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In situ leach mining is safe? We are not convinced!

Three members of the Stampriet Aquifer Uranium Mining Association (SAUMA) recently joined a group on a trip to Russia to visit the JSC Dalur Mine in the region of Chelyabinsk. The group, hosted by Uranium One, also included the CEO of Leonardville Town Council, the Omaheke Regional Councillor, farmers and Leonardville residents, departed Namibia on Friday 11 August. They returned to Namibia on Friday 18 August. Dalur Mine makes use of sulphuric acid in situ leaching (ISL), the same method intended to be used in the main drinking-water aquifer of the Stampriet Artesian Basin (SAB).

The week's excursion was only given 2.5 hours on site at Dalur Mine.

The feedback of the representatives of SAUMA stated that they did not have a chance to see what happens underground when visiting the Dalur Mine (a Kurgan Enterprise) in Russia. The majority of questions asked by the representatives during the visit were answered evasively, superficially or not at all, with no indication of a guarantee that groundwater is not impacted negatively. The long reports studied (IAEA, US NRC, US EPA, Australian CSIRO and others) point out that all ISL mines are surrounded by monitoring boreholes drilled into the main aquifer as well as overlying aquifers because mine solutions do escape out of the mine area.

Water in the monitoring boreholes is analysed regularly to detect escaped mine solution (i.e. water containing uranium). Such monitoring boreholes also surround ISL mines that mine uranium in aquifers with highly saline, undrinkable water. This is a clear indication that even in such mines, the mine solution can escape and cause contamination of other aquifers. With ISL mining, there can be no guarantee that mine solutions will not escape. Add to that natural geological problems such as the high artesian water pressure and the numerous vertical fractures (faults) and leaking boreholes up which mine solution can escape. Town and farm usage of water from the main aquifer is high so that the induced flow of water is also high. This could draw contaminated water out of a mine area.

Why have the people of Kurgan addressed a petition to President Vladimir Putin under the topic '**Ban uranium mining in Kurgan, it is death to our region**'? The residents of Kurgan are against the development of the Dobrovolnoe uranium deposit as they are convinced it could lead to an ecological disaster.

Bottomline – SAUMA is STILL of the opinion that in situ leaching poses a real threat to our only year-round supply of drinking water in the Stampriet Aquifer in Namibia's south-east.

The towns and farming area of the SAB will potentially be impacted by contaminated water should the exploration and mining within this water-control area be given the green light.

SAUMA is still opposed to any in situ leach mining in our fresh drinking water. The visit to Russia has not allayed any of our concerns.

Water is life!!! Namibians should stand together to protect our scarce underground drinking water.

Team SAUMA