

Uranium: The Owner of the Kvanefjeld Mining Project Undermines Greenland's Environmental Standards

According to Greenland's Ministry of Nature and Government, the Australian mining company Greenland Minerals Ltd. (GML), owner of the large Kvanefjeld rare earth elements and uranium mining project, has systematically undermined Greenland's environmental standards. In addition to misinforming the authorities, GML has failed to comply with requests and instructions to correct and supplement its environmental impact assessment (EIA) draft reports. Among other things, there is still no plan for or a description of the embankment structures in the tailings facility or an assessment of the earthquake risk in the region. Considering that it will never meet Greenland's Mineral Resources Act's environmental and climate requirements, the time has come to stop the mining project.

Press release

In a decision aimed at GML's Managing Director, John Mair, and co-signed by Greenland's Prime Minister, Kim Kielsen, and The Department of Nature and Environment's Permanent Secretary, Mette Skarregaard Pedersen, the authorities have rejected a complaint by GML about the length of the EIA review process [1].

In the decision, it is established that GML frequently has contacted high-ranking civil servants and ministers who have no competence within the EIA review process and that these contacts seek to undermine the authority of the decisions of The Environmental Agency for Mineral Resources Activities (EAMRA). The government finds that this behaviour is unacceptable and requests GML to abstain from this practice.

The decision is in accordance with observations by the international business magazine *Forbes*. According to *Forbes*, GML has been involved in the process that led to the Trump administration's offer to buy Greenland [2].

"GML's complaint is an attempt to undermine the EIA process by political pressure", says Mariane Paviassen from the URANI NAAMIK Society in Narsaq. "It is not the first time that GML tries to manipulate and disregard the rules that apply to everybody else. One has to ask, if the mining company behaves that way now, how will it behave if it gets to be in charge of the potentially most polluting industrial project in the history of Greenland and the Danish Kingdom?"

On June 17th, GML submitted its application for a mining license together with the fourth and according to GML final EIA draft report to the authorities. The three previous drafts have all been rejected because of lack of documentation. The timing of the submission is surprising, considering that EAMRA has identified a series of issues that has not been sufficiently dealt with [3].

"Considering that there is no real difference between the latest and the earlier EIA draft reports, criticism from the green NGOs remains unaffected", says Mikkel Myrup from Avataq, Greenland's Nature and Environment Association. "In 2017, at our request, Jan Willem Storm van Leeuwen published an analysis of GML's first draft report. He is an expert in technology assessment and life cycle analyses of energy systems in the Netherlands. The analysis is still relevant". [4]

"We already know that GML's final EIA draft report does not meet Greenland's Mineral Resources Act's environmental and climate requirements", says Hans Pedersen from SustainableEnergy. "Now as before,

there is no plan for or description of the embankment structures in the tailings facility or assessments of the earthquake risk in the region. The lack of documentation has been confirmed by EAMRA as well as an independent Austrian expert. He is the head of an engineering office, which among other things deals with the assessment of the stability of dam structures. Furthermore, the report does not realistically take into consideration that the mining project is located near the Kujataa UNESCO World Heritage Site. The project threatens the integrity of the site”.

GML’s EIA report:

<http://www.noah.dk/nyheder/noah-offentliggor-miljovurdering-kuannersuitkvanefjelds-projektet>

J.W. Storm van Leeuwen’s paper: <http://kortlink.dk/noah/pydz>

Notes:

[1] Naalakkersuisut’s decision on GML’s complaint against EAMRA, 6 September 2019:

https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/inline-files/Decision_GML_complaint_2019-09-06.pdf

See also: GML’s complaint to EAMRA, 4 April 2019:

https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/inline-files/GML_complaint_2019-04-04.pdf

[2] Forbes: Trump Might Want to Buy Greenland But His Nemesis, China, Is There Before Him, 19 August 2019: <http://kortlink.dk/forbes/22rfp>

[3] Among other things, EAMRA has criticised GML for not providing a comprehensive assessment of the earthquake risk, final results of tests of toxic elements during extraction and processing, final radiological estimates and results of investigations of impacts of radioactive minerals, and a description of alternatives regarding management of tailings and the shutdown of the tailings facility. See: Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa: Kuannersuit - Greenland Minerals har ansøgt om udvindingstilladelse, 25/7 2019:

<https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/greenland-minerals-har-ansøgt-om-udvindingstilladelse>

[4] NGO Press release: The Kvanefjeld project does not meet Greenland’s Mineral Resources Act’s environmental and climate requirements, 10 March 2017: kortlink.dk/noah/twef

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