



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: UNITED AGAINST ECOCIDE, OVER HALF A MILLION SIGNATURES AGAINST RIO TINTO'S PROPOSED LITHIUM MINE IN SERBIA.

London, 6 April 2023 - As Rio Tinto gathers for its annual general meeting, a broad coalition comprising locals from Serbia and civil society groups are organizing a gathering outside the AGM in London. Together they will send a clear message to Rio Tinto's shareholders: the company's insistence to carry on with the officially canceled project will only strengthen opposition and the possibility of social unrest, carrying with it financial and political risk. People will gather at 10am at the United Nations Green SW1P 3EE and present the public, as well as Rio Tinto and their shareholders with over half a million signatures against the Jadar Project. They will amplify a clear message: Rio Tinto is not welcome in Serbia.

UK/Serbian organizations Earth Thrive¹, Mars Sa Drine² and international organizations WeMove Europe³ and London Mining Network⁴ will participate.

Over half million signatures have been gathered in Serbian⁵ and European⁶ petitions against Rio Tinto's proposed Jadar mining project (RIO.L).

In January 2022, Rio Tinto's plans were "annulled" by the Serbian government following unprecedented public pressure.⁷ Aleksander Vučić was re-elected President in April 2022 on the promise that the Jadar Project had been canceled⁸. At its 2022 AGM, Rio Tinto declared its intent to overturn this decision.⁹ This, and president Vučić's statements that the cancellation was a mistake, suggests that it was merely a political ploy. Rio Tinto's plans for a lithium mine, processing plant, and tailings landfill in the Jadar Valley in Serbia remain a flash-point for protest, controversy, and legal challenges and present significant environmental and social risks.

The spatial plan for the Jadar Project covers 22 villages and 2,030 hectares of land for a special purpose complex, accompanying corridors and traffic infrastructure systems.¹⁰ It would be

¹ Earth Thrive is an international organization working on the establishment of rights of Nature and Law of Ecocide in the Balkans & Mediterranean region. Link to FB page <https://www.facebook.com/EarthThrive>

² Mars sa Drine (www.marssadrine.org) is a movement uniting experts, civil society groups and international organizations against the Jadar Project on the basis of social, environmental, economic and legal aspects.

³ <https://www.wemove.eu/>

⁴ <https://londonminingnetwork.org/>

⁵ Kreni-Promeni "Stop the lithium mine, Rio Tinto Mars sa Drine" petition.

<https://peticije.kreni-promeni.org/petitions/stop-rudniku-litijuma-rio-tinto-mars-sa-drine>

⁶ YouMove Europe "Stop Rio Tinto's mine destroying Serbia's nature".

<https://you.wemove.eu/campaigns/stop-rio-tinto-mine>

⁷ Agence France - Presse. "Rio Tinto lithium mine: thousands of protesters block roads across Serbia". December 5 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/05/rio-tinto-lithium-mine-thousands-of-protesters-block-roads-across-serbia>

⁸ Guardian; "Serbia scraps plans for Rio Tinto lithium mine after protests" January 20, 2022

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/20/serbia-scraps-plans-for-rio-tinto-lithium-mine-after-protests>

⁹ Rio Tinto Limited. Transcript of 2022 Annual General Meeting.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/8649isgazc4i7uc/RT%20AGM%202022%20transcript.pdf?dl=0>

¹⁰ Official Gazette" of the Republic of Serbia: Spatial plan of the area of special purpose for the realization of the project of exploitation and processing of jadarite mineral "Jadar", number 26, 2020.

situated on the bank of the Korenita river, a tributary to the Jadar river, with underground mining to be performed underneath both riverbeds. Tailings would amount to 1.3 million tons per year (90 million tons over the life of the mine). The Jadar and Korenita rivers are prone to flooding, with the most recent large floods being in 2020¹¹. The project is designed to operate 24/7 over the initial mine life of 60 years. There are important heritage sites in the vicinity, spanning thousands of years of multiple cultures' inhabitation and history. The valley as a whole is a landscape of deep historical and cultural value.

In July 2021, Serbia's ministry for the environment released Rio Tinto's project presentation and EIA Scoping Report.¹² It was incomplete and covered only the mine complex without the processing plant and tailings landfill. There is no description of technology for processing or how the mining waste would be treated.

*"The splitting of key parts of the project is not in line with EIA Directive. It also makes it difficult for the public to understand what would go on at the site. We also have concerns about other legal irregularities from the outset including the reclassification of agricultural land as construction land before permits had been issued."*¹³ If the project is revived, it is likely that legal challenges will be filed." says Bojana Novakovic of Marš sa Drine.

Civil society groups are concerned about the permanent destruction of habitats and nature; forced resettlement of citizens and a potential transboundary impact in the event of an accident. The project site lies in the valley between two important nature areas, and in the proximity of the International Bird and Biodiversity Area "Cer".

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¹¹ Floodlist News. "Serbia – State of Emergency After Floods Prompt Evacuations". June 23 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id78zSkuRBc>
<https://floodlist.com/europe/serbia-floods-june-2020>

¹² https://www.dropbox.com/s/1m3q209gvict82c/RGF-Zahtev_EIA_Jadar_RT-30_06_2021.pdf?dl=0

¹³ Dragojlo, S. "It's [Not] Over: The Past, and Present, of Lithium Mining in Serbia". BalkanInsight. April 13 2022
<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/13/its-not-over-the-past-and-present-of-lithium-mining-in-serbia/>