

Central authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina protest over the agreement.

Croatian Minister of Environmental Protection and Energy Tomislav Coric and Minister of Industry, Energy and Mining of the Republika Srpska Petar Djokic signed a protocol on cooperation on the realisation of a project which will enable the gasification of oil refinery in Bosanski Brod and contribute to the improvement of air quality in Slavonski Brod, a nearby town in Croatia, and the surrounding area.

However, Bosnian authorities have protested against the deal, because they think that it has circumvented the central government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which allegedly was not part of the discussions. The Republika Srpska is one of two entities which make up the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina Denis Zvizdic protested because the protocol was signed by the neighbouring state and one of BiH entities. On the other hand, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska Zeljka Cvijanovic said that the move was not made against anyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that energy issues were within the competence of the entity. "We are talking about a project of limited nature, which will enable gas supply from another country, but in a limited way, because we have a known user and we know the environmental effects which we want to achieve," said Cvijanovic.

The BH-Gas company which is owned by the Federation of BiH, the second entity, claims differently. "We want to preserve the state and state boundaries, to maintain interconnection links. The energy community must respond to this, as well as the High Representative of the European Union. Our politicians must support us because energy is one of the most important issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina," said CEO of BH-Gas Jasmin Salkic.

The Croatian side is glad that the long-standing problem has been solved. "By signing of this international act today, we have made possible the gasification of the oil refinery in Bosanski Brod. From the perspective of the Croatian government, this is an opportunity to finally solve the issue of air quality in the Slavonski Brod area. We look forward to the realisation of this project, and we hope that it will be implemented as soon as possible," said Minister Coric.

The protocol is a result of several years of efforts by Croatia to find a solution to stop cross-border air pollution caused by the refinery. After the re-launch of operations in the oil refinery in 2008, unpleasant smells and the deterioration of air quality in the Slavonski Brod area have been noticed. For this reason the Croatian government has been continuously seeking, at the level of the relevant ministries, diplomatic channels, and ultimately at the highest political level, to find a solution to the cross-border air pollution with the competent authorities of the Republika Srpska, at which territory refinery is located. The best solution was found in the gasification of the refinery.

Given that the refinery currently has no possibility of receiving gas from the pipeline system of the Republika Srpska or other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the direct negotiations with the owner of the refinery it was agreed that a direct connection to the gas pipeline system in Croatia would be constructed.

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