



## **U216 Environment - Lake Baikal**

*A precarious future*

### **V/O**

Ecological modernisation emphasises technical fixes to protect the environment from pollution.

But there's still the need to protect resources from depletion.

With such abundance of resources in Russia, the importance of protection may not be fully recognized.

### **Masha**

The general belief of the ordinary citizens that this country has such an enormous wild life, such an enormous nature and environment that nothing can happen. It's definitely, it's difficult to pollute it. It's difficult to wipe out all animals. It's difficult to extract all the natural resources like oil and gas and everything. So I can tell that the majority of the people don't think of this.

### **V/O**

Reconciling conservation of the environment with the demands of economic growth will require a major shift in the way people think.

### **Lubov**

We need to arrange things so that economics didn't affect the environment but the other way round, so that the price of wood, air and water regulated economics to such an extent that it would be more profitable to preserve the environment.

### **V/O**

For the moment it seems Lake Baikal, with its World Heritage status, is reasonably protected

Although its environment is vulnerable, there is scientific uncertainty about the actual degree of risk.

### **Lubov**

The changes that we are observing now have been happening over a very short period of time and are indeed linked with natural conditions. I cannot categorically confirm that a critical situation is developing, I cannot say that. I am sure that for the moment Lake Baikal is okay.

### **Jenny**

Because Baikal is such an enormous body of water, and because it is such a delicate system, very vulnerable to change, it would be very difficult to say exactly when the point of no return will occur.

Have we already reached that point or has Baikal still got the capacity to restore itself to its original state...the state it was in a hundred years ago.

### **V/O**

So far, Lake Baikal seems to have survived relatively unscathed, despite the economic pressures it has experienced during Soviet times and in the subsequent period of transition.

But the pressures on the lake and its region will inevitably increase.

The vast resources of Siberia are crucial to meeting the demands from burgeoning markets that Russia is anxious to satisfy,

The scale of impending economic change presents a growing threat to the future of this beautiful but fragile environment.