
From: > counter-balance.org>
Sent: 14 April 2017 14:45
To: CAB SEFCOVIC WEB
Subject: Fwd: NGO letter to VP Šefčovic on Southern Gas Corridor
Attachments: NGO Letter_VP Sefcovic_Southern Gas Corridor_21-02-2017.pdf

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič's cabinet,

Following previous correspondance on 21 February 2017 (see below), now sending you this message to enquire whether a reply to the attached letter is under preparation,

Thank you for acknowledging receipt of this message and for taking our request into consideration,

Best regards

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Counter Balance Director
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----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: NGO letter to VP Šefčovič on Southern Gas Corridor

Date: Tue, 21 Feb 2017 11:07:15 +0100

From: > nter-balance.org>

Organisation: Counter Balance

To: cab-sefcovic-web@ec.europa.eu

CC: federica.mogherini@ec.europa.eu

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

Thank you for taking this request into consideration,

Sincerely,

Director of Counter Balance

On behalf of the signatories:

350.org
CEE Bankwatch Network

Climate Action Network Europe
Counter Balance
Food & Water Europe
Friends of the Earth Europe
International Partnership for Human Rights
Platform London
Re:Common
Urgewald
WWF European Policy Office

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Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 1049 Brussels
Belgium

21 February 2017

Cc

Ms Federica Mogherini

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission

Subject: request for a meeting regarding the Southern Gas Corridor

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

As civil society organisations who have been monitoring developments around the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) for some time, we, the undersigned, would like to take the opportunity of your participation in the SGC Advisory Council this week in Baku to highlight our concerns regarding the EU's support to this project.

Human Rights

Firstly, the EU's support for SGC is contradictory to its goals and principles on human rights since it directly supports and further legitimises the Azeri regime, which is has been and continues to be in breach of its international human rights commitments:

The Azeri government has effectively criminalised the legitimate work of civil society, journalists and human rights defenders. In particular, we would like to bring to your attention the case of Ilgar Mammadov, a former member of the Advisory Board of the Natural Resource Governance Institute, a CSO member of the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative - who was arrested in 2013 by the Azeri authorities on bogus charges. Still in jail, he published a "letter from an inmate of the Southern Gas Corridor" on January 20th 2017 where he states that "*International investment in fossil fuel extraction is making me and other Azerbaijani political prisoners hostages to the Aliyev regime.*"¹

In this context, the country has been downgraded within the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2015 from full membership. The EITI Board decided, in October 2016, not to restore Azerbaijan's status in the Initiative unless the government takes corrective actions to ease civil society's situation. An ongoing failure by the Azeri government to respond adequately should lead to the country's suspension from the organisation possibly as early as March 2017.

In addition, the construction of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline and Trans Anatolian Pipeline is contributing to human rights abuses in other transit countries such as Turkey, Greece and Albania. Dozens of complaints have been lodged to the European Investment Bank in relation to land expropriation and poor compensation for affected communities in those countries. The EU should not turn a blind eye to such blatant human rights violations but stand by its objectives of protecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

¹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/ilgar-mammadov/open-letter-from-inmate-of-southern-gas-corridor>

Energy Security & Stranded Assets

While energy security has been the main rationale behind EU support for the gas pipeline, a series of arguments have put this rationale into serious doubt.

For instance, we note your statement of February 1st regarding the reduction in European energy consumption, thus arguing that “*the EU should be less worried [about Gazprom] than in the past*”². It is now questionable whether any additional gas infrastructure is needed in the light of declining gas demand, and this should lead the EU to reassess its support for the Southern Gas Corridor.

The study “Energy Union Choices” of E3G, the European Climate Foundation and WWF, published in July 2016, stresses that: “*Under normal market conditions, Europe does not need any new import capacities into Europe or cross-border gas infrastructure between Member States to secure supplies.*”³ As the project risks becoming a stranded asset due to lack of demand, we believe that the strong political and (public) financial support provided by the EU to the Southern Gas Corridor should now be reassessed.

Climate Action

Furthermore, the planned increase of gas import capacities ignores the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and the urgent need to phase out the use of fossil fuels in Europe. It also undermines the Paris Agreement ambition to limit global warming to 1.5°C and to align financial flows accordingly. Given the disastrous and often underestimated climate impact of gas, especially due to methane emissions⁴, expanding unneeded gas infrastructure clearly undermines necessary climate action.

Geopolitics

Finally, Gazprom has stated that it is considering using the Trans Adriatic Pipeline to bring Russian gas to Europe⁵. This information was then confirmed by several European shareholders in the TAP Consortium⁶. We see no sense in building a gas pipeline as a means to be more energy independent from a certain energy supplier, when the same pipeline will be used to channel gas from that supplier.

Given the number of concerns shared, and noting limited space for open public discussion about the project, the undersigned organisations request a meeting with you to be held in Brussels at your earliest convenience, to further discuss the above-mentioned matters.

Thank you for taking this request into consideration, and we are looking forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

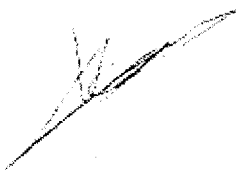
² <http://www.naturalgasworld.com/eu-releases-2nd-energy-union-report-35720>

³ http://www.energyunionchoices.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/EUC_Report_Web.pdf

⁴ http://www.eeb.cornell.edu/howarth/publications/Howarth_2014_ESE_methane_emissions.pdf

⁵ www.naturalgasworld.com/gazprom-eyes-tap-for-russian-gas-35548

⁶ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/eu-gets-wake-up-call-as-gazprom-eyes-rival-tap-pipeline/>



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