



Serbia: Environmental Movement of Vrbas categorically opposes
GaspromNeft NIS oil exploration project in Serbian municipalities of
Vrbas and Kula

After no response to a letter of protest to NIS General Manager Kiril Kravchenko, due to initiation of seismic survey in the municipalities of Vrbas and Kula, we publish our appeal and call on all people of good will and sharp mind to support!

A letter of protest

Dear Sir,

Having in mind the information regarding initiation of geophysical exploration for oil and gas in the municipalities of Vrbas and Kula, which your company will be conducting within 3D seismic survey in the exploration area Turija, we would like to inform you on the following:

We express our resignation due to your disrespect and exclusion of our organization in the process of informing the local community and local authorities about your intentions in our village area, bearing in mind our previous "unpleasant relations", and the narrow focus of our organization on environmental protection.

The Environmental Movement of Vrbas categorically opposes to this project of NIS in the municipalities of Vrbas and Kula!

Having this in mind, the Environmental Movement of Vrbas with all legitimate and legal means at its disposal, its capacities and capacities of many partners, will request from the Government of the Republic of Serbia to review the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the oil and gas industry, as well as a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in Serbia!

The reason for this is that the said Agreement causes major and provable economic impact on Serbia, and without doubt diminish energy independence of Serbia, through limiting the research and use of alternative, renewable and clean energy sources and it significantly determines the long-term and strategic commitment of Serbia to using fossil fuels, promoting private monopoly in power industry, contrary to the principles of the Treaty of Energy community of South East Europe, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (which we are about to sign), the National Environmental Protection Programme, the National Environmental Approximation Strategy...

In addition, we also inform you that we are a member of the National Convention on the EU for the opening of Chapter 27, and therefore parliamentary bodies for proposing legislative procedures and evaluating the implementation of existing ones are more accessible for us! We will also use a positive element of upcoming local elections in the municipality of Vrbas, through a public suggestion for the citizens not to vote against their interests and for owners of properties, which are in the line of works, not to give consent for passing through their property. We will make succumbing to your lobbying influence extremely unpleasant

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for the local authorities, present and future, through active pressure regarding public determination of all leaders at the local electoral list, in terms of attitude towards potential harmful effects for the oil industry development “in their backyard”.

Explanation:

NIS policy in solving the problem of oil based mud and abandoned drill holes is far from perfect (we are not sure there is one), and in our opinion, it is primarily promotional, and for the purpose of protecting profit rather than the environment and citizens' health. Which, of course, is quite normal! Because you are not a humanitarian or environmental organization and you are not a public institution! Well, after almost one and a half century the oil industry would not be called “dirty” if it could be clean! Corporate responsibility for which you are proud of, in our opinion is a drop in the sea of oil (extra) profit!

We were assured in Vrbas at the beginning of 2014 that you are prone to non-transparent and ad-hoc solutions, when “part of our landfill was filled” with a few thousand tons of “waste mixture” from your oil based mud, which was secretly (hidden from the public) thrown only 20 to 50 meters away from the water intake of agricultural company, which uses water from it for irrigation of 1,600 hectares of farmland, from which it primarily feeds large cattle farm, and further supplies its dairy plant, the largest in the region of Central Backa!

You paid for this favor a certain amount of money to public utility company in Vrbas! Are you sure that the citizens of Vrbas and all other consumers of Vrbas dairy got satisfaction for health risks at which you have selfishly put them without their will and knowledge! Have you even thought for a moment that the citizens of Vrbas are fed up with local garbage from dirty Great Backa Canal and overcrowded landfill even without your “oil junk”!

We do not think so, because here you are again!

Yes, respected Mr. Kravchenko, the perspective of our life among oil drill holes, oil based mud, and then on the fresh shaking area, on the huge holes that you will leave behind ... cannot fit into our vision of the “clean and safe Vrbas” for which we are fighting for almost 13 years!

Thus, without wish for your approval, we once again claim that the production of oil and gas is one of extremely dirty industries! Oil is toxic to almost all forms of life and it is proven it has a strong impact on climate change.

For seven years Ecological Movement of Vrbas has been doing the expertise of application of the Aarhus Convention in Serbia, within which we actively assess the work of government, in particular the judicial authorities, and in doing so we find models of its efficient implementation at the local level. In fact, we were engaged regarding this matter

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several times by the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The experience we gained makes us objective in the justice assessment and the general inability of the judicial authorities in Serbia to successfully prosecute environmental complaints. Therefore, we know for certain that Serbia currently has neither capacity nor the moral integrity to successfully and impartially monitor the complex exploration activities and in particular the non - exploitation of oil and gas, by one of the largest economic entities in the country and one of the most important “donors to authorities”!

Therefore, believe that we will do everything in our power to stop you in the damage and disaster that you would have caused in the coming decades, and that you already causing in Serbia! We will for sure apply the experience of our friends from Romania, who, as you know, also “had a serious fight” with your company!

We just want to remind you of unjustified preferential treatment of NIS (owing to the aforementioned Agreement), which implies that you pay the lowest mining royalty in Serbia and in the region. Therefore, you rob millions of euros from the citizens of Serbia, the owners of our natural resources, through extra profits, you deprive them of standard of living and decent life. You deny us jobs, treatment of serious diseases, reconstruction of kindergartens and schools, waste management ... “, and thus you are side by side to serious generators of poverty in Serbia! The harmfulness of this Agreement in the near future could be declared, with no doubt, a betrayal of national interests, and responsible persons in the current and former government could face justice and your company could be rightfully nationalized! It will certainly not benefit the further development of very good relations between Serbia and Russia, but we can easily explain to friendly Russian people - “the industrial greed which corrupts our relations”!

Besides, the Environmental Movement of Vrbas is a collective member of the Association of Serbian-Russian friendship! We love and respect the Russian people, Russian culture and history. But how to place you in that corpus Mr. Kravchenko? Because, can you evaluate how true friendship is with someone who is “sucking the lifeblood” for years?!