

Bratislava, 8th of March 2023

Declaration on “Vrakuňa landfill”

A Declaration, drafted in Bratislava, March 8, 2023, in collaboration with participants of the workshop remediation in the margins of the State visit to Slovakia of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands.

Preamble

Water is a dealmaker for the sustainable development goals, and for the health and prosperity of people and planet.

All participants of the workshop fully respect the uniqueness of Žitný ostrov ("Rye Island") as the largest drinking groundwater reservoir in Central Europe. The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic consider as a high priority to protect ground water.

Experts, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, the private sector and other stakeholders are now invited to contribute proposals for the themes of the interactive dialogues through an open discussion.

The outcome of this expert's discussion and this joint statement will be presented during the UN 2023 Water Conference – formally known as the 2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028) – which will take place at UN Headquarters in New York, 22-24 March 2023, co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands.

I.

The landfill in Vrakuňa Bratislava – containing hazardous waste originating mostly from chemical company CHZJD - is located in the proximity of the mouth of Rye Island. There has been leaking of the landfill for over 30 years, contaminating the soil and groundwater towards Rye Island. The issue is now more urgent than ever as there is evidence that the contamination plume has spread more than 10 km from the landfill and threatens the drinking water reservoirs located in Rye Island. The landfill in total is over 62,000 m³; all is covered with fillings of 156,000 m³ (2-3 m thickness), but there is no watertight top cover.

For some years there has been collaboration between Slovakia and the Netherlands about the Vrakuňa site. From 2019 till 2021, the members of a Dutch, German and Spanish Consortium of an EU funded project "HCH in EU", started an exchange with the Ministry of Environment on Vrakuňa.

II.

At the bilateral level the environmental burdens were discussed as well, including doing student exchanges on topics of water management, and possible knowledge exchange with Dutch experts. In follow up to recent meetings between the Ministry of Environment and The Netherlands Embassy, this collaboration between Slovak and Dutch experts is now being intensified through involvement of the Dutch experts and the request to DRR team.

In the margins of the State Visit of King Willem Alexander and Queen Maxima, a workshop with various representatives of Slovak and Dutch organizations was held to discuss the actual risks and remediation strategies and the next steps to be taken. The goals of the workshop were:

- build trust by being transparent and collaborating with all relevant stakeholders;
- inform the stakeholders about the status quo and risks;
- inform the stakeholders about the next steps with time scale;
- provide building blocks for a joint statement with stakeholders.

III.

In the workshop the following **activities** were addressed and discussed. An initial exploration was conducted with the participants:

1. The communication strategy: Open dialogue to inform relevant stakeholders (newsletter and helpdesk called "*zelená linka*") and communicate about the development of the Rye Island area and the progress of the managing of the risks of the contaminated area. On regular base by Ministry of Environment
2. Creation of international working group on base this workshop's outcomes.
3. Formulating and sharing the Conceptual Site Model (CSM) based on public and private data. Preparation of the CSM shall be reflected in the future contract with DRR team.
4. Formulating remediation strategies and associated cost estimates with a preferred option by the Slovak and Dutch experts. Decision made by the Ministry of Environment with respect to the existing soil strategy project.
5. Preparation of framework documents for new public procurement proceedings (open international tender) by the Ministry of the Environment with support of experts (knowledge exchange, expertise, sounding board)
6. Dealing with all necessary legal steps (i.e. to ensure access to the land, permanent expropriation, current legal actions building permit etc.)
7. Decision making about the tender 1st March 2024 (if no legal obstacles) with regard to compliance with Slovak legislation
8. Executing preferred remediation strategy as the most suitable solution for removal of environmental burden in Vrakuňa

IV.

All participants agreed that a positive attitude and collaboration between all stakeholders is needed to make 'the way forward' and to solve the problem of the Vrakuňa landfill. All stakeholders are needed and will bring their knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Michal Kiča, State Secretary of Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic

Mr. Co Molenaar, The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management of Netherlands

Mr. Martin Kuruc, mayor of Bratislava District - Vrakuňa

Mrs. Annamari Velič, chairman of OZ Za našu vodu