

Black Sea Shared

Regional environmental NGO newsletter for the Black Sea



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Legal victory

Ecopravo-Lviv – international environmental law NGO based in Lviv, Ukraine has scored success in court on the controversial issue of constructing a navigation canal through the Danube Biosphere Reserve. The Commercial Court in the capital, Kyiv, has ruled that the Ministry of Environment of Ukraine violated the national and international law regarding the right of the public to participate in environmental decision-making. The environment ministry so far has ignored the energetic protests aimed at the plans to build a deepwater canal in the delta of the Danube River. The canal would pass through the most sensitive part of the Danube Biosphere Reserve (DBR), a Ramsar Convention wetland area of international significance included on the UNESCO list of the world natural heritage.

In a decision released on March 2, 2004, the Court ruled in favour of Ecopravo-Lviv, stating that the environmental expertise issued by the Ministry of Environment, approving the construction of the canal through the core zone of DBR, did not comply with Ukrainian environmental law. The court ruled that the Ministry violated citizens' environmental rights and international laws, including the Aarhus Convention

on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, ratified by Ukraine. The ministry of transport nevertheless seems intent on constructing the canal. (*International sources*)

IMO convention

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted a convention on invasive alien species the week of 9 February 2004. The convention will require all ships to implement a Ballast Water Management Plan, which will demand that new vessels be fitted with equipment for treating ballast water after 2009 and that all ships be fitted from 2016. In the meantime, ships will be required to exchange ballast water 200 nautical miles from land before entering a port. Overall, 10,000 billion litres of ballast water are transferred around the world each year, carrying living organisms and pathogens. It is estimated that over 4,000 species, including algae, plankton, fish, jellyfish and other invertebrates, travel the world this way each day. (*IMO News*)

NATO expanded

US President George W. Bush welcomed seven new nations into the North Atlantic Treaty

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Organization at an official ceremony at the White House on March 29, 2004. NATO now comprises 26 nations, among them Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia. It is the largest single expansion of the alliance since it was formed in 1949. Russia has expressed discomfort over NATO's eastward expansion. Several of the new members are home to military and naval bases NATO could find strategically useful when dealing with situations in Asia and the Middle East. (*Digest*)

Blackseafor exercise

The Black Sea littoral states plan to hold the manoeuvres in the water area of the Poti (Georgia) and Varna (Bulgaria) ports this summer. Commanders-in-Chief of the Navies of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (Blackseafor) have discussed in Tbilisi, Georgia the program of joint naval exercises. Fleets of the Blackseafor countries will drill interaction at joint humanitarian and rescue operations. NATO commanders will familiarize Blackseafor officials with the NATO operation against international terrorism carried out by the Alliance in the Black Sea area. The Blackseafor group for naval cooperation will hold its fourth manoeuvres under the command of a representative of the Georgian Navy this summer. The first stage will begin in Poti, Georgia, on August 3, 2004. Later the ships will call at ports of Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Bulgaria. The first stage will finish in Romania on September 14. The second stage of the manoeuvres is scheduled for April 2005. (*Digest*)

Nuclear fears

Environmental groups are preparing to challenge the European Commission over its decision to grant a major Euratom loan to upgrade Romania's Cernavoda 2 nuclear plant. Romania's only nuclear power station is situated in Cernavoda, on the northern shore of the Danube River near the Black Sea and the country's

border with Bulgaria. In 1991, the Espoo UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context was signed by Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. The convention, which entered into force in 1997, requires that nuclear project information be made available to the public and to all affected parties prior to the project's approval. The plant is the only CANDU reactor in Europe. Meanwhile, Romanian officials announced that Unit 1 at Cernavoda had to be closed down due to a computer malfunction on March 29. (*Euractiv*)



Azov Sea agreement

The Ukrainian and Russian parliaments on April 20, 2004 simultaneously ratified three important agreements, including the border agreement governing the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, which was the focus of a heated dispute last autumn. The agreement fixes the legal status of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait as inland waters of the two countries. It provides for joint use

of the Azov-Kerch water area and bans the entry of warships of third countries without mutual consent. This will prevent Ukraine from inviting NATO warships to joint manoeuvres in the Sea of Azov, something it has never done but a possibility Russia wanted to eliminate. The two parliaments also ratified an agreement on the Russian-Ukrainian state border, which was signed by the presidents of both countries in January 2003. The third treaty is an agreement for a Single Economic Space (SES), which envisages a common tax code, customs union, foreign-trade policy, and joint financial policies. (*Digest*)

Safety at sea

The European Parliament temporary committee on Safety at Sea, which investigated the Prestige oil tanker disaster, reached its final conclusions on 5 April 2004. The committee deplores the decision taken by the Spanish authorities to tow the vessel away from the Galician coast claiming that it made the problem worse. One year after the disaster, WWF warned in a critical report that the Prestige oil spill crisis was not over, with both the marine environment and the fishing sector on the Northwestern coast of Spain still suffering. According to WWF, "damage to fishing and related economic sectors, tourism, and the natural heritage along 3,000km of coastline polluted by the spill may last for over a decade and cost approximately 5 billion euro, with society at large paying 97.5 percent of it". The EP com-

mittee on Safety at Sea backs the idea of setting up a European coastguard service to coordinate Member States' responses to such disasters. (*Euractiv*)

New status for the Baltic

UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) Marine Environmental Protection Committee designated the Baltic Sea a particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA). PSSA status is given to sea areas that are especially vulnerable to risks caused by transport and other harm. Now that the Baltic Sea has the PSSA status, the area is protected from increased shipping and illegal oil dumping. The bordering countries can also set special standards for oil transports. Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden all favoured the PSSA status. Russia opposed the special status of the Baltic, fearing it would be costly. Protecting the Baltic Sea was a top priority for many environmentalists; a spill could have devastating effects due to the slow rate of natural cleansing. The sea is a major transit route for tankers leaving from the Baltic States. The volume of oil carried by tankers through the Baltic Sea has doubled in the past six years. Upcoming measures may include regulations involving special sea lanes, traffic control systems, areas avoided by all maritime traffic, and restrictions on transport. (*Ecolinks*)

Green power

Green Power Central and Eastern Europe, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency event for the region was launched on April 8, 2004 together with the full support of the United Nations Environment Programme, REEEP, LEAD and with other regional organisations. Green Power CEE will be held in Budapest on 27-29 September 2004 and comes at a vital time for the new accession countries of Eastern Europe. Many of these countries have huge potential for growth in both energy efficiency and renewable energy. Under the former centrally planned commu-



nist economies emphasis was placed on volume and quantities rather than price or efficiency. Until now, large hydro projects apart, there has been relatively little activity or focus on renewables. Romania's Transport Ministry said it would expect foreign investors to express their interest in a project aiming to develop a wind power plant near the Black Sea port of Constanta. Bulgaria will be receiving up to €50 million from the EBRD for local banks to disperse to private sector businesses interested in improving their company's energy efficiency. (*Emediawire*)

Capacity building workshop

A cross-border Turkish-Georgian capacity building workshop was held in Trabzon, Turkey, February 27-29, 2004. The event was part of the BSNN activities aimed at the improvement of exchange between coastal environmental NGOs and the assessment of opportunities for involvement in the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery project. The Kadikoyu Friends of Science Culture and Art Association (KADOS) of Istanbul organized the workshop with support from local Trabzon NGOs and the Black Sea Ecoacademy of Batumi, Georgia. The forum provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experiences between representatives of the regional environmental community. There were two conferences at the workshop: one on climate change mitigation, renewable energy and energy efficiency and the other on environmental protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea by nutrient reduction. (*KADOS*)

PAN Balkans established

Environmental activists from the Balkan countries met in the Bulgarian capital Sofia on 5 and 6 March to exchange experiences on implementing projects associated with the use of pesticides and their influence on human health and the environment. They provided insight to the problems of pesticide use and reporting in

the region and critical review of pesticide issues such as safe storage and handling of obsolete pesticides, necessity for monitoring of pesticide residues in water and food, pesticide use and the agricultural reform, transparency on pesticide use, monitoring, etc. Members of BSNN from Bulgaria and Turkey attended the conference. The participants established a regional network to be affiliated with the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe. (BSNN)

Media competition

The second annual media competition Black Sea Shared named after the regional bulletin of the BSNN was formally launched at a news conference in Varna on March 22, marking International Water Day. The 2004 priorities for

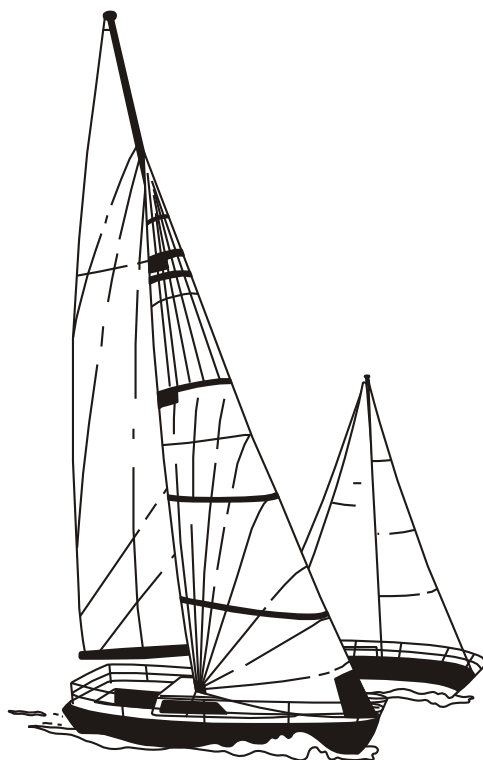
materials in the three categories – press, electronic media, and photography – include the Black Sea ecosystem and the efforts aimed at its recovery: basin management of waters, sources of pollution of the Black Sea, agriculture and the environment, environmental legislation, regional initiatives and cooperation aimed at the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea. The BSNN regional office is starting a new initiative: environmental legal and advocacy centre offering advice, consultation and information on legal environmental issues. Journalists and law students will be invited to the first training dedicated to the Aarhus Convention, which came into effect in Bulgaria in March. (BSNN)

New mail list

In April the Independent Environmental Watch on the North Caucasus started a new Russian language information mailing list Environmental Problems of the Black and the Azov Sea (key publications)-[BS-Info]. The list distributes publications on environmental, economic, health, and marine policy issues associated with the wider Northeastern coastal region. It includes publications from Russian and Ukrainian sources including specialized editions, local press and periodicals, and information from independent authors and environmental citizen groups. Write to <ies@nc.ru> for subscription. (IES)

Coastal monitoring

The Sailing Academy of Taganrog, Russia, involved young environmental activists in coastal monitoring along the seafront. The youth coming from local schools were divided into two groups and monitored a total of 8.2 km along the north eastern and southern outskirts of the bay. The students took water samples and made records of the state of the beach to compare with similar records made last summer. The positive changes were rather few, the participants noted, and made plans to apply more pressure to the municipal administration so that the state of the beaches would improve in view of the coming season. The monitoring conducted by the Sailing Academy was dedicated to the International Earth Day and is part of its consistent efforts to address the authorities on water quality issues in Taganrog Bay. (Sailing Academy)



Newsletter of the Black Sea NGO Network

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