

10 years ago it seemed that the river Tara “won eternal freedom and that the hydropower project Buk Bijela, once and for all, was halted.

With these words, in fact, the Montenegrin NGO responded to the report of UNESCO and the World Conservation Union which was published in 2005, in which it expressed strong opposition to the construction of the hydropower facility on the Drina river which would be submerged 12 to 18 kilometers the Tara river canyon, second largest in the world, which is due to the invaluable biological and aesthetic values under the protection of UNESCO.

However, from time to time occur initiatives that speak to the HPP project Buk Bijela as not really stopped.

In early 2005, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted the Declaration on the Protection of the Tara which permanently prohibit any proposals or papers in the canyon of the river.

A few months before that, Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic said that the Declaration is not binding, but it is something that every serious government would receive due care.

Discontinued Buk Bijela project, i.e the construction of power plants on Tara, was halted because it is a national park that is on the list of UNESCO as a World Heritage site, and the project was economically halted.

Doubts, which then was, that the project is only temporarily abandoned, these days have proved to be justified.

During a recent meeting with Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic, President of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mladen Ivanic said he expects that Montenegro once again considers the issue of the Declaration which was once Buk Bijela called into question. Ivanic elaborated suggestion: Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely interested in the project Buk Bijela. Completely clear to us that we can not do it alone, but together with Montenegro, and even Serbia. There is the Declaration of the Parliament of Montenegro, which is virtually impossible to build so-called Buk Bijeles due the impact on the environment. It stopped the construction of the road from Foca to Pluzine over Scepan Polja and it is now one of scariest interstate crossings in Europe. Everything is blocked because it does not know what the definitive solution. My opinion is that Montenegro should once again consider the Declaration and see how it is justified. I suppose that is a precondition for this is one serious, neutral institution to assess the impact of hydropower plants on the environment. None of us has an interest to endanger Tara , said Ivanic.

Proposals for a referendum

Director of the Parliamentary Committee for Environment Mr. Predrag Sekulic, who is also official from ruling Democratic Party of Socialists, which ten years ago, voted against adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of the Tara, believes that it should consider the Declaration, but also other water potentials of Montenegro.

It is unacceptable and without justification that Montenegro will not use this natural resource. Montenegro currently uses only 17 to 20 % hydropower potentials, and that about

80% of possible cost-effective hydropower goes manage to score , commented Sekulic. For Declaration ten years ago voted all but the DPS, but if it comes back on the agenda, the question is whether majority is still for the declaration.

Late last year, an official of the opposition Socialist People's Party, Aleksandar Damjanovic said that the Montenegrin Assembly should in the near future seriously consider the possibility of a referendum on the use of water resources of the river Tara and the construction of hydroelectric power plant Buk Bijela. The real moment to sum up the effects of the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of the Tara and open honest dialogue on energy, and therefore the economic prospects of Montenegro, said Damjanovic.

The opposition also, Positive Montenegro, believe that there is no point for Declaration reconsidering. They believe that the energy potentials of Montenegro are large and unused but unjustifiably leaves out the enormous potential-solar energy.

Environmental NGOs oppose the reconsideration of the Declaration.

Aleksandar Perovic from the NGO Ozon concludes that it is obvious that the energy lobby has not given up on Tara:

If they really want to revise the justification of the Declaration, the need to involve the citizens and of public opinion which had once told that Tara should remain a natural treasure of Montenegro.