

As a result of a final court ruling that cancelled the mine's urban plan, Canadian Eldorado Gold has announced that it intends to sell its stake in the Certej gold mine proposal. The Certej gold mine proposal also known as Deva Gold S.A. has been a joint venture between Canadian-based Eldorado Gold (80%) and state-owned Minvest Deva (20%). Eldorado Gold, a low cost Canadian gold mining company, intended to open Romania's first cyanide based open-pit gold mine. However, the mine proposal has been beleaguered by scandals, operational problems, setbacks and national, and international opposition due to the use of very large amounts of cyanide and the destruction of pastures, forests and even protected forests. The tailings dams, with 169 m and 70 m high rockfill dams respectively would have been located in the close vicinity of several densely populated villages. Similar to the halted Rosia Montana mine, Romanians generally associate the Certej proposal with corruption at the highest political level.

Mining Watch Romania and Declic will continue to use all steps to protect the area and to stop any attempt at mining using cyanide; regardless of who will be the new owner. In addition, civic organizations will continue to closely monitor the actions of public authorities, which, throughout the history of the Certej mine proposal, issued illegal permits. According to the latest information publicly available, Eldorado Gold ranked down its activities and concessions in Romania to 'non-essential assets.'

"Putting up for sale the Certej mine confirms that Eldorado Gold understands that it can't develop its murky mine. Although it has been in the approval process since twenty years, they failed to obtain all permits. The value of the Certej deposit, estimated at \$3.5 billion, has proven to be a bad investment because it underestimated and ignored the strong and on-going opposition by Romanian citizens and civil society organisations," said Roxana Pencea, from Mining Watch Romania.

The Certej project was a constant source of concern, including the massive initial damage caused to develop the mine. The inceptions of the project are related to the controversial businessman Frank Timiș, who together with Rosia Montana secured the concession via highly irregular ways and means. In 2012 Eldorado Gold bought it off Frank Timiș for \$ 2.5 billion; intending to start operating in 2015. In 2015 Romania's Inspectorate for Constructions and the Prefecture of Hunedoara County stopped all construction works after the court confirmed that works were being carried out without a construction permit. In 2017 a parliamentary investigation led to an official notification at Romania's criminal investigation authority. In 2018, the Ministry of Environment halted the removal of over 56 ha of forest land from the county's forestry fund which the mine owner had requested for the construction of the tailings pond. And in the same year, a local association of land-

owners submitted requests for the restitution of the forest lands. But the strongest blow to Eldorado Gold came in summer 2020 when the Cluj Court of Appeal canceled in a final ruling the urban plans for the mine. Almost all these actions were based on civil society efforts coordinated by Mining Watch.

“Eldorado investors were kept informed about the social, environmental and legal risks that the Certej project entailed. In the end, they could no longer ignore the evidence: their mine proposal can not comply with Romanian law, and civil society will never accept open-pit operations. The mobilization of the Măcrișul land-owners association shows that the locals are not willing to give up their forests - a source of long-term well-being and prosperity”, concludes Tudor Brădățan, from Declic.

Source: miningwatch.ro