



From Conflict to Sustainable
Development

Assessment of Environmental Hot Spots

Serbia and Montenegro

April 2004



Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning of the Republic of Montenegro
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORDS	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN SERBIA & MONTENEGRO	9
2.1 Main Institutions and Legal Framework	9
2.2 Environmental Management of Industrial Facilities	11
2.3 Environmental Protection at the Municipal Level	12
3. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	14
3.1 Pancevo	14
3.1.1 Site Assessments	14
Pancevo Petrochemical Plant (HIP Petrohemija)	14
Pancevo Oil Refinery (NIS-RNP)	20
Pancevo Fertilizer Factory (HIP Azotara)	25
3.1.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	29
3.2 Novi Sad	32
3.2.1 Site Assessment	32
Novi Sad Oil Refinery	32
3.2.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	37
3.3 Kragujevac	39
3.3.1 Site Assessments	39
Zastava Group of Companies	39
Kragujevac Landfill	45
3.3.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	46
3.4 Bor	48
3.4.1 Site Assessment	48
RTB Bor	48
3.4.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	54
3.5 Sabac	56
3.5.1 Site Assessments	56
Zorka Industrial Complex	56
Sabac Landfill	59
3.5.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	60
3.6 Niksic	62
3.6.1 Site Assessment	62
Niksic Steelworks	62
3.6.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	65
3.7 Lazarevac	68
3.7.1 Site Assessments	68
Kolubara Coal Processing Plant	68
Kolubara Power Plant (TPP Kolubara)	71
3.7.2 Institutional Capacity to Protect the Environment	73
4. CONCLUSIONS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATION	75
ANNEX 1: REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	80
ANNEX 2: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES OBSERVED AT SITES VISITED BY ASSESSMENT MISSION	84
ANNEX 3: LIST OF PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE UNEP FEASIBILITY STUDY (2000) AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES	85
ANNEX 4: UNEP CLEAN-UP PROGRAMME PROJECT SUMMARIES AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION	87
ANNEX 5: LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	109

FOREWORD

Serbia & Montenegro, like many countries, is faced today with the serious challenge of integrating environmental considerations into the country's pressing economic, social and political priorities. Efforts to improve environmental legislation and harmonize it with EU legislation are under way. Environmental action plans to identify and implement priority action, on the local as well as national levels, have been elaborated and priority actions initiated. South Eastern Europe as a whole has turned its back on the violence and conflict which caused such pain and suffering and stifled economic development and is now rightly looking forwards to a peaceful and successful European future.

In response to the Kosovo conflict in 1999, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its partners have worked to assess and remedy a number of Serbia & Montenegro's most urgent environmental problems. The UNEP Clean-Up Programme has during the past four years remediated site-specific, conflict-related risks at four "hot spots" and strengthened institutional capacity in a number of important areas.

As an integral part of the closure of UNEP's post-conflict activities in Serbia & Montenegro and the handover of the Clean-Up Programme to Serbian authorities in the spring of 2004, this report has reviewed the achievements of the Programme and sets out clear guidance for the continued management of the remediation projects.

Whereas the UNEP Programme focused on conflict-related environmental damage and risks to human health it was generally recognized that the majority of the country's environmental challenges are a consequence of inadequate environmental protection, management systems and practices during the past decades. In response to the overall framework, this assessment report has also identified chronic environmental problems at other industrial locations visited, and recommendations have been offered for addressing those problems, and similar problems elsewhere in the country. In addition, this assessment has looked beyond the question of industrial pollution to examine local capacities to manage the environment.

The responsible national and local authorities have recognized the immediate environmental problems and have taken important first steps in addressing them. Whilst UNEP's post-conflict activities ceased in the spring of 2004, UNEP will continue to work with the governments in the region and other international stakeholders, through the UNEP Regional Office for Europe.

I would like to thank the Serbia & Montenegro partners, national and local authorities, experts, site owners as well as the international partners and donors, for the successful and constructive cooperation during the UNEP Clean-Up Programme.

Klaus Töpfer
United Nations Under-Secretary General
Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

FOREWORD

Five years ago diplomatic efforts failed to offer a way forward that would lead to peaceful resolution of the political conflict in the province of Kosovo and Metohija in southern Serbia. As consequence NATO started war against the former FR Yugoslavia, now the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

After almost three months of bombardment hostilities finally ceased on 10 June, 1999 but the consequences were horrific and long-lasting. In addition to the several thousands innocent civilians killed, the hundreds of thousands displaced from their devastated homes, and huge economic damage, the environment suffered to almost the same extent. Thousands of tonnes of hazardous chemical substances were released into the environment from targeted chemical and petrochemical plants, oil refineries and other industrial facilities.

The domestic and international environmental communities were alerted and most experts took the view that the war had already inflicted damage that would have long-term consequences for the environment of FR Yugoslavia and its neighboring countries. On the other hand NATO argued that its use of sophisticated weapons against carefully selected targets would minimize environmental and other so called "collateral" damages.

Based on the conclusions of the UN Inter-agency Humanitarian Assessment Mission that visited FRY during the war, from 16 – 27 May 1999, Executive Director of UNEP (at that time also Acting Director of UNCHS-Habitat) formed the UNEP/Habitat Balkan Task Force (BTF) which was given the assignment of evaluating the consequences of the war for the environment and human settlements in the Balkans, i.e. former FR Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Albania. The BTF visited the FRY between 17 July and 13 September 1999 and published its report at the end of October that year.

Due to the complexity of the situation, the BTF focused its efforts on exploring three key aspects: the most damaged industrial sites; the Danube River and some of its tributaries; and several legally protected areas to investigate damages to biodiversity.

As a result the BTF defined 27 urgent projects with the ultimate objective of eliminating environmental impacts and possible health consequences for the population. The donor community responded positively and provided the financial and technical assistance that enabled of the industrial "hot spot", such as Novi Sad and Kragujevac, to be cleaned up to the extent that the label " hot spot " need no longer apply.

On the other hand, at Pancevo and Bor, which were also the subject of BTF activity steps were made in the right direction but much remains to be done before we actually solve the environmental problems at these and many other sites. These problems originate both from the war but also from inappropriate environmental practice in the past.

As the BTF operation comes to an end we would like to express our deep gratitude to UNEP and the donor community for everything they have done to help us identify and define ways of healing environmental wounds of the past and of the war. However we believe that both UNEP and the donor community will find ways and means to continue their support to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in its continuing efforts to secure healthy environment. We believe that this is in the mutual interests of us all, Serbia and Montenegro, our neighboring countries and the wider Europe, where we belong.

Dr Aleksandar Popovic
Minister of Science and Environmental Protection
Republic of Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

With the government reforms that began in October 2000, Serbia & Montenegro has gradually entered a period of more stable political and economic development. The country has experienced real growth in its gross domestic product, low inflation, a stronger currency and renewed interest in foreign direct investment. The European Union (EU) integration process has been launched.

The country has also experienced important growth in its ability to manage the environment in recent years. Efforts are underway to harmonize Serbia & Montenegro's laws with EU environmental legislation. In Montenegro, the Ministry for Environmental Protection was formed in 1999 and integrated into the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning (MEPPP) in 2001. In Serbia, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection was formed in 2002 and integrated into the Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection in early 2004.¹

Serbia & Montenegro now faces the serious challenge of integrating environmental considerations with the country's pressing economic, social and political priorities. Principles of sustainability have not yet been broadly integrated into the country's policies or investments. Industries and surrounding communities remain deeply burdened with pollution, jeopardizing the benefits of economic modernization and recovery.

If Serbia & Montenegro is to continue on the path toward creating a strong, safe and healthful society, environmental protection must receive sustained attention and commitment. The country's transition presents a crucially important opportunity to halt the degradation of precious natural resources, implement cleaner production methods, reform environmental institutions, and establish sound and sustainable economic development.

From Conflict to Sustainable Development

In 1999 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported on the environmental consequences of the Kosovo conflict and suggested immediate risk reduction measures at four environmental hotspots – Bor, Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Pancevo. UNEP's recommendations were received favorably by donor nations, which supported the creation of the UNEP Clean-up Programme in Serbia & Montenegro (the "Programme"). Since 2000, the Programme has worked to reduce the most urgent conflict-related environmental and health risk at these four sites.²

The Programme has taken measures to protect drinking water resources in Novi Sad, remediate ethylene dichloride (EDC) contamination and rehabilitate wastewater treatment capacities in Pancevo, and assess and remediate polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in Kragujevac and Bor. Taking into account the important input by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) on five other remediation and monitoring projects, as well as the complementary activities by national and local authorities and assistance by Czech development partners, a total of 22 out of the 27 originally identified projects have been implemented, completely or in part.³ These activities have resulted in improved conditions at all four sites to the degree that it is now appropriate to reconsider the "hot spot" designation at some of the sites.

The UNEP Clean-up Programme's limited, humanitarian assistance mandate is ending in April 2004. Overall responsibility for follow-up to the Programme is being formally transferred to Serbian environmental authorities. Environmental investments and technical operating responsibilities are being handed over to the site owners and relevant local partners.

In preparation for the handover, the environmental authorities in Serbia & Montenegro and UNEP agreed to conduct a joint environmental assessment. The aim of the joint assessment was to:

- review the environmental conditions at the four sites previously identified as "hot spots" in Serbia, including the risk reduction and remediation work undertaken by the Programme, as well as issues outside the direct scope of the Programme;

- review the environmental conditions at three other industrial sites elsewhere in Serbia & Montenegro; and
- assess municipal capacities to protect the environment.

By providing a detailed record of the status of the seven sites visited as well as local environmental capacities, this report will assist site owners and national and local authorities in their efforts to sustain and expand the risk reduction and remediation work undertaken by the Programme. In addition, the report gives clear recommendations to the country's environmental authorities, which have identified continuous remediation of contaminated sites as a major short-term priority.



Sites visited by assessment mission in November 2003

In November 2003, a team of national and UNEP experts conducted a field mission in the framework of the assessment. The mission consisted of site visits to 12 industrial facilities and/or contaminated sites in seven municipalities and meetings with a wide range of local stakeholders. In addition to the four sites previously identified as “hot spots”, Sabac, Lazarevac and Niksic were included in the assessment in order to assist Serbia & Montenegro environmental authorities with identifying, assessing and prioritizing key environmental problems on the national and local levels.

At each site, the mission team made preliminary assessments of the industrial facilities and investigated municipal capacities to protect the environment. The site visits and local meetings were arranged in consultation with officials from the republic and local governments. The assessment methodology at each site included an opening meeting with the site owner; a presentation from the site owner about the industrial process; a walk around the site; and the completion of a standard questionnaire regarding emission and enforcement issues. The major departure from standard site assessment methodology was that site owners were advised in advance to identify areas of environmental concern that they wanted to highlight to the assessment team. National competent authorities provided sampling and analysis services.⁴

This report does not provide a comprehensive list of “hot spots” in Serbia & Montenegro, nor do the site assessments present comprehensive evaluations of the sites’ environmental problems. Instead, the report contains independent reviews of the Programme’s work and an assessment of the priorities for the future at the sites and municipalities visited.

This report’s main findings, conclusions and recommendations are ultimately directed to the national authorities and industrial sites for follow-up. The international community however is expected to assist.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of key environmental institutions in Serbia & Montenegro and the country’s general environmental framework, noting issues of particular relevance to this assessment. Chapter II also outlines the main environmental problems common to most industrial facilities and municipalities.

Chapter 3 sets forth the assessment’s main findings and presents recommendations for each of the sites and municipalities investigated. In addition, Chapter III provides guidance to site owners and national and local stakeholders regarding the follow-up required to ensure sustainability of the UNEP clean-up projects. Chapter 3 also presents a broader set of specific recommendations for priority environmental issues at each of the industrial sites and municipalities visited.

The report’s general conclusions and recommendations are summarized in Chapter 4 Annex 2 summarizes the key environmental issues identified at the industrial sites visited.

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