

NGO statement in support of Rosia Montana community:

From the outset, the proposed Rosia Montana gold mine project in Romania has been beleaguered by scandals, operational problems, and vehement local, national, and international opposition. If constructed by Toronto-based Gabriel Resources, Rosia Montana would become Europe's largest open-pit gold mine operation and transform the densely inhabited Rosia Montana valley into four open-pit mines. Just a few kilometers south of Rosia Montana, Gabriel Resources owns an even larger concession in Bucium.

The film "Mine Your Own Business," by Phelim McAleer and his wife Ann McElhinney, purports that "foreign environmentalists" oppose the project and accuses them of "exaggerations and misleading claims." This couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, local opposition to the mine is strong and organized. Alburnus Maior, a local association based in Rosia Montana, represents families that oppose the mine and refuse to sell their lands. Eugen David, the president of Alburnus Maior, was not interviewed by the film makers, and has sent the attached message and fact sheet to provide more information about the project and the reasons for the opposition.

While Gabriel Resources touts local employment, the mine is expected to create between 250 and 560 jobs, and it remains unclear if local people will have the necessary qualifications to fill these positions. Alburnus Maior counters that Rosia Montana could benefit more through sustainable development activities based on agriculture, tourism, and historic heritage conservation. These would provide long-term development to the region, unlike the mine which would be in production for roughly 16 years.

Over the past few years, the project has come under increasing amounts of international scrutiny. In fact, the International Finance Corporation, the World's Bank private sector arm, announced in October 2002 that it would not financially support the project, saying in an official statement that it had "concluded that it is in everybody's best interest that we do not pursue discussions with the company regarding IFC's involvement in the project."

Within Romania, Rosia Montana has become an issue of national significance. A January 2007 opinion poll conducted by a Deputy Chamber of the Romanian parliament found that over 96 percent of Romanians voted against the mine proposal. The widespread opinion is that the political decision-making about the project is riddled with corruption.

Opposition to the mine is also based in part on the disastrous experience at the Baia Mare gold mine in Romania, where a cyanide spill in 2000 polluted the Tisza and Danube Rivers, contaminating the drinking water supplies of 2.5 million people and killing 1200 tons of fish. The European Parliament has cautioned against the environmental threat the Rosia Montana project poses not just to Romania but to the whole region, and Romania's neighbor Hungary, whose eastern rivers face the risk of pollution stemming from the mine, has pointed to serious flaws in the project's environmental impact assessment.

Academics and scientists too have voiced their concerns. The project is opposed by the prestigious Romanian Academy, the country's highest scientific body, which has stated that "the gold mine proposal is not in the public interest and the collateral negative effects as well as the risks involved are not justified." The project has also been heavily criticized by archaeologists, including ICOMOS, the archaeological consultant to UNESCO, because of the destructive impact it would have on the area's unique cultural and historical treasures dating back to Roman and pre-Roman times. Romania's Orthodox Church as well as the Historic Hungarian Churches, all of

which own cemeteries, forest, arable land, and historic monuments in Rosia Montana, refuse to sell their properties to Gabriel Resources and oppose the mine proposal.

Keeping in mind that “Mine Your Own Business” is financed by Gabriel Resources, those who view the film should at least take the time to read Eugen David’s message and visit the websites maintained by Alburnus Maior: www.rosiamontana.org and www.rosiamontana.ro.

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Signatories (80 organizations):

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