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Saap 04. 05. 2009
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Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) for the Nord Stream gas pipeline

Estonia as other affected parties has received the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of the Nord Stream gas pipeline project for making statements and comments. All affected parties have the opportunity to provide comments concerning the assessment of the environmental impacts of the project and to indicate whether there is a need for possible consultation between the states by June, 8, 2009.

Estonian Ministry of the Environment has forwarded a copy of the Nord Stream EIA report package to the Environmental Board for comments and guidance. Having familiarized with the documentation we are very concerned about the quality of the mentioned report. Therefore we consider it important to establish constructive cooperation and discussion on the issue between the national environmental bodies of neighbouring states. Current letter indicates our main concerns related to the report in question.

The chapter on transboundary impacts in the Espoo EIA contains primarily declarative statements of "minor" or "missing" impacts, but gives no exhaustive analysis to acknowledge these statements. The summaries of the country reports presented in the Espoo EIA are limited to general declarative statements, without relevant data and its interpretation. Publicised national EIAs of parties of origin do not give more advanced information on transboundary impacts either. Especially in the condition where we have been positioned into the blackout concerning detailed data and processes in the Russian EEZ, the current treatment of transboundary and cumulative impacts has to be considered as incomplete or invalid.

In the context of transboundary impacts to Estonia, three main fields of concern are as follows:

- Conventional and toxic munitions: high-risk situation with dumped mines, war toxins and Hg in Danish and Swedish waters; for the Gulf of Finland, data and interpretations on several issues related to the highest risks; munitions and war toxins in the Russian EEZ, are missing or incomplete.

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- Remobilization of hazardous substances from the sea bed: studies of several hazardous substances (incl those listed in the EC Regulation No 1881/2006 of 19 December 2006; HELCOM documents and Stockholm Convention) in the Finnish EEZ sediments are missing or incomplete, and mostly missing for the Russian EEZ.
- Cumulative impacts of remobilisation and hydrodynamic re-distribution of contaminants in the Gulf of Finland and their bio-accumulation in processes embracing continuously Finnish, Russian and Estonian EEZ-s.

We hope that you share our concern related to fact that Russian national EIA and the results of studies (carried out during EIA) in Russian area have not made available for the parties of origin and the affected parties. It could mean that the competent bodies of the parties of origin do not have enough information for evaluation of the possible transboundary impacts resulting from the project. Therefore the final decision given on current grounds clearly relies on prediction and not on the proved facts.

Second, potential transboundary impacts that could affect the Estonian environment are caused during the construction and operational phase of the project in the zone of the pipeline between our states and Russia (to a large extent). The EIA documentation of the Nord Stream project do not provide the results of the studies carried out in your country and EEZ by the developer or the subcontractors on which the conclusions of the EIA are based. Understandably this sets clear limits for verifying the conclusion of the EIA report of the project. Therefore, we kindly ask you to secure access to all relevant data of the studies carried out in Finland and Sweden on which the conclusions of the EIA are based.

In order to meet international standards in the expertise of EIA, we welcome active information exchange between the EIA competent bodies of our countries and also at scientific level for guaranteeing the quality of the EIA of the project. We hope to establish cooperation and mutual understanding between us in proceeding the EIA of the Nord Stream project.

Herewith, we propose to have a meeting between us (also inviting experts to attend there) or to start active communication by electronical means. Herewith we would kindly ask your position on the given proposal. However, we would kindly ask you to provide aforementioned data by **May 1st, 2009**.

Taking into account the possible impacts of the Nord Stream project, we kindly ask you to take into consideration our concerns in the proceeding of the EIA of the project.

Yours sincerely,



Andres Onemar
Director General