Sludge catastrophe in Hungary

2010/2924(RSP) - 14/10/2010

The Hungarian delegation provided information to the Council on the situation in western Hungary following the red sludge spill on the territory of the Hungarian Aluminium Co. (Magyar Alumínium Zrt.), an alumina production establishment situated southwest of Budapest in the vicinity of the city of Ajka, on 4 October.

As a result, some 600.000 – 700.000 m3 of red mud escaped, flooding the lower parts of the settlements of Kolontár and Devecser through the Torna creek. The heavily polluted water flowed through the Marcal, Rába and Mosoni-Duna rivers, subsequently reaching the Danube river. As a consequence of the disaster, eight persons died and 130 individuals (some in a critical condition) were being treated with burn injuries in various hospitals. The disaster affected 16 settlements over an area 14 kilometres long and 50-1200 metres wide.

In response, the Commissioner and a number of ministers expressed their support for Hungary and their sympathy to the people of Hungary for the loss of lives and the impact on the population and the environment. The need to learn lessons from these events was underlined, including with regard to the implementation of existing rules.