



## PRESS RELEASE

October 19, 2010

### The Romanian State Obstructs Sustainable Development

**The state of the environment in Romania is catastrophic, while public authorities do not show any intention to improve it.**

**The Romanian Government has constantly ignored most of the civil society's initiatives in the last years. Currently, according to the draft of the Law regarding Social Dialogue, non-governmental organizations are threatened to be excluded from this framework.**

**Aggressive economic development lies at the root cause of most environmental problems in Romania; this ignores the fact that the environment is Romania's most valuable resource on the long term.**

**The Romanian Government supports the priorities of sustainable development merely discursively, while simultaneously issuing inappropriate normative acts, strategies and action plans whose outcomes are nonexistent.**

**Consequently,**

**Considering the fact that the Romanian Government consistently refuses to collaborate with environmental NGOs and to accept their expertise, the organizations participating in the Environmental NGOs Forum, the 2010 edition, will inform the European Commission about all the problems identified in order to initiate infringement procedures. If currently the Romanian Government does not take responsibility for the 'costs of inaction', we can only hope that financial penalties will place environmental protection higher on the political agenda.**

These are the main conclusions reached by the Environmental NGOs Forum, the 2010 edition, that took place in Brasov between 14 and 17 October 2010. The Forum gathered around 75 active NGOs from Romania. This Forum has become an annual event proving that the environmental NGO sector in Romania is mature and responsible. However, its expertise/experience and solutions have to be integrated into the system rather than merely 'listened to' by the administration; currently, public authorities in Romania prefer to take the stance of a passive spectator or even refuse a dialogue with NGOs. The current situation is intolerable given the fact that, in practice, the entire responsibility for addressing environmental problems in Romania is 'externalized' to NGOs (these having to provide even the resources and the implementation of projects); there are, however, basic public services that have to be the responsibility of an administration (Government, Parliament, local authorities, other public institutions).

The Forum has addressed a number of serious environmental problems that Romania is facing such as: the state of natural protected areas and the pressure they have to cope with as a result of environmental law violations; the practices for exploitation of natural resources (mining, open pits), waste management,

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Fundația pentru  
Dezvoltarea  
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A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



renewable energy and energy efficiency, threats to the sea coast, nuclear energy and radioactive waste, water pollution and dykes/levees, green urban areas, agriculture (GMOs and traditional seeds, lack of application of agri-environmental norms), air quality. The results of all unsolved environmental problems in Romania are reflected in all infringement cases opened by the European Union for Romania.

Besides these environmental problems, the Environmental NGOs Forum has warned about the way the Romanian Government is abusing its power to eliminate NGOs from the national and European dialogue framework. The NGOs' representative transparently elected by 60 environmental NGOs to act in the European Economic and Social Committee was basically erased from the list of nominees made by the Prime Minister. In addition, the environmental NGO sector is entirely ignored in the list of NGOs to be appointed by the Government as members in the European Economic and Social Committee following the current legislative change on social dialogue (article no. 85, with no reference to democratic procedures). Basically, the exclusion of environmental NGOs from these forums of dialogue coupled with poor public participation procedures will directly result in their exclusion from the public decision-making process altogether.

In the context of alarming environmental problems in Romania, the NGOs that participated in the Forum will continue their activism and express their willingness to contribute to solving these problems. If this offer is not taken into consideration by the Romanian State, they will notify the European Commission about all these identified problems to ask for the initiation of new infringement cases. If currently the Romanian Government does not take responsibility for the 'costs of inaction', we can only hope that financial penalties will place environmental protection higher on the political agenda.

We hope that this way, catastrophes such as Baia Mare in 2000 and Kolontar (Hungary) that Romania may be confronted with in the future will be prevented.

The Environmental NGOs Forum was organized in 2010 by ALMA-RO Association in partnership with TERRA Mileniul III Foundation, Save the Danube and Delta Association, the Environmental Partnership Foundation and Ecopolis with the support of the Foundation for Civil Society Development and co-funded by the Balkan Trust for Democracy.

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