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HUMAN ECOLOGY – SELECTED ASPECTS

Human ecology is a relatively new branch of knowledge that deals with the study of human in relation to the surrounding environment. It is related with genetics, microbiology, medicine, anthropology, toxicology, climatology, technology, psychology, sociology, politics, and even art. Human being is not only a group of cells, tissues and organs operating strictly according to the laws of physics and chemistry, with a very complicated psychological background, but as a biological entity consists also an important component of the biosphere. The natural environment affected human existence throughout the history of mankind, and its changes, especially those of climate, caused migrations of entire human groups, and locally even their extinction. Development of agriculture resulted in a gradual transformation of the areas of the natural environment into the cultivated fields, pastures and numerous settlements. This process was significantly accelerated on a global scale in the nineteenth century, when, with as a result of the rapid progress in scientific research, advances in medicine, pharmacology and obeying hygiene rules, as well as an increase in the production of fertilizers, dissemination of mechanisation in industry and agriculture, a fast increase in population number, the development of urban settlements and industrial centers, created several serious ecological problems. These changes in the social and living conditions have been intensified in the twentieth century, arousing both hope and creating real new problems on a global scale. In many parts of the world the radical transformation and environmental pollution followed, resulting in completely new living conditions which modern man must overcome. Human

ecology strives to clarify the impact and effects of these changes on human and proposes the most appropriate directions of its development.

This issue of KOSMOS contains a selection of articles providing the reader with some aspects of contemporary human ecology. These include problems of environmental pollution, food quality, health aspects of nutrition, environmentally related diseases, and other interactions between human and the environment. The authors of all presented and reviewed articles are the participants of the second International Conference on 'Human Ecology', held in Szczecin on 9–10 June 2016 at the Faculty of Environmental Management and Agriculture of the West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin. This conference was organized by the two Szczecin universities: Pomeranian Medical University and the West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin.

I am aware that this selection of articles touches only certain aspects of human ecology and does not exhaust the subject. The main aim is to draw attention to the connection between environmental pollution and the deterioration of the quality of food products and the prevalence of lifestyle diseases, as well as an attempt to assess the impact of climate change on the environment and the welfare of its inhabitants. I would like to thank the Regional Fund for Environment Protection and Water Management in Szczecin for the financial support of the edition of this issue of KOSMOS.

