

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0022/03  
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to the Commission

Subject: Environmental repercussions of the Agua Blanca mining project in Monesterio (Badajoz, Spain)

An opencast nickel mine, called Agua Blanca, is planned for Monesterio (Badajoz), in an area recognised as a nature reserve of great ecological significance. In addition, there are plans for three reservoirs for waste covering over 100 hectares and containing highly contaminating products. The project would create slag heaps, destroy 350 hectares of woodland and necessitate the removal of over 40 million cubic metres of earth. The environmental impact study did not fully appreciate the pristine state of the area and excluded some of the most important species living there, such as the black stork, the Iberian lynx, the wild cat, the mongoose, various types of bat, and the alytes obstetricans, a variety of toad, as well as plants such as the flueggea tinctoria, orchids etc., whilst citing some species which do not inhabit the area, such as the stoat.

The mining project is an example of an unsustainable development, in both social and environmental terms, which will wreak havoc on its natural surroundings, as happened in cases such as that of Aznalcóllar. One of the main problems of the project is that if any of the contaminating substances escape or filter out, they will end up in the Ribera de Cala, catalogued as water of importance to European indigenous fish (protected under the Habitats Directive).

Given that this project could infringe EU environmental legislation, what measures will the Commission take, as guardian of the Treaties, to ensure compliance with Community law and, more specifically, Directive 85/337/EEC<sup>1</sup> on the assessment of the repercussions of certain projects on the environment and Directive 92/43/EEC<sup>2</sup> on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.