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Ministry of Environment
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ESTONIA

Information on the decision-making procedure for the Nord Stream gas pipeline project in the Finnish exclusive economic zone

Finland received a preliminary answer from Estonia in a letter dated 12 October 2009 and a complete answer in a letter dated 2 November 2009 concerning the supplementary information on the Nord Stream gas pipeline project that Finland provided to Estonia with a letter dated 15 September 2009, in accordance with the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Bilateral EIA Agreement between Finland and Estonia.

In the letter dated 2 November 2009, Estonia presented its position that all Baltic countries should bear in mind the state of the Baltic Sea and work in cooperation within HELCOM and in implementing the EU Baltic Strategy to improve the environment of the sea. Estonia also feels that the information provided under the EIA process is partially insufficient and that there are gaps in the information; especially Estonia feels that the questions on the hydrodynamics of the Baltic Sea are only partially covered. Estonia considers that the transboundary consultation process is still unfinished and that the work on it should be continued.

Finland is also very concerned about the state of the Baltic Sea and is fully implementing the HELCOM BSAP and is following the relevant EU directives and strategies in order to improve the state of the Baltic Sea. Finland has been involved with these processes over the years and has consulted a large group of top scientists and experts and has used their scientific findings in work on the Baltic Sea. These same procedures have been followed during the EIA process of the Nord Stream project.

Finland is grateful for the good and constructive cooperation with Estonian authorities and scientists and especially acknowledges the comments that Estonia has provided during the EIA process. During the consultation process, with the additional information provided by the developer and by the scientific community, we have been able to solve many of the remaining questions and uncertainties. Finland values the work of Estonian scientists and their long cooperation in Baltic marine science.

The national EIA process in Finland was finalized on 2 July 2009 when the competent authority gave its statement on the EIA process. In this statement, the Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre stated that in the essential parts the EIA report is adequate and fulfils the requirements of the EIA Act. Some clarifications were required, however, for inclusion in the processing of the permit applications. According to these requirements, the developer has provided an answer to Estonia's concerns and the supplementary information was sent to Estonia on 15 September 2009. Finland considers that instead of reviewing and rewriting the whole EIA report, the additional information and consultation

meetings with Estonia (on 25 June and 26 October 2009) have fulfilled the relevant information exchange. Finland emphasizes that the potential transboundary impacts on Estonia are not only discussed in the summary of the transboundary impacts on Estonia, but that the information can also be found throughout the documents. Thus, Finland sees that the documents should be considered as a whole.

In the Estonian answer there was an annex concerning the hydrodynamic issues. Finland acknowledges the detailed hydrodynamic issues provided by Estonia. The scientific issues raised are interesting and many of these are still under scientific debate between Baltic and other international scientists who have not yet reached consensus on them. Finland sees that the problems in the modelling that Estonia has presented are important and that they will be taken into account in the permitting procedure e.g. with sufficient safety factors. Thus the models used in the EIA process can be considered adequate for the purpose of the permitting.

Estonia has asked for an official statement from the Finnish authorities whether Nord Stream has been notified of the existence of the annexes in the Estonian letter dated 8 July 2009. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for delivering the comments received during the Espoo process to the competent authority on EIA in Finland and to the permit authorities as well. The duty of the competent authority on EIA is to deliver its statement and all other statements and opinions received to the developer.

Finland believes that the information provided in the EIA documentation, together with the additional information by the developer, and the results of the Estonian–Finnish consultations are adequate and sufficient. In conclusion, Finland considers the EIA process to be complete and feels that it fulfils the requirements of the European Union EIA directive. However, Finland emphasizes that the Western Finland Environmental Permit Authority will take the concerns presented by Estonia into account in the permitting procedures.

In its letter, Estonia also expresses such concerns which are not part of the environmental impact assessment process under the Espoo Convention. The Ministry of the Environment has forwarded the information on these concerns to the appropriate authorities in Finland. Finland supports the future cooperation on the monitoring issue between all Parties and notes that the national monitoring programme of Finland will be defined in the permitting procedure.

Finland would like to state that in the decision on the proposed activity, due account will be taken of the outcome of the environmental impact assessment, including the environmental impact assessment documentation, and of the comments thereon received pursuant to the Espoo Convention, Article 3, paragraph 8, and Article 4, paragraph 2, and of the outcome of the consultations in accordance with Article 5 of the Espoo Convention and with the Bilateral EIA Agreement between Finland and Estonia, Article 9, Article 11 and Article 12.

Yours sincerely,

Permanent Secretary


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For information

Western Finland Environmental Permit Authority
Ministry of Employment and the Economy
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