

It is time to untangle the situation regarding cooperation with Italians and to start building hydropower plants on the Drina river, independently or with another partner, Serbian Minister of Mining and Energy Aleksandar Antić said after the first meeting of the Joint Energy Committee between Serbia and Republika Srpska.

In September 2011, Italy's Seci Energia, Serbian public power utility Elektroprivreda Srbije and Republika Srpska's public power enterprise Elektroprivreda Republike Srpske signed a preliminary agreement on the construction of three hydropower plants on the Drina river. The planned capacity was 450 MW, expected annual production 1,200 MWh and the estimated value of the investment EUR 800 million. The energy produced by the three HPPs was to be transferred to Italy. The works were supposed to start in 2013.

On Friday Serbian Energy and Mining Minister Aleksandar Antić and his Republika Srpska counterpart Petar Đokić attended the first meeting of the Joint Energy Committee in Belgrade. They announced stronger cooperation, implementation of joint energy projects and construction of the HPPs on the Drina river.

"We have had an agreement with Italians, but they have delayed it for many years. The time has finally come to untangle this situation and to build HPPs, independently or with another partner. Republika Srpska has the excellent Upper Drina project, one of the best in this part of Europe. We are interested in becoming partners in it. The Lower Drina project is also very good," Antić said.

Energy utility directors from Serbia and RS are members of the Joint Energy Committee.

"We spent too much time hugging and kissing because we are all Serbs. I think the time has come to realize joint projects and that must be a priority," Antić added.

Minister Petar Đokić said that four hydropower plants could be built as part of the Upper Drina project, four along the middle section of the river and three under the Lower Drina project.

Đokić recalled that Republika Srpska will build HPP Buk Bijela in cooperation with Chinese partners and that Republika Srpska would like to include Serbia in this project.

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