



“We can not allow for Montenegrin citizens to be collateral damage of the development plans of other countries”

Director of the Agency for Environmental Protection Daliborka Pejovic said that Montenegro should seek international protection because of the announced construction of hydro power plants in the region, if the neighboring states are signatories of the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in cross-border context.

Speaking of energy projects announced by Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on Drina and Lim, without officially informing or consulting Montenegro Pejovic said that even though neighbors are not signatories of the Espoo Convention all diplomatic connections and media pressure should be used to solve this problem.

“If they have signed the convention we should seek international protection, since we can not afford Montenegrin citizens to suffer the consequences and to be collateral damage of development plans of some other countries” she said at a press conference on the occasion of presenting recommendations for strategic assessment of the environmental impact, especially regarding hydro power plants.

International pressure instruments

When asked whether this means that if the neighbors are not parties to the Espoo Convention Montenegro is helpless and must accept their will, Pejovic said that “it seems so.”

“In this case we can not use the instruments of international pressure that could help us, but we can use all state instruments and diplomatic connections. We are not preventing anyone’s development instead we are trying to negotiate, and we can do that regardless of international regulations

There should be no compromise. I do not know what could be a warning to the citizens of Montenegro after the floods of what might happen to us besides natural disasters, so we should not create further problems by remaining silent to what happens in the environment” Pejovic said.

Coordinator for the environmental in the NGO “Green Home” Natasa Kovacevic said that the situation caused by hydro power plans made by countries of the region must be examined for both citizens and the state’s sake.

“Civil society was not happy with how the planning of hydropower facilities went on. Our government seems to have no clear direction of development that was once set when Montenegro proclaimed itself as an ecological state. It is still not clear to us whether we want to be an energy exporter or a state to which sustainable development and tourism are important issues”, Kovacevic said.

She believes that it is a priority to mitigate losses in the power grid that go up to 35 percent or to invest in energy efficiency and alternative energy sources.

European practice is not respected

Professor at the Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Danilo Mrdak said that these plans made by the states of the region are an example how European practice and signed documents are not respected.

“If all this was respected we would not be in the situation that we have to write to the Espoo Convention office and that we have to use other mechanisms. The content of the project and construction methods are unknown to us, and the only thing we can be satisfied about is that these projects are planned downstream, so we are hoping to avoid some disastrous consequences” he said.

Kovacevic also presented Recommendations for strategic assessment of the environmental impact with particular reference to the planning of hydropower facilities, including consideration of alternative solutions, to provide information about all the costs and benefits of projects, and to define environmentally acceptable flow for the survival of living beings. Pejovic said she is not happy either with the bad trend when it comes to the strategic assessment regarding spatial, urban and other planning at the local level.

Tender for oil and gas exploration soon

Pejovic also mentioned the project of exploration of oil and gas at the Montenegrin coast, which is in its earliest stage.

“The Ministry of Economy is currently discussing whether to announce a tender for strategic assessment of the environmental impact. When documentation is completed parts of the territorial waters will be marked, within which the research will be done,” she said. As she said planning documentation and international documents oblige them to first do an assessment and additional research and evaluation, while international experience will be used when in the assessment of the impact on the coast.

*Source Serbia Energy Magazine*