



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS APLINKOS MINISTERIJA
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

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13 May 2013 No. (10-3)-D8- 4007

Ms. Vesna Kolar-Planinšič
Chair of Implementation Committee
Convention on Environmental Impact
Assessment in a Transboundary Context
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Ms. Tea Aulavuo
Secretariat, Convention on Environmental
Impact Assessment in a Transboundary
Context
Office: 429-1, Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

RE: INFORMATION CONCERNING VISAGINAS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Dear Ms. V. Kolar-Planinšič and Ms. T. Aulavuo,

In response to your letter of 22 March 2013, please find the requested information related to the Visaginas nuclear power plant environmental impact assessment process.

In this regard, we would like to bring to your attention that the so-called Belarusian NGO "Ecological Initiative" mentioned in your letter, in fact, is closely tied to the Belarusian authorities. First of all, the very Mr. Jurij Solovjev, who is heading the organization, is also leading the "Public Monitoring Centre" which was established by the Belarusian authorities with the aim to boost the image of its nuclear power plant (hereinafter – NPP) in Astravets. In addition, it is worth noting that the Centre holds its press conferences at the information centre of the NPP in Astravets – a telling fact indeed.

Lithuania has already brought to your attention the fact that the Belarusian authorities were attempting to draw parallels between EIA process of the NPP in Belarus and Lithuania; the Implementation Committee itself had a chance to witness that during the 24th Session in March

2012. It is very much likely that, for the reasons explained above, the activity of “Ecological Initiative” is targeted at deflecting attention of the international community by reversing the questions related to the NPP in Belarus over to the Lithuanian NPP project. In this regard, we would appreciate if you could send us a copy of the material provided by the Belarusian NGO on the Visaginas NPP.

1. When did Lithuania notify the affected Parties according to article 3, para 1 of the Convention regarding the planned construction of the nuclear power plant in Visaginas?

In accordance with the Lithuanian legislation and Espoo Convention, construction of a NPP is considered as an economic activity for which carrying out environmental impact assessment (hereinafter – EIA) process in transboundary context is mandatory. Based on the Espoo Convention article 3, para 1 Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania notified the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus as well as Espoo convention’s points of contact in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Russian Federation and Sweden by letter No (1-15)-D8-6437 of 27 July 2007 about the initiation of EIA procedure for construction of the NPP in the vicinity of the existing Ignalina NPP (eastern part of Lithuania). The information about the planned net electrical output of the new NPP, two location alternatives for the new plant (both in the territory of the existing Ignalina NPP) and the possible technical alternatives of the new NPP have been provided in the notification. Information about the steps of EIA procedures of the construction of the Visaginas NPP and relevant institutions participating in the EIA has been provided as well.

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania requested the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus to confirm its intention, if any, to participate in the transboundary EIA procedure by 30 September 2007 and provide comments on the EIA program by the same deadline. The EIA programme of the new NPP construction (in Russian) and the EIA programme summary of NPP construction (in Russian) has been sent to Belarus together with the notification on 27 July 2007.

2. Did Belarus ask to be able to participate in the transboundary EIA procedure? If yes, when?

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus notified the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania about the intention to participate in the transboundary EIA procedure of the construction of Visaginas NPP by the letter No 14-09/3285- BH on 27 September 2007 and provided some comments to the EIA programme (in Russian).

3. When was the EIA documentation submitted to Belarus?

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania sent the EIA programme of the New NPP construction (in Russian) and the EIA programme summary of NPP construction (in Russian) to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus by the letter No (1-15)-D8-6437 of July 27th 2007 together with the notification.

On 27 August 2008 the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania informed all parties which have been expressed interest (Austria, Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia Poland and Sweden) by the letter No (1-15)-D8-7448 that EIA report for the construction of the NPP in Lithuania has been prepared, and submitted a summary of the EIA report (in respective languages) to all affected parties. The EIA documentation (EIA report (in Russian) and summary of the EIA report (in Russian) has been submitted to Belarus immediately after the EIA Report was prepared.

All the aforementioned documents were published on the internet at the new website for the new NPP project (<http://www.vae.lt/en>), and Belarus was informed about this fact on 27 August 2008.

4. Was the public in Belarus informed of and provided with possibilities for making comments on the proposed activity?

On 27 August 2008 the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania informed Belarus by the letter No (1-15)-D8-7448 that EIA report for the construction of the NPP in Lithuania has been prepared and requested to inform its public and appropriate institutions about the proposed activity.

The public in Belarus was informed of and provided with possibilities for making comments on the proposed activity during the public hearings on 14 October 2008 in Breslaw in Belarus. Representatives from various science, medicine, municipal and public agencies as well as people living in the vicinity of the Lithuanian border with Belarus participated in the public hearings. On 24 November 2008 Belarus provided the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania with the protocol of the public hearings.

The EIA report was issued in Lithuanian, Russian and English in order to provide seamless communication and to avoid any misunderstanding.

5. When did Lithuania make a final decision regarding the construction of the nuclear power plant? Please provide this decision to the Committee.

On 21 April 2009, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania made the decision No (1-15)-D8-3504 on the feasibility to construct Visaginas NPP with due respect to its environmental impacts.

On 5 May 2009 the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania informed Espoo convention's points of contact in Austria, Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland and Sweden about the decision made and provided unofficial English and Russian translation. The letter of 5 May 2009 of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania also included information about the possibility to obtain the final version of the EIA report on the internet, which included answers to the comments received from the potentially affected parties.

6. Was a geological engineering survey about the site of the nuclear plant provided after the final decision?

Results of the engineering geological investigations, performed until 2006 on both sites were considered in the EIA report. An overview of the available data from more than several tens of engineering geological boreholes was provided and used for site comparison.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the decision No (1-15)-D8-3504 on 21 April 2009 on the feasibility to construct Visaginas NPP on certain conditions. One condition specified that, "It is necessary to undertake the detailed assessment of the sites No 1 and No 2 in line with the IAEA Safety Standards document NS-R-3 *Site Evaluation for Nuclear Installations*. The assessment of the seismic hazards at the sites has to be carried out in line with the IAEA Safety Standard DS422 *Evaluation of Seismic Hazards for Nuclear Installations*. A seismic monitoring system will have to be installed for the surveillance of the seismic impacts."

Such assessment was carried out in 2010 during which thorough new 3D and 2D high resolution

seismic reflection exploration, engineering geological and geotechnical investigations were performed. The activities were designed and carried out in line with IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and State Nuclear Power Safety Inspectorate (VATESI) requirements and guides. Complying with Construction Technical Regulations of the Republic of Lithuania the acquired

engineering geological results were reviewed and approved by the Lithuanian Geological Survey under Ministry of Environment. According to the information available at the Lithuanian Geological Survey under the Ministry of Environment the geological and tectonic settings of the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant sites were described on basis of new 3D and 2D high resolution seismic reflection exploration, engineering geological and geotechnical investigations results. The data definitely showed the absence of any capable faults and any traces of faulting in sedimentary cover of the site of the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant. The assessment was verified by the IAEA Site Safety Review Mission (took place on the 8-12 November, 2010), which reviewed the process and results of the evaluation of the sites (Site Evaluation Report) with respect to the IAEA safety requirements. On the final day of the IAEA mission it was stated that Sites' evaluation was conducted in line with the IAEA requirements and guides, the volume of investigation was sufficient and the chosen sites are suitable for the construction of Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant. Acting according to the IAEA official procedures, IAEA officially formalized Site Safety Review Report and submitted it on 25 March 2011. The main conclusion is that both sites are suitable for the new Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant. The Site Evaluation Report was also submitted to the Lithuanian authorities involved, including State Nuclear Energy Safety Inspectorate, Lithuanian Hydrometeorological Service, Lithuanian Geological Survey, Lithuanian Radiation Protection Centre, Fire and Rescue Department under Ministry of Interior, Civil Aviation Administration.

This information was also provided to Belarus on 2 December 2011 by the letter of Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (10-3)-D8-10771.

7. Does the referendum of 14 October 2012 have an impact on the project?

On 18 December 2012 the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, based on the results of non-binding referendum on the new NPP construction in Lithuania, passed a resolution proposing to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to take into account the evaluation of the referendum's results in preparing the most economically feasible and consumer-friendly energy supply strategy and submit it to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. Subsequently, a special working group was established by the Government to review the National Energy Independence Strategy and perform a comprehensive analysis of the new NPP project in Lithuania.

The following documents are enclosed to support the information provided above:

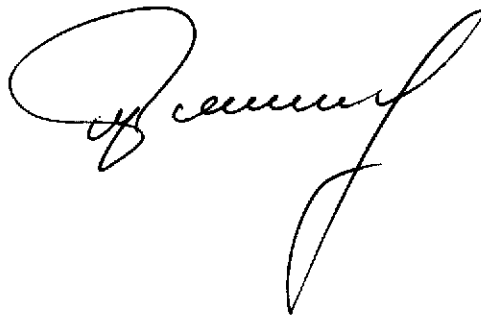
1. Letter of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (1-15)-D8-6437 of 27 July, 2007.
2. Letter of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (1-15)-D8-7448 of 27 August, 2008.
3. Letter of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus No 14-09/4822-BH of 24 November 2008.
4. Letter of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (1-15)-D8-10282 of 26 November 2008.
5. Decision No (1-15)-D8-3504 on 21 April, 2009, on the feasibility to construct Visaginas nuclear power plant (in Russian and English).
6. Letter of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (1-15)-D8-3918 of 5 May, 2009.

7. Letter of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania No (10-3)-D8-10771 of 2 December 2011.

We hope that the information provided in this letter is sufficient enough to weather any concerns related to the Lithuanian NPP.

Sincerely yours,

Almantas Petkus
Vice-Minister

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Almantas Petkus', written in a cursive style.

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