



ROUND TABLE RESOLUTION

Ensuring environmental safety during implementation of the North-European Gas Pipeline construction project in the Baltic Sea

Within the framework of the VII International Environmental Forum “Baltic Sea Day”

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Participants: 107

107 members from 9 Baltic Sea countries have participated in activity of the Round Table. 16 participants, including the representatives from Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland were heard.

The Round Table Moderators took part in a press-conference that was held on 22 March after the plenary session.

On 23 March the Round Table Moderators gave a TV-interview and answered the extra-questions of journalists.

The Round Table subject excited an intense interest of participants of the VII International “Baltic Sea Day”. Essentially, the tribune of this Environmental Forum affords an opportunity for the first international public hearing on the subject of the North-European Gas Pipeline construction project in the Baltic Sea.

Considering specificity of high sensitivity and vulnerability of the Baltic marine eco-system, suffering from pressure of diverse economical activity along the shore and burdened with man-caused danger (MCD) risk, including chemical weapons (CW) submerged after World War 2 as well as hazardous objects (HO) remaining after former marine military operations,

Taking into consideration great international importance of the North-European Gas Pipeline (NEGP) construction project in the Baltic Sea, which is directed to provide energy security for countries of Western Europe,

Evaluating perspectives of international cooperation which NEGP opens for Baltic region countries understanding herewith serious joint scientific research of sea grounds, MCD accumulated through dozens of years and risks they present for marine environment, flora and fauna, an Baltic countries population,

Basing upon planned deployment deadlines with unexampled NEGP parameters, upon number of project participating countries and necessity of well-coordinated international cooperation on all stages of NEGP construction project implementation, first of all for compliance with requirements of international and national environmental regulations,

With view of marine ecosystem preservation and excluding any potential danger for marine environment, Baltic flora and fauna, which can be presented during gas pipeline construction and its further operation by man-caused sources of threat located on the bottom of the Baltic including CW and HO,

Supporting political efforts of HELCOM countries' representatives in their forming of new ecological strategy – Baltic Sea Action Plan, directed to ensure healthy marine environment with balanced eco-systems for present generations and relying on unique practical scientific material, which is already accumulating in the course of diverse exploration works and monitoring along NEGP route, as a real input into studying of marine system in support of finding ways to develop new ecological strategy on the Baltic,

Participants of the Round table point out:

NEGP project implementation is thought to contribute to sustainable development of Western Europe countries on the basis of constant energy supply. NEGP will allow connecting Russian gas-transporting networks with all-European gas network.

Baltic Sea is a highly sensitive larger marine eco-system and a part of its waters belong to the category of “particularly sensitive sea area” (PSSA). Therefore NEGP should not present any threat for the marine bio-diversity and water quality in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea as a whole.

During NEGP project development specificity of Baltic marine ecosystem (such as sensibility and vulnerability) as well as MCD availability are taken into consideration. Preliminary NEGP route does not come into contact with areas of CW burials. Preliminary NEGP route was determined after close analysis and by consecutive optimization according to ecological parameters. Special safety measures are planned at all stages of the NEGP project realization. They will provide the performance of the international requirements of industrial, ecological and chemical safety.

In spite of underwater gas pipelines construction and operation experience available world-wide, the NEGP construction project presents to be a unique project of such parameters and specificity of the chosen route. In the world there are no analogues yet. Unified international normative-legal basis of NEGP off-shore route preparation, which goes through territorial waters and exclusive economical zones of 5 countries, does not exist. Current UNO international standards on MCD elimination, which could be applied to NEGP project, do regulate only land works and are of recommendation character. No recommendations were yet elaborated for underwater gas pipelines which enter areas of former military operations on the sea and burials of extremely dangerous objects.

HELCOM parties have not yet adopted practical Guidance on carrying out international procedure of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the Baltic Sea.

During the on-going engineering research along the NEGP route (compulsory technological stage), about 1000 soil and water tests from a seabed layer will be taken and a careful laboratorial analysis will be carried out. Result of this work will be completion the unique scientific material that can be used for the further researches of the marine environment condition of the Baltic, which is in frames of the international cooperation of the interested countries of the region. Multi-pronged sea ground instrumental research along NEGP route initiated by project implementation, can become a first practical step towards development of large scale international cooperation in frames of the future Baltic Sea Action Plan – new HELCOM environmental strategy.

Round table participants recommend:

1. To support constructive measures of NEGP project organizers, directed to ensuring ecological, informational, international, normative-legislative and organizational sides all stage

of works connected with preparation of sea route, construction and operation of the unique gas pipeline including:

- development of specific actions Regulations for NEGP project for cases of HO and CW detection on marine areas of the route - NEPMAR (North European Pipeline Mine Action Regulations – Regulations on mine-clearing of the NEGP route) and creation of International Coordination Centre (ICC), with attraction to cooperation of international and national experts and consultants from interested countries. (Prime motives for NEPMAR and ICC creation are: recommendations of OOH IMAS land standard with preceding experience, corporative marine standard creation for underwater “Sakhalin-2” gas pipeline construction (SEMAS), experience in realization of international gas pipeline construction project “Goluboj potok” (“blue flow”) in the Black Sea, specificity and uniqueness of NEGP construction project on the Baltic seabed;
- initiative of Inter-governmental agreement adoption for implementation of NEGP sea route preparation works (in respect of MCD handling during possible contacts in the course of implementation of engineering research) in exclusive economic zones of countries-participants;
- carrying out of international ecological expertise, open parliamentary hearings in the countries of Baltic Sea and other actions, including those with participation of Russian Parliament representatives (Committee on Ecology of Russian State Duma).

2. Regularly inform parliaments and governments of Baltic Sea countries, Baltic Sea States Council, Baltic cities Union, European Commission on the development of Intergovernmental agreement draft for implementation of NEGP sea route preparation works (regarding MCD) in exclusive economic zones of countries-participants and approach relevant national and international experts. This measure may contribute to minimization of environmental risks.

3. NEGP construction project organizers to ensure gas pipeline Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with attraction of international and national experts from in the project participating countries, including application of international procedure; follow norms of national legislations of participating countries, international legal regulations and recommendations of international conventions (HELCOM and Espoo) and implementation of associated European Union Directives requirements throughout project design, construction and operation of the gas pipeline.

4. NEGP construction project organizers to ensure utilization of best available and ecologically safe technologies and materials during gas pipeline construction; if possible, implement ecological management system ISO 14001 upon all stages of NEGP project works; ensure modern scientific support in the course of NEGP design and construction, establish close and effective cooperation between engineers, technologists, ecologists, chemists, biologists and other specialists, international and national experts from participating countries throughout project design and construction.

5. NEGP construction project organizers to ensure development and introduction of production and ecological monitoring system and control for the gas pipeline (such system is entitled to control compliance of taken actions with requirements of national legislations, international law and current environmental standards).

6. Propose NEGP construction project organizers to make a practical input into research of marine environment and elaboration of HELCOM new environmental strategy – Baltic Sea Action Plan, by means of access to results of laboratory research of seabed layer soil and water tests which are taken during engineering-geological researches of the NEGP route. Such input will contribute to development of international cooperation in order to reach the main aim on the Baltic – ensuring healthy marine environment with balanced ecosystems.

7. NEGP construction project organizers to ensure for public access exhaustive environmental information on NEGP project in the process of EIA implementation, implementation of routine maintenance in the period of preparation of marine route area for pipeline construction and in the period of gas pipeline operation in the marine route. Use the principal of openness in coverage of ecological aspects of project implementation which will be provided at international public hearings, seminars, press-conferences and mass media in all countries of the Baltic Sea.