



# EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

**Statement of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum  
4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, The Hague, 06 October 2013**

## **THE EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM DEMANDS THE RELEASE OF GREENPEACE ACTIVISTS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDING OF THE ARCTIC**

We condemn the detention of the vessel of the international environmental organization Greenpeace "Arctic Sunrise" since September 18, 2013, held by Russian border forces not in Russian territorial waters but only in its exclusive economic zone, and the accusation of all crew members of piracy. The action by the environmentalists on the Gazprom platform "Prirazlomnaya" was non-violent, did not constitute a threat to the company's employees or property, and the Russian authorities were informed in advance of the intention of the action. That is why the detention of all crew members without any decision by a judge, as well as the initial limitation and restrictions for lawyers to be in contact with them constitute serious violations of the national law and international obligations by the Russian authorities.

Special attention should be drawn to the arrest, and charge of «piracy», of journalists Denis Sinyakov, Kieron Bryan, and Andrey Allakhverdinov, who were on the vessel to report about the Greenpeace action. The arrest of the journalists is a flagrant violation of the Article 144 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation on «Interference with the lawful professional activities of journalists» and Russia's international obligations.

In view of the above, we consider the following steps necessary:

- to change the sentence for all 30 defendants, which is not related to deprivation of liberty, including the bail with the guarantee that they do not leave the territory of Russia during the investigation process;
- to change the case for those directly involved in the campaign at the platform "Prirazlomnaya" from a criminal to administrative;
- to give an independent legal assessment of the actions of Russian law enforcement forces when they detained the vessel, and procedural violations of national and international law, which took place during the incident.

We should not forget about the essence of the protest. Extraction of oil and gas in the Arctic is associated with an exceptional risk to the delicate ecological balance of the Arctic. Further concerns are related to Gazprom's unavailability to show an adopted oil spill response plan for the platform "Prirazlomnaya" to the public. All documents related to the activities of Gazprom on the shelf are carefully hidden. More than 10 attempts by Greenpeace and WWF to enter into a discussion regarding the project in different ways failed without any feedback from authorities or the corporation. In these circumstances environmental activists had to hold a non-violent direct action to defend the public interest and prevent the realization of such a dangerous project.

We consider that the company Shell shares full responsibility for the potential environmental consequences of the realization of the joint project with Gazprom in the Arctic and call on the leadership of the company to ensure transparency of information about the project and dialogue with environmental NGOs and the public regarding the environmental safety of the project.

We also call on the Russian authorities to cooperate with Russian and foreign NGOs in order to develop a common strategy to ensure the environmental safety of Arctic.

We consider it essential that the EU authorities should take a clear position on this case and initiate an investigation process to look into the actions of law enforcement agencies against the crew of the Arctic Sunrise. Thus, we support the decision of the Dutch government to address the International Sea Tribunal on the violation of the UN Law on Sea by Russia.

**EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM / ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ**

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