

WWF calls for the immediate release of Greenpeace members

WWF is calling for the immediate release of the 30 crew members of Greenpeace's ship the Arctic Sunrise, currently detained by Russian authorities after a peaceful protest against Gazprom's risky Arctic offshore oil project Prirazlomnoye.

Two Greenpeace activists climbed the Prirazlomnoye oil platform in the Russian Arctic last week, only to be arrested by the Russian Coast Guard. The Coast Guard later boarded the Arctic Sunrise in international waters and detained the crew. Both crew members and the ship have been in the custody of Russian authorities since last Thursday.

"Greenpeace's peaceful protest in the Arctic was intended to bring public attention to Gazprom's truly risky and environmentally unsound project, Prirazlomnoye. Gazprom refused to respond to concerns about the project raised by Greenpeace, WWF and Russian experts, and this escalation is a consequence. WWF calls on Russian authorities to release Greenpeace's crew members immediately", says Jim Leape, director general of WWF International.

WWF shares Greenpeace's concerns over Gazprom's Prirazlomnoye project, which has been strongly criticized by leading Russian experts on the safety of oil and gas. Last year WWF and Greenpeace issued a report documenting the project's environmental risks to the fragile Arctic environment. Despite Gazprom's promises to engage in a dialogue with civil society and make project documentation public, the company has not responded to requests for information and still remains silent.

Dr Morné du Plessis, CEO of WWF South Africa adds, "Oil and gas extraction processes have a predictable risk of such accidents occurring, and the remoteness of the Arctic means that damage containment will always be a difficult and highly harmful activity. The Arctic is so remote and so inordinately

fragile that we simply cannot run the risk of the occurrence of industrial accidents in that environment. The solution is very simple: no fossil fuel extraction must happen from the Arctic. Not GazProm, or any of its competitors!"

"It's deeply perverse to be developing oil projects in the Arctic when our addiction to fossil fuels is already causing major upheavals in that delicate ecosystem," says Leape.