

Small Power Plants Destroy Rivers

- We have two power plants in Plav and all the streams have dried up there. Nature looks like an atomic bomb has fallen there, said Hoti
- Construction of SHPPs is an outdated model in the EU. Genocide is being perpetrated against the local population by construction of SHPPs, said Svitlica

A group of about one hundred citizens protested yesterday in Budva against construction of small hydro power plants (SHPPs) in Montenegro. The protest was held in front of the hotel „Splendid“, where Hydropower Balkans Summit began yesterday, which gathered supporters and investors in development of hydropower projects. Following a half an hour protest, the participants went down to the promenade and spread their banners in order to be seen by the conference participants i.e. in order to draw their attention to the fact that they are against construction of SHPPs, and they said they would not give up their fight against construction of SHPPs and destruction of rivers.

„Let's leave something to our children“, „No to SHPPs“, „Cijevna is our wealth“, No to HPPs on Cijevna“ were only some of the protest participants' banners.

The civil protest was organized by the movement Balkan River Defense, which fights against „killing the rivers“ and which representatives demanded yesterday to stop further devastation of rivers and to cancel charging subsidies for SHPPs via electricity bills.

Civil activist **Semra Mahmutović** said on behalf of the initiator of the movement Balkan River Defense that hydropower was not green energy, and that the fact that construction of almost three thousand dams was planned in the Balkans was destructive for the living world.

- We expect from the Government that, if it has resources and technologies, it will direct the same into something so that the whole community would benefit from it – said Mahmutović in the yesterday's protest.

Milica Kandić from NGO Green Home said that they wanted by their presence to point to the problems of construction of small hydro power plants in Montenegro, especially in the northern part of the state.

- We give our support to the people from the north to express their rebellion against construction of small HPPs. The fact that the small hydro power plants process was not implemented in a proper way is confirmed by numerous protests all over Montenegro as well as resistance of local community, and all of this happens only for the reason that local community was not involved

when it was needed i.e. when small hydro power plants planning process was initiated and it was in 2006 when Small Hydro Power Plants Development Strategy was adopted. Due to lack of transparency of the process and failure to involve local communities in the process of SHPP planning and for the reason that neither Law on Concessions nor Law on Waters were complied with, we here express our dissatisfaction – said Kandić.

Milan Svitlica from NGO Budva Pizana said that construction of SHPPs was an outdated model in the EU.

- Genocide is being perpetrated against the local community. We, who live from the sea, know how it is to live from water and with water, and what it means for local population - he said.

Independent consultant and former director of WWF Adria from Slovenia, **Martin Šolar**, said they wanted to influence so as to prevent construction of power plants on every stream.

- Environmental impact assessments should be done professionally and properly and only then it should be established where power plants can be potentially constructed – pointed out Šolar.

Councilor in the Municipal Assembly of Plav **Ibar Hoti** pointed out that he tried to contribute to protection of rivers by his activities.

- We have two power plants, one of which is constructed in Babino Polje and one on the Treskavička and Hridska river and all the streams have dried up there and nature looks like an atomic bomb has fallen there. No decision made at the municipal level was made in a legal manner. Public debates were always held secretly, within people who had interest in it. Jasenička River is a source of the town Plav's water supply and at a distance of 10-15 meters from its source, a water intake structure for hydro power plant is planned. If this is going to be done, Plav will not have drinking water in the next years. The river will dry up and people will leave the town – said Hoti.

The Government of Albania should give up the Cijevna project

Representatives of the NGO "Future for Keljmendi" from Albania said they were affected by the construction of hydro power plants on the river Cijevna and its tributaries.

- Inhabitants of Keljmendi who took care of that natural region ask to stop construction of small HPPs on their river, and they ask from the Albanian government to definitely give up that project. They ask from the banks providing financial support to stop their investments in construction of small HPPs in the region, before the last wild rivers are irreversibly destroyed. In addition, they ask for compliance with the ESPOO - international convention as well as to pronounce their region a national park protected by UNESCO – said the representatives of that NGO.

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