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## Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to Draft Resolution on Chemical Weapons Buried at Baltic Sea



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*VILNIUS -- Lithuanian MP Gediminas Jakavonis managed to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the resolution he had initiated over chemical weapons buried in the Baltic Sea.*

Jakavonis, a member of the Lithuanian PACE delegation, said that the assembly's bureau supported the Lithuanian initiative to draft the resolution at a meeting in Strasbourg on Thursday [13 April 2006] evening.

Jakavonis, a member of the assembly's Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, said the decision was made after a heated discussion with PACE President Rene van der Linden.

"The bureau's policy caused indignation of PACE parliamentarians, and a decision was made to stop tolerating the quiet demonstration of 'bureaucratic power' and invite the Assembly's president for explanation to the meeting of the Environmental Committee," said Jakavonis, the author of the initiative on chemical weapons.

Two months ago, the Lithuanian initiative of drafting the resolution on possible threats to the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea caused by the buried WWII-era chemical weapons was named among this year's PACE environmental protection policy priorities. Nevertheless, the PACE bureau did not pass a decision on the matter for the fourth time in mid-March.

Jakavonis believes that the bureaucratic impediment of the Lithuanian initiative to hold a separate resolution was related with economic interests of two influential countries - Russia and Germany - to build a gas pipeline on the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

Last fall, Russia and Germany signed an agreement on the laying of a gas pipeline via the bottom of the Baltic Sea. However, the Baltic states fear that this may pose a threat due to the chemical weapons that have been at the bottom of the sea for a half century.

Lithuanian environmentalists believe that there is a real threat of hitting the chemical weapons, the burial sites of which are scattered around the Baltic Sea. Scientists of different countries have not agreed so far if weapons with a chemical agent that have been under water for 60 years are still dangerous, but think that the threat of an ecological disaster is still big.

Shortly after World War II, the USSR and its allies, which defeated Nazi Germany, sank around several thousand tons of bombs and cannon shots with chemical charges in the Baltic Sea.

In 1993, the Helsinki Commission set up a special task force on the chemical weapon dumps at the Baltic Sea, which in its conclusions stressed the possible threat of the dumps to the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea due to intensive fishing and prepared recommendations for fishermen.

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