

EKOFORUM - Slovak Environmental NGO Network

info@ekoforum.sk

Mr. President
PES
98, Rue du Trône
B-1050 Brussels

Dear Mr. President,

Dear Presidency,

In the next days you are going to discuss on the future of the SMER-SD party (the Slovak Republic) in your association.

As the European citizens and EKOFORUM - a representative association of 21 environmental non-government organizations from the whole Slovakia, which promote the values of environmental sustainability declared as well by PES - we feel obliged to inform you about activities of SMER-SD in the environmental area.

After a year of SMER-SD operation in the Government of the Slovak Republic we must state that this party has not been fulfilling its declared social-democratic agenda at all - and especially in areas of protection of the environment and strengthening the principles of civic society. Most of the indicators in these areas are on the decline as well in comparison with the former right-wing government and some measures even shift the development in Slovakia back before the year 1989. SMER-SD acts literally in contradiction with the general heading of the European Union - especially in the area of protection and restoration of the environment, which is a main theme of our network, and a theme, which is becoming a major and important topic as well in united Europe.

We must observe that after a year of ruling, SMER-SD stands behind every legislation proposal damaging protection of the environment and restricting the level of democracy in this country. The SMER-SD parliamentarians reduced the role of non-government organizations (e.g. in relation to planning permission consultations) in direct disagreement with the Aarhus Convention. They restricted the freedom of assembly, contributed to the toughening of the asylum policy, support rough operations in the protected areas of NATURA 2000 and prohibited free movement of bikers in the production forests. They also weakened the parliamentary Committee for the Environment, suppressed citizens' rights to a healthy environment in several laws and ignored opinion of professional experts as well as a president's veto in case of several environmentally unacceptable legislative regulations. In the name of realization of large investment projects, SMER-SD has prepared the legislation that seriously impacts ownership rights of citizens, and as such reminds the expropriation decrees of the Communist Government in Czechoslovakia from the 50's of the last century. The most serious issue of the upcoming legislation is the fact that the Government of the Slovak Republic can decide on expropriation without a civic participation and public control, only by its simple decision. There is

practically no protection from intervention to the right to ownership as well as the right to a healthy environment.

In the mentioned areas SMER-SD significantly shifts the development in our country backwards. We are disquieted by the growing arrogance of power and backslide to methods from the period of Vladimír Mečiar ruling. We are persuaded that the way of operation of the current government represents a coarse contravention to the principles on which the European Union is based and that SMER-SD has not accomplished anything to dispel concerns of the Party of European Socialists. On the opposite, in relation to adherence to the civic society principles and protection of the environment, SMER-SD even exacerbated the situation.

We understand that the Party of European Socialists is interested to find a relevant partner in Slovakia. However, SMER-SD does not fulfil the European standards. The most significant attribute of this party is nationalism, which puts together as well the whole governmental coalition. Please, consider our argumentation and do not allow discrediting of the fundamental values of your association as well as those of the European Community.

With regards,

Daniel Darida, coordinator

Juraj Smatana, coordinator

Members of the EKOFORUM network:

1. A-projekt n.o., Liptovský Hrádok
2. Brečtan, Nové Mesto nad Váhom
3. Centrum pre trvaloudržateľné alternatívy (CEPTA), Zvolen
4. Dubnická Environmentálna Skupina, Dubnica nad Váhom
5. Klub Strážov, Považská Bystrica
6. Lesoochranárske zoskupenie Vlč, Tulčák
7. Nádej pre Sad Janka Kráľa, Bratislava
8. Občianske združenie TATRY, Liptovský Mikuláš
9. Pre Prírodu, Trenčín
10. Priatelia Zeme-CEPA, Ponická Huta
11. Regionálne environmentálne centrum pre strednú a východnú Európu – Slovensko (REC Slovensko), Bratislava
12. Slovenská ornitologická spoločnosť / BirdLife Slovensko, Bratislava
13. SOSNA, Košice
14. VIA IURIS - CENTRUM PRE PRÁVA OBČANA, Banská Bystrica
15. ZA MATKU ZEM, Bratislava,
16. Centrum environmentálnej a etickej výchovy Živica, Bratislava
17. Centrum environmentálnych aktivít, Trenčín
18. Priatelia Zeme-SPZ, Košice
19. Spoločnosť pre trvalo udržateľný život, Bratislava
20. Združenie Slatinka, Zvolen
21. Živá planéta, Piešťany