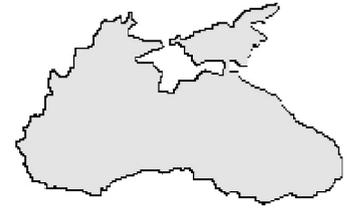


# *Black Sea Shared*

*Regional environmental NGO newsletter for the Black Sea*



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## **IBSD October 31**

Improving conditions sustaining life in the Black Sea is a tremendous challenge. For the seventh year NGOs and other stakeholders from coastal communities are preparing to celebrate, on October 31, International Black Sea Day. This will mark the progress and outline the positive steps taken towards the achievement of this goal. No doubt the key word is solidarity.

The efforts of the public and other stakeholders, the spheres of government and business aimed at the rehabilitation and restoration of the Black Sea, would hardly be successful without the establishment of a strong link between them. Countries from the Black Sea basin need to be able to exchange information, share experience, and have conscious and equal participation to achieve solidarity.

From its founding the Black Sea NGO Network has stated that one of its major objectives is to unite the efforts of non-governmental associations and foundations from the coastal region in the spirit of European civic values and universal democratic principles. It was agreed that the Network would be above the local and sometimes conflicting interests of governments in the region. We have managed to achieve this

over the years. It is a source of great satisfaction to everyone in the BSNN that the Network's regional image has been enhanced. With the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project under way we are confident that the Network will play a significant role in the process of mobilizing the NGO community towards a more effective public involvement in environmental decision-making. We share ownership of the Black Sea and we must channel our efforts towards common objectives to preserve the future. (BSNN)

## **Tenth Meeting of BSC**

The Tenth Meeting of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution took place in Istanbul, Turkey on October 27-28, 2003. One item on the agenda was the formal signature of the Black Sea Regional Contingency Plan: part 1, Oil pollution and Management of Dredged Spoils, work on which was finalized at the 9th Meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Safety Aspects of Shipping in July. The plan is yet another regional regulatory document paving the way to closer collaboration between the coastal countries on important issues relating marine business with the Black Sea environment. (PS of BSC)

## **In this issue**

- *IBSD October 31*
- *Tenth Meeting of BSC*
- *Expedition of BSERP*
- *Regional border police centre*
- *Turkey bids EU*
- *Border dispute*
- *Protests in Taman*
- *Channel construction starts*
- *Pressure campaign*
- *Coastguard base in Poti*
- *New naval base*
- *Ferry crossing*
- *Project underway*
- *Clean beaches*
- *Media competition*

## **Expedition of BSERP**

The research expedition in the Black Sea on board the Akademik, the vessel of the Bulgarian Institute of Oceanology, returned to Varna on October 13. The 20-day voyage was dedicated to studying the marine ecosystem and the sampling of benthos in the territorial waters of Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. The research is part of the scientific programme of the GEF-UNDP Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery

Project (BSERP). This expedition was the first of a series intended to provide more information on the current state of the Black Sea environment. More studies of the marine environment, within the same project, will be performed in the spring of 2004. (BTA)

## Regional border police centre

Regional Integrated Coordination and Information Centre for the Black Sea will be established in Bourgas, on the Bulgarian coast. This was decided in October by the heads of border police authorities from the six littoral states at the fourth annual meeting of the Black Sea coast guard authorities in Odessa, Ukraine. The centre will improve communication and integration on a regional and international level. It will maintain direct communication with all border police centres, coordinating international police operations, search and rescue operations, the tracking of suspect vessels etc. (Radio Varna)

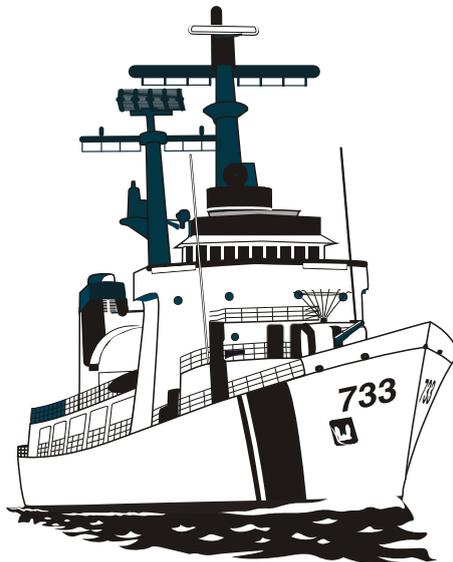
## Turkey bids EU

On his official visit to Athens, Turkish foreign minister Abdullah Gul met with Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis to discuss Turkey's European Union membership bid. During the talks, Simitis said next year would be pivotal for Ankara's bid. "We shouldn't wait until the last moment to resolve the Cyprus and Aegean disputes," urged Simitis. For his part, Gul said that

he hoped a resolution would be reached on the island before Greek Cyprus joins the EU next May, adding that the Union should also help to reach a settlement. (Turkish press)

## Border dispute

A deepening border dispute at the Black Sea island of Tuzla in the Kerch Strait that started October 19 threatened to escalate into



armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia. After a meeting between the premiers of the two countries on October 24, construction stopped in anticipation of talks of the foreign ministers in Kiev on October 30. Kiev is angry that Russia is building a causeway towards a Ukrainian island while Russia has asked for proof that the island is legally part of Ukraine. Russia says the causeway is being built for economic and ecological reasons and that the facility is essential protection from coastal erosion, a fact dismissed by both scientists and observers. They

fear Russia is trying to enlarge its territory and claim rights on the strategic trade route of the Kerch Straits. Ukraine has appealed to other countries and international bodies for support in the dispute, including the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO as the causeway is already within hundreds of metres of Ukrainian territorial waters. The dispute threatens to derail the new common market agreement the two countries had concluded with Belarus and Kazakhstan. (International media)

## Protests in Taman

According to the independent NGO service IES, protests continue in Taman, a town on the Russian Black Sea coast and site of the controversial EBRD-financed construction project of the TogliattiAzot Ammonia Terminal. Taman is in the immediate vicinity of the disputed Tuzla island in the Kerch Strait.

Even though the local authorities were duly informed of the public rally scheduled for August 31, and invited to make speeches, they refused to give permission for the event. The peaceful meeting nevertheless took place with some 200 participants attending who voiced their concern and established a public committee for the salvation of Taman. The security services and authorities tried to intimidate the green movement activists and campaigners. Locals had put great store in presenting their grievances directly to Russian

president Vladimir Putin but his September 9<sup>th</sup> scheduled visit to Taman was postponed. The 'greens', from the Socio Ecological Union of Western Caucasus, the Atshy Movement and the Independent Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus, started the campaign with the intention to inform the public and put pressure on the authorities. Now they are subject to smear campaigns from media close to the local authorities. Charges for organising an unsanctioned gathering were brought against Genadii Maikov, one of the outstanding local leaders and director of the Taman-UNESCO centre. A campaign of collecting signatures against the construction of the ammonia handling facility is under way in Taman. The signatures and a petition will be handed to president Putin when he visits the area. *(after IES)*

## Channel construction starts

The Ukrainian government has given the go ahead to the construction of a deepwater navigational channel, Danube - Black Sea, through the Danube biosphere reserve on the Bystroye estuary. The government has approved the feasibility study proposed by "Ukrinvestexpertize". The projected channel will be 162.2 km in length and will have a maritime section of 3.1 km to service vessels with draught up to 7.2 meters. Construction work is

committed to the "Delta-Lotsman" firm. Total project costs are 144.938 m hryvnias (over 27 m USD). Bystroye estuary is the part of the reserve included in the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere reserves, with water and marsh grounds of international value. *(SEU)*

## Pressure campaign

NGOs continue to voice serious concerns over the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, launching a pressure campaign after the expiry of the public consultation period on October 14th. The two banks considering backing the pipeline -



the IFC and EBRD - want to make their decisions at their next Board meetings, on October 28th and November 11th respectively. Given all the problems with the project, detailed in a new review carried out by NGOs, they are calling on the UK government to delay any decision until major concerns have been addressed. The NGOs' review finds the project to be in violation or partial violation of every relevant World Bank safeguard policy, as well as European Commission Directives, on at least 173 counts. *(Bluelink)*

## Coastguard base in Poti

The Georgian Coast Guard opened a base in the Black Sea port town of Poti on September 19, 2003. The base was created through the USD 17.5 million US program of reforming the Georgian border patrols. The base allows for the strengthening of control over the territorial waters of Georgia and strengthening the sea borders of the country. The US Coast Guard intends to conclude a five-year agreement with the Batumi Shipbuilding Factory for the repairs and modernization of ships in the Georgian Coast Guard. *(Pravda.ru)*

## New naval base

Russian Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, has announced Construction of a new naval base for the Black Sea Fleet in Novorossiisk will be launched in 2005. He stresses that no relocation of the Black Sea Fleet from Sevastopol (Crimea, Ukraine) to Novorossiisk was intended. Sergei Ivanov explained that the new base would host the warships relocated after 1991 to positions off the coasts of the Krasnodar Territory. *(Gazeta.ru)*

## Ferry crossing

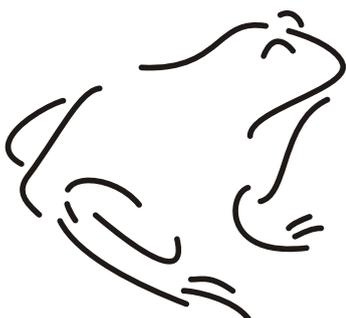
Spanish banking group Santander is ready to invest 120 million euros in a Black Sea ferry crossing between Kavkaz Port in

Russia and Poti Port in Georgia, Sergei Grigorian, the director of the Southern-Russian investment fund, told *Interfax*

Earlier Russia and Armenia announced plans to restore the ferry crossing between Kavkaz and Poti. Kavkaz, a joint venture, was set up by Armenia's shipping company and the government owned Armenian Railway, and for Russia the Kavkaz port administration and North-Caucuses Railway. The project envisages a system where cargoes will go by rail from Armenia to Poti Port, then by sea to Kavkaz Port and then by rail to their destinations. (*Interfax*)

## Project underway

The Sochi Branch of the Russian Geographic Society (SORGO) is implementing a project within the Small Grants Programme of BSERP. The project is associated with the restoration of the Colchis type of flora and fauna in the Imeritinskaya Wetland and legalizing the status of the protected area and the monuments of nature for the site. The activists of SORGO are currently performing topographical mapping of monuments of nature on the



wetland territory. Out of 15 monuments of nature identified 7 years ago only three remain. Part of the wetland territory is overgrown with trees and bushes. Border guards are good supporters to NGO activity as the territories under their custody seem to be the only area where plants can be restored and grown in their natural environment. The sand lily, an endemic species of the region, was restored on the dunes in a border zone. In summer SORGO conducted a coastal boating cruise with stops at the monuments of nature and public awareness activities with emphasis on the efforts for the protection of biodiversity in the Black Sea. The participants were awarded diplomas and medals on behalf of the Edinnaya Rossia party and the Cassack Troops. (*SORGO*)

## Clean beaches

Rodni Balkani, Varna based NGO with strong traditions in outdoor activities, conducted its annual clean beaches campaign on October 26, 2003. It was the central event of this years activities marking International Black Sea Day. NGO members cleaned the beach at the Veterans Tourist House, south of Varna, and collected 45 bags of solid waste. The green activists are now starting a campaign to engage the local mayor in improving the conditions of beaches in the area. Members of Rodni Balkani in association with the Society of Marine Biologists and Oceanologists held a series

of lectures on biodiversity in the Black Sea with focus on the need for remedial activities, public awareness and new projects, like construction of artificial reefs to improve biodiversity in the Black Sea. (*Rodni Balkani*)

## Media competition

The BSNN has announced the results of the first media competition named after the newsletter *Black Sea Shared*. It was organized by the regional office of the Network in association with the Black Sea Centre for Environmental Information and Education and Radio Varna. Five nominations for distinction have been made in the press, electronic media and photography sections. A jury of media specialists, experts and NGO activists selected the materials. The competition will be organized every year to mark International Black Sea Day and raise public awareness on major dates of the environmental calendar. (*BSNN*)

## Newsletter of the Black Sea NGO Network

Editorial team: Emma Gileva, Ralitsa Zhekova, Chris Laycock, Aleksandar Shivarov

Contact information:  
Black Sea NGO Network  
Regional Office  
12 Sheinovo St, P.O.Box 91  
BG-9000 Varna, Bulgaria  
tel.: +359 52 615 856  
e-mail: office@bseanetwork.org  
reg\_off@bseanetwork.org