of direct combustion of fossil fuels, and increased use of natural gas and renewable energy sources [53].

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Supporting the Use of Renewable Energy Sources" (2009), clean energy producers are provided with the opportunity to sell the generated electricity from RES in the public network, at special tariffs through the Settlement and Financial Center for RES Support. This, in turn, guarantees the purchase of electricity from renewable energy sources. Renewable energy producers are exempted from paying for the services of energy transmission organizations for the transmission of electrical energy, a priority has been determined for renewable energy sources in the transmission of electricity through networks. These state support measures in the form of a guaranteed purchase of electricity make it possible to stimulate the development of renewable energy sources. To obtain the above support measures, the implementation of RES projects is carried out through the mechanism of auctions [53].

For Kazakhstan, the introduction of the methodology and indicators of the SDGs provides an opportunity to systematically adapt the system of strategic planning and monitoring of the Republic of Kazakhstan to world standards, taking into account the consonance of the program documents of Kazakhstan, primarily the "Strategy-2050" and the programs arising from it, globally balance development goals. Overall, the SDGs are in many ways consistent with Kazakhstan's development efforts and can serve as a useful and compelling policy framework for achieving them, as well as for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the SDGs. The mission of UNDP international experts for a quick comprehensive assessment of Kazakhstan's readiness for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, which took place in November 2016, revealed a fairly high degree of inclusion of SDG targets in national and sectoral plans—61% of the SDG targets are already covered by national strategic documents [59]. In November 2016, the deputies of

the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted a Statement, which notes the need to promote the application of the principles of sustainable development and promote the integration of the SDGs into the current legislation in order to create favorable conditions for their implementation [60].

Unlike Russia, Kazakhstan's laws and regulations and policy initiatives are less diversified and more streamlined and mutually integrated. Subclause 6, clause 8 of the Strategic Plan 2025 (which is part of 'Kazakhstan-2050' long-term strategy) provides that Kazakhstan's policies in the field of green economy and environmental protection will address:

- Ensuring sustainable development to improve the standards of living;
- Decarbonization of the economy and the development of renewable energy sources, improving the quality of Kazakhstan's water resources and lands;
- Improvement of the investment climate and environmental benchmarks—air quality, preservation of biodiversity, etc. [2,24].

The Law 'On supporting the use of renewable energy' passed in 2009 was a necessary step toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the share of renewable energy (defined as solar, hydropower, wind, biomass, and geothermal energy) compared to fossil fuels. This meets the government's interests in setting up an enabling environment for electricity/heat generation where renewable energy sources are used, as mentioned in Article 3 [61]. This implies promoting the innovative sectors, which should become attractive niches for innovative and knowledge-based businesses. However, the law does not specify the percentage of renewable energy sources. The text provides a legal framework for the development of nationwide and regional renewable energy programs, the introduction of renewable energy production standards, and the authorization of new projects and plants [50]. In fact, the law forms the legal basis for the implementation of Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production), Goal 13 (combating climate change), Goal 14 (preservation of marine ecosystems), and Goal 15 (preservation of terrestrial ecosystems).

As a party to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Kazakhstan shows a commitment to integrating environmental impact assessment into its strategic plans and programs. These efforts are reflected, among other things, in close collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Such collaboration includes a review and revision of Kazakhstan's current laws and regulations in the area of environmental protection under the provisions of the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on strategic environmental assessment, and the pilot project on SEA, implemented under the Action Plan for Development of Kazakhstan's Energy Industry Until 2030. UNECE legal experts have positively emphasized Kazakhstan's efforts in the development of the country's legal and regulatory framework based on the principles of a green economy [62].

The first draft of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) amendments to Kazakhstan's Environmental Code and industry-specific regulations, prepared by national and international consultants, were presented in Astana at the 2018 meeting of the task force on law reforms with representatives from the UNECE and Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy. The task force discussed amendments to the Environmental Code and relevant industry-specific regulations concerning SEA, as well as recommendations for further actions to be performed to reform the national environmental impact assessment system [63]. Even though the event did not involve any binding decisions, these efforts can be looked at as background causes for the future reform of Kazakhstan's industry-specific laws and regulations in terms of compliance with SEA criteria.

Yet, in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (according to UNDP information for 2016), the failure to apply the ecosystem approach for the development and implementation of socio-economic programs, as well as non-compliance with the principles of integrated monitoring of the environment and the biosphere in Kazakhstan, was

regarded as Kazakhstan's main policy shortcoming in achieving Goal 7 (ensuring sustainability). However, in the 2000–2014 reporting period, Kazakhstan achieved improvement. Namely, the country reduced greenhouse gas emissions by phasing out ozone-depleting substances [64].

Since 2015, Kazakhstan has been extensively collaborating with the OECD as part of a program helping Kazakhstan to implement national reforms and promote this agenda to society. Such collaboration, in turn, involves working on sustainable resource management. The OECD recommendations on promoting a green economy emphasize:

- The need to set up a stable and transparent environment for the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPP) and investments, materializing Kazakhstan's significant growth opportunities in the area of energy recycling and renewable energy sources;
- The need to review the practices of introducing market-based controls for industry-specific prices and encouraging the involvement of businesses, introducing additional incentives for investors;
- Supporting technology and knowledge sharing, project development, and encouraging the involvement of businesses.

## 5. Discussion

Turning to the discussion of the political and legal regulation of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of nature management in the framework of achieving the SDGs, one can conclude that a "symmetrical" comparison according to the criterion of political documents or purely legislative regulation (at the level of acts of different legal force, such as laws, by-laws, etc.) would not be entirely correct. At the same time, it is impossible to do without the context of the study of the issue. Thus, the Russian legal system contains a number of documents that have a special legal status, not quite characteristic of the legal system of Kazakhstan. We are talking about a number of strategic documents approved by acts of the president and having the legal force of the level of law but often not containing legal norms. There are no such acts in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which contributes to an increase in consistency among regulatory legal acts, separating declarative documents from those containing legal norms.

Of course, documents of a program-strategic nature are also present in the legal field of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, based on the review and analysis of strategic documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan in terms of their compliance with the laws (in terms of mutual agreement between policy and legal regulation, as well as the prevailing legal force of the law), it can be noted that in the Republic of Kazakhstan the role of strategic documents is much more understandable both for a lawyer and for civil servants. In the Russian Federation, such political acts of the president, which determine policy, come into conflict with legislative regulation. In fact, attention has been paid to this aspect before [25]. In addition, as previously noted, in contrast to Russia, Kazakh laws, regulations and political initiatives are less diversified, more streamlined and mutually integrated.

In Russia, unlike the Republic of Kazakhstan, there are documents (such as the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation) that are actually irrelevant to today's carts, but are in the status of existing ones. Some program and strategic documents duplicate each other in some parts (Fundamentals of the state policy in the field of environmental development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030, the Climate Doctrine, etc.). A number of documents are of a legal nature but do not imply the content of any legal norms and, consequently, not binding.

It should be noted that there are no references to the defining role of the Agenda 2030 SDGs in both the text of the strategic documents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan. At the same time, in the case of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the importance of achieving the SDGs for the country is noted in the statement of the President of the country, which states that the qualitative growth of the economy should be based on increasing the competitiveness of business and human capital, technological modernization, improving the institutional environment, as well as minimizing the negative

human influence on nature. At the same time, the UN Sustainable Development Goals will be an important guideline [65].

Raising the issue of SDG indicators integrated into the national legal framework, it is important to note that such practice is absent both in Russia and Kazakhstan. In general, considering the legislative field of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, as well as examining political documents in both cases, it was not possible to find references to the immediate importance of achieving the SDGs for these two countries. It is interesting to note that the Russian Federation seems to deliberately avoid using the definition of the SDGs in the sense of Agenda 2030 in its strategic documents and legislative acts, which, presumably, may be due to the unwillingness to bind itself with international obligations and an attempt to reassess the role of the SDGs from the position of national interests. For the sake of fairness, it should be noted that in the documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan—both strategic and legislative—there is also no mention of direct references to the SDGs. However, their importance and role is emphasized by many initiatives outside the norm-creative field, as well as in political statements [65,66]. So, for example, on 14 July 2022, Kazakhstan presented the Second Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals (VNR) at the High-Level Political Forum in New York, NY, USA.

Speaking about the policy and legislative regulation of the Russian Federation in the field of environmental management in the framework of achieving the SDGs, it should be noted that there are common approaches to interpreting the SDGs at a practical level, including attempts to present them in the form of strategic goals. Nevertheless, it seems that Russia, in an attempt to comply with the SDGs, has put a new meaning into them, trying to interpret them from the point of view of previous political priorities, while elevating them to the rank of strategic tasks. Turning to the legislative context, it should be noted that today, Russian environmental law is actively seeking a principled approach to harmonizing the legal regulation of social, economic and environmental relations in their entirety. One of these approaches is associated with the adoption of political strategic documents in which environmental problems are solved not in isolation but together with the goals of socio-economic development.

To date, many of these acts have already been adopted or approved by various state bodies. They include several environmental policies that are interrelated with economic and social ones, such as the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the Fundamentals of State Policy in the Field of Environmental Development for the period up to 2030, the Strategy for Environmental Safety for the period up to 2025, the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation, and the Water strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. In terms of their legal form, these acts are approved by decrees of the President, resolutions and orders of the Government and differ in different periods of validity [25]. Due to such a variety of formal features, it is not possible to build a hierarchy of such acts, determine how they are related in the system of legislative acts, and outline the circle of persons who must implement and comply with them. In terms of legal technique, these documents define the problem to be solved, set the policy goal, set operational objectives, and list the legal and practical measures to be taken to achieve them. Additionally, these documents are not intended to define any personal rights and obligations, nor do they provide for an enforcement mechanism [25]. Although formally the powers directly related to the implementation of the SDGs are not assigned to the state authorities, however, they have the powers sufficient to implement all the goals. Based on the existing data provided by modern research, several federal executive bodies may exercise powers for one goal; herewith their interaction is not fixed in any way [67]. This, accordingly, creates prerequisites for duplication of functions and an increase in the number of bureaucratic procedures. For example, within the framework of achieving SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation”, the following authorities exercise their powers: the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia and some subordinate central bodies under its jurisdiction, the Ministry of Construction of RF, the Federal Body of RF in the field of consumer rights. On the achievement of

SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production”—the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Russia. On SDG 13 “Combating climate change” achieving—the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, the Ministry of Transport of Russia, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Russia and the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia, etc. The peculiarity is that the functions to achieve the SDGs, or to process information related to the SDGs, are not provided for in the provisions (standing order) on the relevant authorities that determine their powers. In other words, information on the achievement of the SDGs is accumulated and processed by the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation on the basis of generalized summary data, in fact, without the participation of the relevant body approved by law. At the same time, as mentioned above, in the Russian legal field there is no legislative regulation that assigns specific tasks to achieve the SDGs to one or another authority.

In this regard, it is advisable to legislate on the interaction of federal executive authorities and the powers of the executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation and municipal authorities in terms of assisting federal authorities and implementing sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection. In addition to environmental authorities, law enforcement agencies also play an important role in implementing the principles of sustainable development, ensuring environmental protection and environmental safety [67].

Discussing Strategy 2030 as the primary document in the field of sustainable management of natural resources in a general context, attention should be drawn to the fact that this document relies on the ‘sustainable development’ category without any connection to the SDGs and does not make any reference to Agenda 2030. In some respects, Strategy 2030 duplicates the goals of the Environmental Principles of the Russian Federation, Presidential Decree No. 204 (2018) ‘On the national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024’, including many declaratory provisions (such as ‘developing a theoretical and technological background for the transition to sustainable development’, ‘developing an integrated system of solid municipal waste management’, ‘preparing the ground for recycling of all industrial and municipal solid waste prohibited for disposal’, etc.). Yet, the Strategy does not include effective indicators of achieved goals.

Russia faces serious institutional, financial, and social obstacles in its transition to a circular economy. This is caused, first of all, by the high percentage of raw materials in GDP, accompanied by economic stagnation and a lack of innovative technologies. High corruption rates bring difficulties with financing infrastructural projects, and the conversion of industrial companies, especially with the involvement of foreign investors. Second, additional economic and cultural obstacles can be identified: widespread ‘distrust’ attitudes; inadequate environmental consciousness in matters of environmental protection; lack of proper knowledge and skills in establishing long-term cooperation [41].

The green economy in Russia is characterized by diversity and inconsistency of public policy measures, the focus area of existing regulations on the green economy (no clear goals, tools and indicators), and, as a consequence, poor motivation among businesses to implement green [14]. The financial policy of special agencies deserves special attention. For a long time, questions have been raised about tax policies in the energy sector due to: the attempted introduction of green bonds; co-financing of innovative projects with large private businesses; ineffective state subsidies, etc. The existing tax burden in the recycling industry with little environmental impact is higher than in the processing industry. This does not encourage the circular economy [41].

As mentioned above, Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 204 (2018) on National Goals and Strategic Objectives for the Development of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2024 sets several tasks for the government of an environmental nature, in particular, to reduce emissions of pollutants in large industrial cities. However, the document does not contain any mention of risks and threats directly related to the global

processes of climate change and their manifestations on the territory of Russia [68]. Besides environmental tasks outlined in the aforementioned Decree of 2018, the development priorities for the period until 2024 included no measures to improve the sustainability of marine resources management. In addition, the stated goal of developing the Northern Sea Route and increasing cargo traffic along it to 80 million tons creates risks for the state of the environment in the vulnerable Arctic region [68].

In 2020, the Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was presented in the Russian Federation. As can be noted, the authors of the Russian review pay increased attention to the social aspect of sustainable development to the detriment of the economic and environmental ones. The review does not demonstrate their relationship. Policy coherence for the implementation of the SDGs is only mentioned in the chapter on SDG 17, and there is no comprehensive approach to policy coordination for sustainable development. At the same time, research circles note that the review does not describe the role of communities and local self-government in improving environmental literacy. The Russian government does not conduct proper educational work on these issues, while the 2030 Agenda is not sufficiently implemented at the local level [46,69,70].

Discussing the role of strategic documents in the framework of initiatives to achieve the SDGs, it can be noted that at present the significance of existing strategic documents in the Russian Federation performs rather a declarative function, implying neither the presence of indicators of their achievement, the development of mechanisms, nor the mechanisms for their control. Despite the many declared goals and the role of strategic planning in the Russian Federation as such, an obvious situation is created when the existing strategic documents do not create legal norms and, accordingly, do not imply control over their achievement. Presumably, strategic documents would have to determine the mechanisms for implementing the SDGs and adapting the current legislation to achieve them, however, in practice, the opposite situation arises, when the existing legislative regulation is presented as an already working mechanism that practically does not require changes. The absence of clear indicators for achieving the SDGs, as well as mechanisms for their integration into national legislation, once again demonstrates a general approach that actually levels out the purpose of the SDGs.

Unlike the Russian Federation, in a number of countries, including both the countries of the global north and the global south, bringing legislation into line with the SDGs, their integration into the current legislative regulation is a number of political priorities, while their interpretation is not distorted [71–73]. For example, to meet the SDGs, legislation in countries, such as the UK and Brazil, sets targets related to the amount of electronic and electrical waste to be collected for recycling. In the United Kingdom, at the legislative level, a certain amount of waste is set to be collected and processed each year based on generalized data on their production, supply, and disposal [71]. In Brazil, the goals for structuring the WEEE management system are determined at the level of a Presidential Decree [71]. The governments of Japan and South Korea are implementing the SDGs by adapting existing legislation [73].

As can be seen, the implementation of the SDGs is not always associated with the need to develop and adopt separate strategic documents. So, in the case of the law-making tradition of the Russian Federation, strategic documents, not being acts of legislative regulation in their multitude, distort the SDGs in their original form, trying to interpret them in their own way and creating additional obstacles to the law-making mechanism. From all of the above, it becomes obvious that the issue of harmonization of strategic documents is urgent. Two options can be offered. First, taking into account the established law-making practice, when the goals of national policy are directly formulated in the relevant legislative acts or included in them in separate chapters, it seems appropriate to apply this model to environmental policy. A separate law on state environmental policy or a chapter on environmental policy of the Federal Law “On Environmental Protection” can proclaim long-term guidelines for the development of legal acts in the field of environmental protection,

environmental safety and nature management through creative codification of existing political and strategic documents [25]. With this approach, the national environmental policy can acquire a completely legal, sustainable and long-term character. The policy formulated in the legislative act will acquire a clear binding legal force, outline the circle of persons responsible for its implementation, and become a solid basis for the adoption of further strategic and program documents as law enforcement tools [74].

Therefore, the government needs to design a comprehensive national strategy for sustainable development. The new action plan should incorporate both national and sectoral priorities. However, in the absence of the political will to adopt and implement a special document on the SDGs, a possible solution might include the allocation of SDGs as part of the government-administered programs. Such programs could make it possible to continue to follow best industry practices in the implementation of the SDGs and to factor in local-specific features. Furthermore, such a step could help to address the institutional issues of redistributing the responsibility between the federal and regional executive authorities. On top of that, such measures can provide incentives for the implementation of energy efficiency infrastructure projects, best practices, and wider coverage of productive collaboration [68].

## 6. Conclusions

Summing up current work, a number of important aspects should be noted. As for the Russian Federation, formally in the Russian regulatory field there are basic legal norms in the field of regulating the achievement of the UN SDGs. In internal legislation, there are national goals that actually correspond to the SDGs but are not formally related to the latter. At the level of by-laws, there is no real description of the mechanisms for achieving the SDGs, their indicators. The study gives grounds to say that due to the presence in the Russian legal field of many inconsistent laws and political documents, harmonization of strategic documents related to the achievement of the SDGs is an urgent issue for the Russian Federation. For the Republic of Kazakhstan, this problem is less obvious. At the regulatory level, the instruments for achieving the UN SDGs and their indicators are not enshrined in the legislation of both countries. References to the defining role of the UN SDGs are absent both in the text of the strategic documents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan. The research findings suggest that Russia and Kazakhstan both are concerned with the effective implementation of sustainable development goals and the green economy in general. Nevertheless, one can note the need to increase the level of consistency in Russia's approach to the implementation of the SDGs. An important feature of the Goals approved by the UN is an integrated approach that requires the implementation of the SDGs, taking into account their close relationship. In Russia, there is a slow process of implementing the SDGs in program documents, however, municipalities and subjects do not participate in this process as actively as needed. Russia does not have a consistent legal framework in the area of sustainable management of natural resources, as well as certainty in its development visions, which results in a situation in which many policy and legal documents define only general principles for sustainable development, without proposing any clear strategies. To abandon the model based on commodities exports and move to a new paradigm of green economy, both Russia and Kazakhstan have to include the sustainability action plan, based on balanced economic, social and environmental components, in the strategic documents underlying the countries' long-term development. Russia's existing strategic documents do not provide for such balance, which in fact calls into question the effectiveness of their implementation. Although environmental protection policies are considered to be one of the priorities in Kazakhstan, the country is at the very beginning of the path to effective legal and regulatory mechanisms for improving the efficiency of environmental management. In the Russian Federation, however, the achievement of effective environmental management within the framework of the SDGs is not a national priority. Confirmation of such plans is not contained either in normative acts or in documents of a political and strategic nature.

Kazakhstan implements a consistent approach to developing the regulatory framework for sustainable resource management, which is due to the complementarity and integration of the main strategic documents in the development of a green economy, underpinning the sequence of the required further structural changes in applicable laws, regulations and the entire environmental policy. To achieve significant progress in the development of a green economy and sustainable management of natural resources, strategic documents, as well as laws and regulations governing the long-term development of Russia and Kazakhstan should include the maximum possible number of SDGs and related goals and indicators. As of today, this approach is seen as the most effective and the only objective approach in terms of balance between environmental and economic goals. Considering the problems discussed, there is a critical lack of research on green finance. Subsequent studies in the framework of studying the prospects for achieving the SDGs in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan should be devoted to these issues.

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