

Montenegro: Environment NGOs Green Home and Greenpeace -The construction of the TPP second unit is the potential ecological bomb

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Date : January 30, 2014

The new unit of thermal power plant (TPP) in Pljevlje could cause up to 16 premature deaths per year, or 622 for 40 years, according to a survey done by the NGO Green Home in partnership with the global environmental movement Greenpeace.

Program Director of Green Home, Jelena Marojevic Galic said that these were alarming data, and that it was appalling fact that in Montenegro so far, according the scientific method, it has not been performed either retrospective or prospective studies on the pollution impact from TPP Pljevlja on health status of residents from Pljevlje.

"However the government plans to continue use of the coal for energy production during the next 40 years", said Marojevic Galic for MINA agency.

According to her, in order to clearly answer the question of what Montenegro gets and what risks with the TPP construction, it is necessary to do serious and comprehensive analysis, economic, environmental, and those on the impact of the health.

"Unfortunately, until today, it was not presented such analysis to the citizens of Montenegro and Pljevlje", said Marojevic Galic.

In addition, she said, as the World Health Organization (WHO) recently announced that the pollutants from the air were main cause of lung cancer, the relevant authorities in Montenegro sent a message that it was also obviously the enormous pollution in Pljevlje did not come from existing power plants.

"And even more - that new unit, if would be built, it will not have an impact on human health and pollution, and that it will solve all environmental problems", added Marojevic Galic.

She recalled that, on the other hand, the professional services of medical institutions from Pljevlje pointed on pollution worrying impact on human health for years, notably on the increase in the number of respiratory diseases particularly among children.

Marojevic Galic indicated that especially obstructive syndrome and asthma showed increase both among children and adults, in a group of respiratory diseases.

There is no clean coal technology, and each thermal power plant, even those built in accordance with the prescribed emissions, has negative effects on health", she stressed.

For this reason, as she said, Green Home, in cooperation with Greenpeace, did research on

the projected impact on human health of the new unit in TPP Pljevlja, using a software model that was developed by the University of Stuttgart.

"Based on the modeling, we got the alarming data by which the new unit in Pljevlje could cause up to 16 premature deaths per year, or 622 premature deaths for 40 years", said Marojevic Galic.

She said that it was also analyzed the incidence of respiratory diseases, so that the construction of a new unit in Pljevlje would cause 110 cases of children with need of acute asthma treatment per year, and it would be lost 14 working years due to the need for absence from work because of the sickness.

"In this analysis we did not count on the impacts of the current unit, which continuation of work is predicted until 2030th by The Strategy energy, so that these data can be much more drastic in case of parallel operation", warned Marojevic Galic.

They occupied also with economic parameters in the analysis, as he said, so the external costs of the project implementation were calculated at 75 MEUR per year.

In The Green Home considered that all serious and responsible government must be occupied with these issues before it decided to continue coal exploiting for energy production.

"As our contribution, we will deliver our data and analysis to the relevant address, but we will certainly inform the public in Montenegro and the citizens of Pljevlje about them", announced Marojevic Galic.

She stressed that the issue of a new unit building in Pljevlje was very complex, and it should not be reduced to the choice of the investor and its bids.

"This issue cannot lock the capital, emissions and the structure of the energy sector of our country in 40 or 50 years, which is far above the expected date of accession to the European Union (EU) and beyond the EU target for the decarbonization of the energy sector in 2050th", explained Marojevic Galic.

It also, she believes, should not be viewed separately from the opening of coal mine Maoce, which is planned as necessary due to limited coal reserves in the basin of Pljevlje.

From Green Home recall that during the past year, a number of development and investment banks - the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank (WB), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Government of the United States of America (USA), introduced harsh restrictions in the further funding of such projects, reaffirming the policy of removal from "dirty" energy sources.

"At the same time, the official policy of Montenegro precisely tries to present the project of a new unit building in TPP as an ecological solution and a way to deal with the existing problems in Pljevlje", said Marojevic Galic.

She added that, at the same time, there still was not defined any project, as well as a detailed spatial plan and Strategic impact assessment on the environment, which should answer on that question.

"On the other hand, the alternative options for Pljevlja were not considered, such as the biomass use and the possibility of transforming the existing TPP on biomass, which would be certainly acceptable solution from the point of view of the investment banks", said Marojevic Galic.

She recalled that the EIB, the main EU instrument for the loans, decided in July to stop funding the majority of coal energy facilities, in order to assist in the efforts of 28-nation bloc of countries for the prevention of air pollution and climate change causing.

"The construction of new and renovation of existing coal power plants will not be eligible for funding if they do not emit less than 550 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour of produced energy (gCO₂/kW), which could fulfill only the combined power plants or those on biomass", explained Marojevic Galic.

Also, as she stated, the SB Board of Directors decided that it would no longer fund coal power plants in poor countries, adopting a new energy strategy by which it would limit funding to coal power plants, except under rare circumstances.

"U.S. President Barack Obama, in June, speaking on climate changes, said that the U.S. government would introduce severe restrictions on the financing of new coal power plants abroad", said Marojevic Galic.

She recalled that also EBRD had recently made a decision on a strict limitation of financing the construction of the coal thermal power plants.

Commenting on the announcement of potential investors about investment in environmental protection and "rounding" of ecological processes, Marojevic Galic said that the issue of the investor severity and the fulfillment of the promised actually was the question of the state strength and determination to ensure that it really happened.

"We are the ones who primarily need to know what really want to achieve, both today and in a longer period. So it is up to us to make sure how to reach those goals", said Marojevic Galic.

She emphasized that the Government, on occasion of negotiations with any investor, was obliged to keep in mind the best interest of the citizens, and to respect public opinion.

"So, I think that the government is obliged to inform citizens of Pljevlje on time, but also of Montenegro to the consequences they may face in case of a new unit construction", said Marojevic Galic.

According to her, the negative effects on human health, the hidden cost of treatment, rehabilitation, new mines opening - must be known before making the final decision to

continue the coal use in basin of Plevlja.

"However, in this case, it seems that these negative effects are ignored, and that the priority is given to short-term economic effects", concluded Marojevic Galic.

Source; Serbia Energy See Desk