

## Ministry of Environment Rejected Applications for Uranium Mining at Liberec Region

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Prague – Ministry of Environment (MŽP) rejected the applications of Urania Mining for exploration mining license at the deposits of Osečná-Kotel and Ploužnice at Liberec Region. ČTK was informed today by Jakub Kašpar, spokesperson of the Ministry. The opponents of mining at Osečná-Kotel locality were not surprised by the Ministry's decision at all. However, this does not change anything about the fact, that the locality continues to be Protected Resource Area and villages and their citizens will continue wrestling by all means against the uranium mining which is hanging above them, ČTK was informed by Josef Jadrný from Naše Podještědí civic group. According to the Ministry, current raw materials policy does not include opening new uranium mines, all villages are strongly opposed and potential mining could have very negative impact on the environment in affected localities. Urania Mining appealed against the decision. And this is not the first such intention of the firm in the Czech Republic. A year ago, they were also trying to enter the state company Diamo, which is running the only Czech uranium mine in Rožná. Until now without success.

“Current raw materials policy says clearly that uranium mining in the Czech Republic should finish, not expand. There are no doubts that also the current energy policy of the state is operating with inhibition, not expansion, of uranium mining. That is why it is not possible to justify the intervention, which potential uranium mining would mean for the life of the people in affected localities as well as the environment. The fact, that the deposit is protected as so called Protected Resource Area, does not allow anybody to start mining here“, said the press release of Martin Bursík, Minister of the Environment.

However, Martin Říman, Minister of Industry and Trade said during his recent visit at Stráž pod Ralskem that uranium will not stay under ground for long. “Every country disposes of some wealth, one has oil, another one diamonds, and we have uranium. It is a great wealth and its mining can't be put aside for future, that would be irresponsible“, said Říman to ČTK. According to him, mining will use modern methods, not the chemical one, which devastates environment, like in the past. According to Jiří Jež, General Director of Diamo, we can presume re-opening of mining in Ralsko in 20 years from now. It is estimated that underground deposits in the location contain 115,000 tons of ore, which in current prices represents CZK 400 to 500 billion. Later, mining in Osečná should be opened as well.

Protected Resource Area Osečná-Kotel was declared by MŽP [*Ministry of Trade and Industry*] on request of the state company Diamo at the end of April. The area of 10.5 square kilometers is estimated to hold around 20,000 tons of ore, which in current prices represents around CZK 120 billion. “Declaration of Protected Resource Area is, as a matter of fact, required from the Ministry by mining law. However, the administrative procedure does not decide if protection will be declared, but only about the conditions of that protection,“ said František Pelc, Deputy of the Minister of the Environment. According to the Ministry the state is thus preventing mineral deposits from being mined illegally or otherwise depreciated. Declaration of Protected Resource Area does not mean that anybody is entitled to any future mining. Any potential mining would have to undergo licensing procedure with participation of the villages.

The villages and environmental activists were exasperated in April by the information about the declaration of Protected Resource Area, since mining law did not allow them to participate in the procedure. Protection of resource areas is, according to them, the first step to uranium mining. For the communities of Český Dub, Osečná, Světlá pod Ještědem and Janův Důl it also means a building ban. Mining law from 1988 says that anyone who wants to start building or even reconstructing has to ask Diamo for approval, regardless if they are the owners of the property or land. Villages have defended against the intention since the very beginning, they are afraid that it will stop the development of the region which is a popular touristic destination. On Saturday, among other things, opponents of mining organize another protest march. At the happening the participants will destroy mining towers and burn mining law.

In the Czech Republic, since 1945 there were located 164 deposits and other uranium occurrence, mining activities took place in 66 deposits. The last uranium mine is operating in Rožná at Žďársko. The deposit of Osečná-Kotel was discovered by Diamo's exploration already in the 1960's. But the application for declaration of Protected Resource Area was filed by Diamo last year, due to the rising price of uranium, which has recently increased sevenfold. In Liberec Region, there were uranium mines operating since the late 1960's near Osečná v Hamru na Jezeře and Stráž pod Ralskem. In Stráž, Diamo was mining with use of sulphuric acid which destroyed environment disastrously. Repairing damages will take 30 to 40 years here and will cost about CZK 40 billion. The mine in Hamr was using classical deep mining method. Diamo stopped uranium mining in both localities at the beginning of 1990's.

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[*Translated from Czech*]