In the matter of an arbitration under the Rules of Arbitration of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

Case No. ARB/21/51

> The International Dispute Resolution Centre (IDRC)
> 1 Paternoster Lane LONDON, EC4M 7BQ

Day 3
Saturday, 3rd February 2024
Hearing on the Merits
Before:
PROFESSOR GABRIELLE KAUFMANN-KOHLER
MR STEPHEN L DRYMER
PROFESSOR PHILIPPE SANDS

DISCOVERY GLOBAL LLC
Claimant
-v-

SLOVAK REPUBLIC
Respondent

Secretary to the Tribunal: JARA MÍNGUEZ ALMEIDA Assistant to the Tribunal: MAGNUS JESKO LANGER

> Transcript produced by Anne-Marie Stallard and Emma Lovell

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09:37 1
(9.35 am)

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning to everyone, good morning, sir.
MR BARAN: Good morning, madam.
THE PRESIDENT: I hope everyone is doing fine, ready for Day 3. We are starting with the examination of Mr Baran. Nothing to be raised in advance?
MR PEKAR: Just one very small matter, Madam President. There is a new face on our side of the table, this is
Slovak Republic's Slovak law expert, Mr Fogaš.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Welcome.
PROFESSOR FOGAS: Thank you.
MR VLADIMIR BARAN (called)
THE PRESIDENT: For the record, sir, can you please confirm to us that you are Vladimir Baran?
MR BARAN: Yes, I am.
THE PRESIDENT: You are the mayor of Smilno and you have held this office since 2014?
MR BARAN: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: You have provided us with one written statement that was dated 15 September 2023.
MR BARAN: That's correct.
THE PRESIDENT: And signed the day before.
MR BARAN: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: You're heard as a witness. As a witness you
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first one is we are on a transcript, and therefore
I would like to ask you that whenever you answer my questions, please do that in an audible manner so that the court reporter could record your answer.
A. I will do my best.
Q. Thank you, sir. And the second thing, I will do my best also to formulate my questions in the most simplest possible way, and I would invite you to answer in the same way so that we can cover a lot of ground this morning.
A. Please do.
Q. So Mr Baran, in paragraph 2 of your witness statement you say that you graduated from an agricultural school, is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. In what year did you graduate from the agricultural school?
A. 1987? I'm not sure. It's years back.
Q. Yes. So it was a high school, secondary education; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And then you did a BC -- you obtained a BC degree in computerisation in public finance; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Was that a three-year programme, sir?

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are under a duty to tell us the truth. Can you please read the witness declaration?
MR BARAN: I solemnly declare upon my honour and conscienceness that I shall speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
MR BARAN: Welcome.
THE PRESIDENT: So you know how we proceed. You will first be asked questions by Claimant's counsel, and then we turn to Respondent.
MR BARAN: Okay.
THE PRESIDENT: Mr Tushingham.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you, Madam President. I have no direct examination, so I will now hand over to Mr Pekar.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mr Pekar, please.
( 9.37 am )
Cross-examination by MR PEKAR
Q. Thank you, Madam President.

Good morning, Mr Baran.
A. Good morning.
Q. Mr Baran, as you know, because we have already met, my name is Rostislav Pekar, I am counsel for the Slovak Republic and I will be asking you some questions this morning.

I would just like to make two technical points. The

2 Q. So you got that degree around 1991, 1992?
A. No, it was well after my high school: it was in 2003, if I remember.
Q. Okay, so what did you do --
A. If I remember. Maybe one year up, one year down.
Q. So what did you do when you finished high school?
A. Then I returned to the army. After my national service there was a gap when I was unemployed and I returned to the army for a contract working with the United Nations.
Q. Which year was that?
A. I think 1993.
Q. Okay. So you left Slovakia at that time and worked for the United Nations abroad; correct?
A. Yes, in Yugoslavia.
Q. Then in which year did you leave the army?
A. It was a one-year contract, so it must have been 1994.
Q. Did you join the army at any later point in time again?
A. Yes. Again in one year, break, because it was necessary, and then I rejoined in -- I think maybe not one -- maybe one and a half year, because there was a leave I had to take, 1995, or 1996.
Q. And so when did you leave the army for the last time?
A. It was 2011.
Q. What military rank did you have at that time?

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09:43 1 Q. Mr Baran, did Discovery's counsel help you with drafting your witness statement?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you review the draft of your witness statement prepared by counsel?
A. Actually, it was not Discovery. It was the -- you know, their representatives on the left side. It was not -if I may correct the -- my answer.
Q. Yes. Understood.
A. Their lawyers, not Discovery.
Q. Yes. And so did you review their draft prepared by lawyers?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you propose any corrections to the draft?
A. No.
Q. Mr Baran, are you a member of the municipal council in Smilno?
A. No.
Q. Could we please turn to paragraph 8 of your witness statement. And there in the fourth line you state:
"Ultimately we ..."
And then:
"... (being myself and the other council members) all agreed that it was not a matter that we could decide on."

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## A. Kosice.

Q. Just for everybody's benefit, Kosice is the major city in eastern Slovakia; correct?
A. I wouldn't call it a major city. Yes, it's the biggest in the east part of Slovakia, yes.
Q. I understand that you are closer to Prešov, so --
A. Yes, Prešov is my --
Q. -- there may be some rivalry between the two? It's one of the two biggest cities in eastern Slovakia.
MR DRYMER: It's bigger than Smilno, I suppose.
A. I think, it is.

MR PEKAR: Does the municipal office in Smilno have any employees?
A. Yes.
Q. How many?
A. Three at this time.
Q. How many employees did the municipal office in Smilno have in 2015?
A. Two.
Q. Was any of these employees a lawyer?
A. No.
Q. Mr Baran, did Discovery's counsel help you in drafting your witness statement?
A. Can you repeat your question, please?

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Can you see that, sir?
A. Being myself as a mayor. As a mayor I cannot be a council member. It just doesn't work that way. I meant that me, as a mayor, and the council members.
Q. So the word "other" is there in excess?
A. It's -- yes.
Q. So it was supposed to be "myself and the council members", not "myself and the other council members"; correct?
A. Correct.
Q. And then if we look at paragraph 14, we have -- there it's a long paragraph, so I would ask you to go to the, what is it, seventh line from the bottom, which starts:
"Ms Varjanová ..."
And you will see:
"Ms Varjanová knew I would not cave into her pressure, so she set about trying to influence the other Council members ..."

So that, again, the "other" is redundant there; correct?
A. "Other", like not all; other, other council members, yes.
Q. Thank you. Now turn to paragraph 9 of your witness statement, please. And, again, this is in the middle of the paragraph, there is a long sentence, which explains

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the benefits you perceived Smilno could derive from
AOG's activities, and there is a text in parenthesis which starts on, is it the sixth line, and it states:
"... (for example, more local employment in the
Smilno region for the local residents would boost the immediate local economy, there would be more taxes collected from salaries that could be invested back into the village ...)."

Can you see that, sir?
A. Say again? What is your question?
Q. My question is whether you can see it, because I read a long text to you so I want to make sure that ...
A. No, I can see it clearly, yes.
Q. So when you speak of taxes collected from salaries, you speak of the income tax paid by Smilno residents potentially employed by AOG; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you know, Mr Baran, what percentage of the income tax paid by a Smilno resident is allocated to the budget of the Smilno municipality?
A. Not exactly. No. I don't know precise percentage. But it would be more than zero.
Q. Would it be like $1 \%, 10 \%, 20 \%$ ?
A. More than zero.
Q. Sir, I would appreciate if you could try to just give us

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09:49 1
allocation of the income tax.
So is it your testimony that any part of the income tax paid by a resident of Smilno is allocated to the Smilno budget on the basis of the residency of the taxpayer in Smilno? Yes or no?
A. I think yes.

## (Pause)

Q. Thank you. I wish I understood what you were telling me (Pause). My teenage son is not here, otherwise I would direct all these questions to him.

Okay, so just to give you an example, if there is a wealthy businessman which moves to Smilno, becomes the resident of Smilno, and the businessman pays, let's say, $€ 1$ million in income tax, just a ballpark, how much of that money will end up in Smilno's budget?
A. I have no idea. I can't tell you a precise number.
Q. You have no idea or you cannot tell me a precise number?
A. I cannot tell you a precise number. I don't know.
Q. So it does mean that you have an idea. So what is the idea that you have?
A. I told you I have no idea that it means this. I don't have an idea. I don't see your point in that idea.
Q. Well, I will tell you. My point is that your witness statement was drafted by somebody who has no clue about tax allocation in Slovak Republic?

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09:48 1 the numerical order. $1 \%, 10 \%$ ?
A. I cannot answer you. I don't know the exact percentage. So it's definitely more than zero, and it's plus.
Q. Yes.
A. For the village budget.
Q. So would it surprise you, sir, if I tell you that under Slovak law's own tax legislation, all money is collected in a centralised way and that it is redistributed to villages based on the number of inhabitants and other factors which, however, do not include the residence of the taxpayer?

09:51 1
A. Yes, but it would be more, because the more people are employed in our village, we get more taxes. Through that system that you just mentioned.
Q. Yes. Would you agree with me that if there is more income tax paid in Smilno that actually every municipality in Slovakia will get some tax money?
A. They might. In Smilno definitely we would get more and there are also businesses connected to it. It's not just the, you say 1,2 , whatever. It might be that there are businesses connected to it, like shops, accommodations and other businesses, which go along with any business that might be started in the village.
Q. Yes, sir, I'm asking you questions only about the tax allocation in Slovakia, and most precisely about the
A. But if I may say, it's simple. If people are coming to the village, they stay there and they pay direct taxes for, you know, for being in the village. If there is a company, they pay taxes for -- from the land, and also taxes, when there are employees, to the government, and those taxes go through the system back to the village budget. So it's both. And I cannot tell you; as you might well know, it is a complicated system and accountings, so I cannot tell you the exact numbers. Maybe you can.
Q. There's two -- I am told there is 2,900 municipalities in Slovakia, and following the rules of budget -- or tax allocation in Slovakia, each of them gets a small portion of this extra income tax, regardless of the residency of the person which paid the income tax. This is just to answer your question. You asked me, I responded.
A. Well, it differs. There are older people, there are students, there are people who are working. The number varies. It's not the same.
Q. Okay. So now let's move to paragraph 15 of your witness statement, and there you discuss a meeting of the council, discussing a petition relating to the activities of AOG. Do you see that, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. And you state that there was a vote taken by the council, and then you say on the second line:
"I see that only five people voted ..."
And you give the names; four of them voted in favour, and one voted against it.

How many members did the council have at the time?
A. Seven.
Q. So four out of seven is a majority; correct?
A. It is.
Q. You also state that on, what is it ...
A. If I may interrupt you?
Q. Yes.
A. We voted not for the -- or the council voted, they took into consideration that this petition took place and the results. They didn't voted for it or against it. They voted that such a petition happened and they took it into consideration.
Q. If I may --
A. There are two types of voting, that you are voting for something to happen, like budget wise, and some things like this petition, that it was the result. Okay, the council -- I mean we, the council, take it as a fact.
Q. If I may point you, sir, to the fifth line of this paragraph 15 , you state:
"... the Resolution states that the Municipal
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approximately 340 inhabitants of Smilno?
A. I didn't count it. The petition says so, is it 300 --
Q. That's what the petition says.
A. The petition exact number, I'm not sure, I didn't count it.
Q. You didn't. In your witness statement, you state, and that will be -- again, I will need to count the lines, this is line 8. No, 7. You say on line 7:
"I don't believe the Resolution or the Petition showed that the majority of the local Smilno inhabitants were opposed to AOG's project."

Can you see that sentence?
A. Yes.
Q. So you are stating this even though you haven't counted the number of signatures on the petition to satisfy yourself that the petition isn't signed by a majority of Smilno inhabitants?
A. I didn't count the numbers, but I went through the petition. There were people who were not inhabitants of Smilno. They did not have a permanent residence in Smilno. There were people under 18. And the petition in many cases forced people, and the people who ran the petition were troubling people to sign it. They went door-to-door, campaign. I was present in one case because at the same time we were giving present at an

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A. Line -- which line?
Q. This is the fifth line in paragraph 15 , it starts:
"Therefore, only four people voted in favour ..." And then it continues:
"... and the Resolution states that the Municipal
Council expresses its agreement with the petition ..."
A. Yes.
Q. That is correct, right?
A. Yes.
Q. Sir, do you recall that the petition was signed by ...

THE PRESIDENT: I feel there is a problem with your bandwidth. Continue, but there's kind of a background noise when you speak.
MR TUSHINGHAM: I'm really struggling to hear, I am afraid, the questions.
MR DRYMER: Call your son!
MR PEKAR: Thanks to the time difference he is not sleeping anymore.
(Pause)
I hope it is going to be better now?
THE PRESIDENT: It's better, yes.
MR PEKAR: Okay, so I will repeat my question. Do you recall, sir, that the petition was signed by

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anniversary, and they persuaded one older woman, 80, age -- her daughter was there, she told her it would be nice to sign it. But her father, he was over 80 , or maybe 80 exactly at that time, and he said: no, I'm not signing it.

Can you imagine, you know, they went door-to-door and they were persuading people that there would be water spoilage and they endangered them with any other issues, like earth-shaking and so on. So people signed it if -- and I return to the fact that there were people who were not inhabitants of Smilno, so what they have to do with our business.
MR DRYMER: Isn't going door-to-door the nature of taking a petition?
A. I don't know. You tell me? Is it a petition --

MR DRYMER: I'm asking you.
A. I don't know.

MR DRYMER: You don't know, alright.
A. Petitions sometimes happen when people stand -- like a presidency petition in our district town, and people stand, for example, in the square, and wait for somebody to show up and sign a petition. I haven't seen in my life a petition door-to-door. That was the only case.
In Smilno and in all my life anywhere.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Could I just ask, just on paragraph 15,

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sick leave. I don't know. I don't remember.
MR DRYMER: And you said a few minutes ago in answer to a question about whether or not the petition showed that the majority of the inhabitants were opposed, your answer was: I may not have counted the number, but I noted that many people were not actually Smilno residents. Do I recall correctly what you said?
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: You went through the petition at the time to see who was a resident and who was not?
A. No, I just went through, like, last week, because it was --
MR DRYMER: I see. Okay, thank you.
A. I came back to it, because I was now preparing for the case, but it was --
MR DRYMER: Thank you.
PROFESSOR SANDS: You say in your paragraph 15:
"... I see that only five people voted ..."
In the second line of paragraph 15.
A. 15 .

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A. In every case.

PROFESSOR SANDS: So you've got no problem with the vote?
A. Not at all.

PROFESSOR SANDS: So why does the petition matter if it went
to the council and the council took a democratic and a legitimate vote? I don't understand what the issue is with the petition.
THE PRESIDENT: What I understood, just to shorten this,
I understood Mr Baran to say that the way the
petition -- the signatures were collected was he considered unusual, at least, and people were forced and there was a door-to-door campaign when this is not usual for a petition.
A. Exactly so.

PROFESSOR SANDS: But even if that was the case, the council voted.
A. Yes, they were asked to take a stand. They voted.

PROFESSOR SANDS: The members of the council could have expressed a view that they didn't accept the petition, they didn't believe the petition, they thought the petition was forged. They didn't do any of those things.
A. No, they voted as they did.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Was there a debate before the vote?
A. There is always a debate, during the session and before

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THE PRESIDENT: He also added that two were not there.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Yes, I know.
A. It must have been that two were not there. I don't
remember. If it's five, so two must have not been
there.
PROFESSOR SANDS: But the maximum that could have voted was seven?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Right, and five voted, and four voted to support the petition.
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And one voted against.
A. Against, yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: I mean, that's a democratic vote. That's
a free vote. I mean, what's the problem with the vote?
Isn't that democracy at play?
A. It is. I don't underestimate the --

PROFESSOR SANDS: You're not challenging the legality of the
vote?
A. No, I haven't. If I remember right.

PROFESSOR SANDS: So you accept that the vote was legitimate, it was an expression --
A. I have to accept, as a mayor, you know, the majority.

PROFESSOR SANDS: No, no, I'm not saying you're not.
I'm just trying to understand.

## that.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And you were present at that debate?
A. Most of the time I am present.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And did anyone raise questions about the legitimacy of the petition during that debate?
A. No, I don't remember.

PROFESSOR SANDS: You don't remember?
A. No. I don't remember if anyone raised any question of that kind.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Did you raise any concerns about the legitimacy of the petition?
A. No. I think I wrote to the -- I don't know which ministry about the petition, what we have to do, because it's very rare. You know, people -- mayors, most of the mayors don't come across these kind of things, and they told us that we have to take a stance, so the council members did. That's it.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Okay. Thank you.
A. You're welcome.

MR PEKAR: Thank you.
I think we may take a brief look at the text of the petition. It is document R-107. It will be shown to you on the screen.

So this is the English translation. Could we please scroll down? So I would just read out loud the text of

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10:05 1 the petition, which is on top. It says:
"We, the undersigned residents, disagree with the activities related to exploration area 'Svidník - Oil and Combustible Natural Gas' that with their consequences have an impact on the environment in municipality Smilno.

We therefore request that the Municipal Council of Smilno and the mayor of Smilno express their disapproval of exploration area ... as well as all the geological works in the exploration area and related activities that intervene in or have an impact on the environment in Smilno."

And now I would ask you to show us the Slovak version, so that we can look briefly at -- but before doing so -- yes, that would be perfect if we can have both at the same time. Excellent.

So this is just one page. What you can see here is in the left column we have the name of the person; in the middle column we have the primary, it should be actually permanent residence, street, street number, municipality, postal code; and then we have the addresses. And if you look just on this first page, we can see that out of the 15 signatures on this page, if I counted correctly, 13 are from Smilno and 2 are not; correct?

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## A. Number 13 ?

Q. No, no, in total. So there's two of them which are not from Smilno -- I think we can all read "Smilno" even though it's in Slovak. Number 3 has a different address.
A. Yes.
Q. Actually there's also number 6 and number 8. So I misspoke.
A. 11 I think is Zborov. Does it say 11 is Zborov? Did I read it right?
Q. It says Smilno 63 and then Zborov.
A. No, the area is post code. It's post code, so it is --
Q. Yes, exactly, because Smilno is a small village and so the post office is in Zborov; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. So here we have three are not from Smilno and 12 are from Smilno; correct?
A. Correct.
Q. Yes. And we will not verify all 341 signatures, but we could say that a large majority of the signatures on this page are from Smilno; correct?
A. Yes, it is, but it's in the first paragraph, we residents, and there are definitely no -- the residents in many sheets of paper there. On each, nearly on each, it's a couple of those that are not, and many of those
are under 18.
Q. So then if we look at just the following one, please.

Would you agree with me that on this one all of them are from Smilno?
A. Yes, they have permanent address in Smilno, they do.

But I see one that hasn't lived in Smilno for 20 years.
The second, at least.
Q. So you dispute the fact that his permanent resident is in Smilno?
A. It is -- it was at that time, but he hasn't lived in

Smilno for many years.
Q. So if his permanent residence is in Smilno, does it mean he has the right to vote in Smilno?
A. Yes, he has. That's okay.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Can I just ask, so out of interest, you
know all of these people, you recognise the names?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: They're legitimate people; and do you have
any reason to believe that they did not sign this
petition?
A. No. I had no reason.

PROFESSOR SANDS: As far as you're concerned they signed the petition?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Thank you.
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10:11 $\quad 1 \quad$ Q. But you see here, "As per house no."?
A. "As per house no."

Yes, now I see, yes.
Q. And it gives the total number of inhabitants between ages 15 and 100, and then men and women; do you see that?
A. Now I see that, yes.
Q. Then if we scroll down to the last page of the document. We will see the grand total, 613 over the age of 15 ; correct?
A. Mm-hm, correct.
Q. So let's assume that we did our math correctly, there is 341 signatures on the petition. You have stated that 23 were not from Smilno, so we take these out. That brings us to 318 .

Of those, and then you say that some of them were under the age of 15 , but now we're comparing apples to apples because this list is over the age of 15 . So if we take these comparable numbers, if the total of such inhabitants is 613 , then one half of that is 306.5 ; correct?
A. Correct. If you counted right, correct.
Q. So if 318 signed, that actually is an absolute majority; correct?
A. Correct.

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you should read the whole paragraph, please. (Pause)
THE PRESIDENT: You may also want to show the original in Slovak.

MR DRYMER: Sure.
A. No, it's okay. (Pause)

Okay.
MR DRYMER: Okay, if I understood your testimony earlier, you said that the counsel was not saying they agreed with the -- they agreed with the disagreement of the citizens expressed in the petition. You said that the council simply recognised that the petition was taken and submitted to the council and the council should take that into consideration.
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: These words suggest otherwise. It says, as I read it, that the council actually expresses its agreement, not its recognition, if you will, but goes further.
A. Yes, you're -- you're right.

MR DRYMER: Okay.
A. There are two ways of voting, so this must have been the second one, yes. You're right. If it says so, it's unquestionable, yes.
MR DRYMER: Right, and I'm not debating the words. Does this accurately -- does this reflect what you recall was

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10:13 1 Q. Thank you
MR DRYMER: Mr Pekar, are you going to take the witness to the council resolution? Or no? If not, I will have a question on that document. It's up to you.
MR PEKAR: I was not planning to.
MR DRYMER: Alright.
MR PEKAR: Please go ahead.
MR DRYMER: Because I want to concentrate on something you said earlier, sir, about what exactly was decided at the meeting.

In your witness statement, as Mr Pekar pointed out, you write that the council expressed its agreement. When I look at the resolution -- we don't need to put it up, I'm going to read this line from the resolution and if counsel wants to put it on the screen they may:
"Following the discussion of the ... Petition [on] the disagreement of the citizens of ... Smilno ... regarding the activities ... the Municipal Council expresses its agreement with the mentioned Petition."
THE PRESIDENT: I think out of fairness to the witness we should show it, because it's ...
MR DRYMER: No problem. Of course, no problem. It is R-15, yes. But I guess -- please put it on the screen, sir, for the witness. Scroll down, please. Again. Right there. The underlying words at the end, but I suppose
Q. But if we scroll down to the second page, on the very last line it states:
"Photo attached of Stanislav on the Smilno location, with the mayor of Smilno and a farm engineer."

And then on the following page we have a picture.
A. Mm-hm.
Q. So, sir, is it you on the picture?
A. Yes, it's me on the left, yes.
Q. Who else is on the picture?
A. I'm not sure. If -- the letter says it's a farm engineer. From behind I'm not sure. But it must be him.
Q. Mm-hm?
A. I think, if I recall right, there was the dispute of the actual road layout. So the farm engineer must have been called to this place.
Q. And is Mr Benada on the picture or who is the third person?
A. Yes, Benada, in the middle, yes.
Q. And Mr Benada is the one -- which of the other two gentlemen? I believe I recognise you on the picture, like I would recognise myself, actually, but ...
A. In the middle of the picture. I said in the middle.
Q. So the one in the black T-shirt?
A. Yes.

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A.

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been muddy before, or the year before, so the heavy
equipment, agriculture mostly, went, you know, to the
left, or in this case to the right, from the Smilno
direction. To avoid the muddy road.
Q. So now, Mr Baran, I would like to ask you to turn to
    paragraph }19\mathrm{ of your witness statement. And then -- so
    paragraph }19\mathrm{ spans over two pages. I'm actually
    interested in the last two words on page 5, and then we
    will turn the page. So the sentence starts:
            "The agricultural [then we turn the page] farm which
    is located to the south-east of the village uses
    the Road on a daily basis and has done so for as long as
    I can remember."
        Can you see that sentence, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. So now if we can show again the picture of the road, as
    it was in August 2015. So is it your testimony that
    this is how a field track looks like if it is used every
    day?
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A. Yes. The other one, not in between the sticks, but the
other one, it was more passable, because the upper
ground must have been muddy in the spring time so they
started to use it lower, and they continued so --
THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me, when you say "the other one", you
mean the track just after the second stick; is that what

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10:18 1 Q. Okay, thank you.
So when this picture was taken, were you actually standing on the field track or field road which leads from the Smilno village to the site where AOG was going to drill?
A. Well, I'm not sure it was exactly the track, because there, at that time and even now, there are like two tracks, and when it was muddy, you know, the vehicles went to the left or right, you know, not to get into mud. So it's definitely the direction, but I'm not sure whether we're exactly on that road, I mean geographically. But yes, we're on that road, yes, in the direction to that site.
Q. But I mean if people from Smilno wanted to go to the site, would they go through the land you are standing on?
A. Yes, they would get there, yes.
Q. And then if we scroll further down, there is another picture. So that's another picture of the field track; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And the white small sticks, do you know what are they for?
A. I think they're -- it was measures that the actual road is, in between the sticks, and as I said, it must have

10:22 $1 \quad$ you're saying?
A. It's -- because it's on a hill, so after the second stick, yes, to the right.
MR PEKAR: And if we go back to the previous picture, please. No, no, the previous picture. Yes.

So that would be the other track that you are standing on; correct?
A. I suppose so, yes.
Q. And so your testimony is that this is how a field track looks like if it is used on a daily basis; correct?
A. Yes, but I mean on a daily basis there might be one agricultural machine going there once a day, when they are, you know, feeding the animals on their farm, you know, they pick up the grass and, just in the morning, once.
Q. Actually you did an agricultural school so you may help me: how often do they get to cut the grass on a field a year?
A. Two or three times, but you have to feed animals twice a day, at least.
Q. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Could I just ask, what is the total length of the field road or the field track?
A. 700 metres, 800 metres, approximately.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And does all of the 700 or 800 metres

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resemble what is in this photograph?
A. No.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Could you describe for us --
A. One-third.

PROFESSOR SANDS: One-third is?
A. This way.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And what's the other two-thirds?
A. The other is like stones and ... because it has been a road for, as I stated in my statement, for over 200 years, as a road to a quarry close by. So another part of the road which is -- I hope there will be a picture of that -- it's really laid out of stones, like these gate heads -- do you call it this way? So there are parts of the road, really, were reinforced when it went steep.
THE PRESIDENT: Sorry to interrupt, is this what you say in paragraph 28 of your witness statement?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Actually, it would be helpful. Is there another photograph in the record of what the rest of --
MR TUSHINGHAM: I might take the witness in re-examination to some pictures, if that would assist.
PROFESSOR SANDS: It would be helpful.
MR PEKAR: That will not be necessary. I am going to take the witness there, and just to follow up on the question

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correct?
A. I don't agree. If there is a one truck or one tractor, light tractor using the road once a day, it might look as it is on the picture.
Q. Yes, but in paragraph 28 you don't speak of light tractors: you speak of heavy trucks, yes?
A. Yes, but they don't use heavy tractors all the time. They might use a light -- you know, different kind of equipment, and not -- you know, I said two-thirds, they might access to the first field, and at the end it's the leased field, so they use maybe different equipment, I don't know.

I'm not there. It was like saying they use it on an everyday basis. But I don't stand there, I don't count the vehicles, I don't count the tractors.
Q. Would you also agree, sir, that given the seasonal nature of agriculture in Smilno, a cooperative has no reason actually to drive there every day all year round?
A. All year round, definitely not. Not in the winter.
Q. Yes.

MR DRYMER: I have a question, still, on document C-281. If you're going to change documents may I ask that question now?

MR PEKAR: Yes please.
MR DRYMER: Very good. Yes. Where is it. Down, please.
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asked by Madam President, speaking now of the part of the road that we had on the picture, and you stated that one-third of the road was in that condition. So when in paragraph 28 you state, at the very end of 28 :
"... it is still used to this day by the local residents and the neighbouring agricultural farm which drives its heavy trucks over it on a daily basis, all year round."

That would not apply to the one-third of the track that we saw; correct?
A. You know, it's -- there are fields when the road starts and they don't necessarily go to the furthest fields at the end of the road, you know. So they might, like conduct harvest in the half of the road. So they don't use all the roads up to the end. So that's why --
Q. This is precisely -- yes.
A. -- the last third looks the way in this picture.
Q. And this is precisely why I framed my question to ask only about this one last third of the road. Then one-third of the road is not used by heavy trucks on a daily basis all year round; correct?
A. Not necessarily.
Q. And would you agree with me that the pictures that we saw with the grass really do not suggest that heavy tracks pass on it on a daily basis all year round;

> It's at the end of page 2 of the PDF. Yes. The second to last paragraph. Could you highlight that, please:
> "Access road is a public road."
> Yes. Alright.
> Mr Baran, I realise, as you said earlier, that you probably haven't seen this document, or you have not seen this document before?
> A. I'm not sure, to be honest with you.

> MR DRYMER: That's fine. And I realise that you weren't the author of this document.

> But here it refers to an agreement between AOG and the land user and you.
> A. Mm-hm.

> MR DRYMER: Do you recall reaching any agreement in relation to the matters that are stated here?
> A. There was not an agreement. I was informed, you know, by the company, that they measured geographically where the road was supposed to be.
> MR DRYMER: Mm-hm.
> A. But I didn't sign an agreement. I couldn't. You know, the village is not the owner of the road, not the fields around, so I couldn't sign it. Agreement was only reached that I saw that the actual track was not the one which corresponded, you know, with the system, in the maps.
what occurred in respect of the location of the track?
A. I don't think it's accurate. It was not agreement.
They informed me that the track was not there as it
states in the map.
MR DRYMER: Right.
A. But no, I didn't sign any agreement.
MR DRYMER: Or express -- you didn't -- or did you purport
to agree that they could conduct these works?
A. I couldn't allow them to do the works.
MR DRYMER: You couldn't what, I'm sorry?
A. I couldn't allow them to do the works. So they just
informed me of the situation. They might state it as
an agreement.
MR DRYMER: Yes. And you didn't write the document.
I understand that.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
MR DRYMER: The first sentence of that paragraph says:
"Access road is a public road."
A. Yes.
MR DRYMER: Do you consider that an accurate statement?
A. Yes.
MR DRYMER: Okay. Did you express that to them, to AOG at
the time?

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"The same is true of the quartz mine..."
So what did you mean?
A. Which line is it? The same ...
Q. This is the second line on page 6.
A. Okay. (Pause).

I meant that the road is used like that not just for the agriculture, but also for the quartz. Not on a daily basis, definitely not. The quartz is not -it's not mined there anymore. Like the mineral.
Q. And when --
A. It used to, like 100 years ago, the Smilno inhabitants, they had not much to do in the wintertime and they were supplying all Bardejov District with the mineral, you know, with -- it's not macadam but it's softer, the mineral that was mined there, and that had been used on a daily basis because they were supplying all the district of Bardejov to have jobs, you know, and the land was -- the mines were leased by a person, and also the road was leased to them by a person.
Q. So the --
A. I meant in this paragraph also the history of the quartz.
Q. So historically the road was leased to a person or a corporation which operated a quartz mine there?
A. Exactly.

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10:31 1 A. Yes.
MR DRYMER: I'll leave it there. Thank you.
MR PEKAR: Mr Baran, let's go back to paragraph 19 of your witness statement. So we read the -- so, yes, we can have the second page of 19. Thank you.

So we went through the one sentence speaking of the farm, and then in the second sentence you state:
"The same is true of the quartz mine which used to be located just 100 hundred meters from AOG's proposed drilling site (the V shaped 'forest' next to it.)"

What did you mean to convey by that sentence?
A. That the road has been used not only by farm vehicles, but also by hunters, by people who were collecting or driving the wood from the forest, by people who go there -- I cannot say on a daily basis, because it's not. They're going there to pick up mushrooms, in cars, on motorcycles, pick up strawberries, whatever. So it's a combination of those things. But it's used by public, and it's also a connection -- field connection between villages, Smilno and Mikulašová and Cigla for tourists; they use it a lot, bicycles, nowadays.
Q. I appreciate your answer, but I think your answer didn't really --
A. Answer your question?
Q. -- address my question. Yes. My question was:

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Q. So they were using the road on the basis of the lease they had with the owner of the road; correct?
A. Correct.
Q. And when did the quartz mine close?
A. Oh, it was when the technology that could break stones started, like after the Second World War, I guess, maybe later, when they could -- they were able to crush the stones and create macadam, and later on the people used it just to level their yards, and the agriculture -farm used it to, you know, level places within their compartment -- not compartment, their parking lots and stuff. On a regular -- not regularly.
Q. So the commercial --
A. No, commercial was not since the end of, like, the Second World War, like from the 1950s, not anymore. Q. Thank you.

Now let's have a look at document C-60. So this is a presentation that Discovery Geoservices Corporation prepared for its internal purposes and which describes its visit to Smilno in August 2014. Again, this is a document that I assume you're not familiar with; correct?
A. I'm not sure. I'm not -- it's the first page, I don't recall.
Q. We will -- okay, let's have a look, because actually

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10:39 1
the left there is an aerial view of the broader Smilno area; do you recognise that?
A. Yes.
Q. And then the main picture is a picture taken at the place marked by the arrow on the picture; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And again we can see that this is basically a grassy field; correct?
A. It is a grassy field, but it's not the road. The road is behind, like, from I see like 100 metres where -from where the road ends and enters the forest on the upper right side. That's not the road at all.
Q. And where on this picture do we have the drilling site?
A. Like 100 metres straight forward and -- yes.
Q. Okay.

So now let's go to page 9. So we -- this is
a picture. So, again, the picture has the same
structure. So on the left side there is the aerial view with an arrow, and then there is the picture taken there; correct?

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I would need to leave the part with, you say it's quartz on it, to go into the part where I cannot see quartz, but some grass; correct?
A. Yes, but also this picture is not correct because those trees, the original road goes above the trees and enters the forest, and people chose to use this road because it was muddy, and it's muddy behind the trees, so they carved it more to the -- like from the middle, down. So where the original road goes above the trees, where it enters the forest. But it looks pretty the same up there.
Q. Well, I think it's maybe a bit worse up there. That's why people are taking this one, rather than the muddy one, no?
A. But when it enters the forest, it's the same, you know, there is this quartz.
Q. Obviously we have the pictures we have.

Okay, so now if we go one further page down, we see -- so this is where the field track connects to a municipal road; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. So the municipal road is to the left and to the right, and the picture is taken from the field track; right?
A. Yes.
Q. And so we can see that even in the village, the surface

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A. No, it's not correct. The arrow should be where the road enters the V-shaped forest.
Q. Mm-hm. Okay. So it should be closer to the site than where it is; right?
A. Yes. Yes.
Q. Right. And then when -- okay, so what we can see is that the road, or field track, is of a, what I would say, variable condition; right? There are some parts, the part which is next to us has some gravel on it. Further away from us I cannot see any gravel; do you agree with me?
A. Are you asking me --
Q. Yes?
A. Yes. It's not the gravel, it's the quartz, the mineral which was mined in that area.
Q. Yes. And so the photograph is taken such that the village of -- if I wanted to go to the village of Smilno I would go, like, away; I would go straight forward on that picture?
A. Straight and turn left.
Q. Left.
A. Smilno village is on the left.
Q. Yes.
A. Of the screen. Which is not there.
Q. Yes. So in order to get to the village of Smilno,

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of the road is only hardened. It's not the same layer of asphalt that we can see on the municipal road?
A. It's not true anymore. On the left side to the middle of the junction, it had been asphalt road, and we did a reconstruction and it's proper asphalt road now. On the left towards the village, and to the right, that part of the village doesn't belong -- it belongs to the state, so we cannot repair it. It's others' property.
Q. Okay. So we have actually three chunks there. So the one to the left is now in even better condition than what it was at the time?
A. Yes, it's proper asphalt.
Q. The one to the right waits for the state to do something about it, and the field track from which the picture was taken is in the same condition it was in 2014?
A. Yes, yes, it's the same, yes.
Q. Now if we go to page 16 of the document, and I appreciate again that you're not the author of this document, but the fourth bullet point says:
"[Length] of the road to the location approximately 1.3 km , maybe half [length] of this road requires some modifications only."
Can you see that, sir?

## A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.

Q. So first I thought that you testified a while ago that

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the road is 700,800 metres, if I recall. Here it
states 1.3. So which of the two is correct?
A. I think it's 700 metres. 7-800 metres, max.
Q. From the village?
A. From the junction. But then --

MR DRYMER: From where to where?
A. Then from the road towards the site it was another

100 metres. So I can't say -- I didn't measure it.
MR PEKAR: And here Discovery actually states that one half of the road requires some modifications. And I believe actually you answered that question already in response to Mr Drymer's questions.
You did not approve any modifications of the road, did you?
A. No, I couldn't. You know, it's not the village property.
Q. Mm-hm. So if we look at document C-280.

Are you familiar with this document, sir?
A. Let me see. (Pause)
Q. We can also show maybe the original version on the split screen, sir.
A. Yes. That might refer to the photograph with me,

Mr Benada and the agricultural engineer, where the sticks were.
Q. Yes, and so the document states:

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10:46 1
2

Mr Benada, who is Czech?
A. Yes.
Q. So you did not authorise the modification of the road at that time. Did you authorise any modification of the road at any other time?
A. No. Not that I remember of.
Q. Well, we can look at the document R-61. This is an answer that you provided in the name of the Smilno municipality to a question which was asked by the district police directorate, with respect to the field track. And there you state -- so, first of all, are you familiar with this document, sir?
A. I haven't seen it since 2016 , so ...
Q. But if we scroll a bit down?
A. I signed it, so ...
Q. You did, yes.
A. Yes.
Q. So you state:
"The access road located on plot of land E 2721/780 has not been assigned any functional class or category pursuant to STN 6110.
2. The Smilno Municipality possesses no zoning decision in respect of the creation of the road ...
3. The Smilno Municipality possesses no building permit in respect of the plot of land ...

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"Local investigation took place on 21.7.2015 in the area of the future construction of a working area for the implementation of exploration works of Alpine Oil and Gas ... in the cadastral area of Smilno.

The subject of the investigation was the location of the access road on Parcel Type C, Serial No. 945 (unrecorded ownership sheet - built-up area (road)).

Individual comments:
Provided that the original boundary of the land, serial number 945 registered as built-up area - road, will be respected."

So that's the sticks, basically?
A. Yes.
Q. But this is not your agreement to anything; correct?
A. No. I just, on the other picture, you know, just I said that those, it has to be -- stay on the road, because it's a road, you know, was my advice. Not like my allowance or something.
Q. Now there's one thing which I find interesting, actually. The original is not in Slovak but in Czech. Why is it?
A. I don't know why.
Q. But you confirm it is in Czech?
A. Yes.
Q. Could it be that this document was actually typed by

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4. The Smilno Municipality possesses no occupancy decision...
5. The Smilno Municipality possesses no technical documentation that would confirm the realization of construction in respect of the land plot ...
6. As the road was constructed absent of any issued occupancy decision, the Smilno municipality possesses no opinion issued by respective authorities.
7. The Smilno Municipality has no archived occupancy permit for constructions connected to the road..."

And then finally:
"In respect of the plot ... the Smilno Municipality
has not permitted any construction and technical modification."

Correct? Can you see that? And all of that information is correct; right, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. So that is information you provided as of 3 November 2016.

So now, having refreshed your memory, did you authorise any construction and technical modification of the road at any later date?
A. No.
Q. So now let's turn to paragraph 20 of your witness

10:52 1
"I have also been shown pictures of the Smilno village and Road which I understand have been taken from the website of Slovakia's Office of Cartography ... The first image simply shows the Road as it is and as it should be. Here, you can clearly see the Road leading away from the village and arching down towards the bottom right of the image. In the second image the Road is clearly identified as a 'road' in the icon tabs on the left-hand side of the image, and it is also identified by the GPS points as a 'local, purpose built communication'. This is consistent with my understanding of the Road's status and historical use, and is also consistent with what I have said in this statement and what I had told AOG about the Road".

Can you see that, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. When were these pictures shown to you?
A. Which pictures?
Q. The pictures you referred to in paragraph 20, and if you want to see, you referred to them in the footnotes, so it's Exhibit C-420 and --
MR DRYMER: Exhibit C-418 and C-419.
MR PEKAR: Yes, thank you. It's C-418 and C-419.
So this is the one where I -- yes, so that's it.
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the pictures, C-418 and C-419, is information from 2019.
Does that refresh your memory as to the year when you were shown the pictures C-418 and C-419?
A. Not really. It doesn't refresh my memory, no. I'm not sure when.
MR DRYMER: Mr Baran, when I read a statement like this in a witness statement such as this --
A. Mm-hm.

MR DRYMER: -- "I have been shown a picture", it suggests to
me, at least, that you have been shown this by counsel at the time of your signing of the witness statement.
I'm not saying that's what it means. I'm asking you, is that what it means?
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: Alright.
But to the best -- again, not what the words say.
To your recollection, were you -- you would have -- am I correct to understand that you would have been shown these two maps at the time you were asked to approve and sign your witness statement? Or sometime earlier, or by somebody else?
A. I repeat, I don't remember exactly.

MR DRYMER: Okay.
A. No.

MR DRYMER: I just want to say honestly how I understand the
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10:51 $\quad 1 \quad$ A. And can you repeat your question?
Q. Yes. My question is: when were these pictures shown to you?
A. These pictures are official, you know, internet --

I don't know the abbreviation -- MAPI?
Q. Now, in paragraph 20 you say:
"I have also been shown pictures of the Smilno
village ..."

And then you refer to these two pictures. So
I'm asking you when you were shown these pictures?
A. I don't exactly remember when.
Q. Who --
A. What year, or ... I don't recall.
Q. Who showed you these pictures?
A. It must have been Mr Benada, I think.
Q. Mm-hm. But you don't recall the year?
A. No.
Q. Wasn't it actually shown to you very recently, like in 2019 and later?
A. No. As I said, I don't remember exactly.
Q. Well, we have a document on the record. It's document R-212. And you are not familiar with this document, but I represent to you, sir, that this document, issued by the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadaster Authority of the Slovak Republic, states that the information shown on
words, to give you a chance to address them.
A. Mm-hm. Because it's a map so you can find on the internet at any time. And I don't recall when exactly I was shown them.
MR PEKAR: Okay. So I will show you yet another map. It is in Exhibit C-315.

So C-315 is an e-mail that was sent to Mr Sýkora, who I represent to you was AOG's counsel at the time, in June 2016, to Mr Jozef Stefansky, who is, I again represent to you, a police officer in Slovakia?
A. Used to be. Used to be.
Q. Yes. So you do know Mr Stefansky?
A. Yes. He's from a neighbouring village, and he was the district police director, so I know him.
Q. In which district was he the police director?
A. Bardejov.
Q. So this is the district where Smilno belongs?
A. Falling here.
Q. So AOG's counsellor writes to the district director in Bardejov, and they attach a map. This is PDF page 6.

We will read from that, so maybe we cannot show the witness statement, and instead show only the map. Perfect.

So it refers to the object classified as C-945, that is the field track or field road; correct?

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10:56 1 A. Yes.
2 Q. And it describes on the left -- so first we can see that the road is there in blue. We recognise the shape of the road; right?
A. Yes.
Q. And then on the left side, we can see how it is classified at the time, and it states:
"Land with an engineering structure - road, local and special-purpose road, forest road, dirt road, sidewalk, open parking lot and other construction components."

Can you see that, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. So would you agree with me that from what is stated in this description, I cannot tell which of these road, local and special-purpose road, forest road, dirt road, sidewalk, open parking lot and other construction components, you know, which of these more specific categories apply to this C-945 object?
A. No, I can't tell which exactly.

THE PRESIDENT: While we are on this map, can I just ask you a question?

When you speak of the road being 7-800 metres, where does this -- where does your measurement start and where does it end?

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MR DRYMER: Are you through with the maps? Because I have a couple of questions on maps in a moment. You tell me.
MR PEKAR: Please go.
MR DRYMER: Right answer!
Some counsel, well, excellent counsel always listen to the judge or arbitrators. Really excellent counsel can read their minds. And I love maps and I was going to take you to C-418 and C-419 as well before Mr Pekar did.

Could we look, please, at C-418 again. And here you say -- you pointed out a moment ago on the other map where the drilling site is, approximately. Sir, are you able to put your magic red dot on this figure? Alright. Is that the correct location of the site, approximately?
A. Yes, I think it corresponds with the previous picture. MR DRYMER: Very good. The first thing I always look for on a map is the legend. It seems to me that that sort of rectangle with an image in it, which was close to where the red dot is, is called a "material dump". I'm not making evidence: is that correct? Are you able to scroll down and take a look? Do you see the rectangle?
A. No.

MR DRYMER: Sir, could you put the red dot back on the map?
A. No, no, it was, like, the site that was prepared for drilling.

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10:58 $1 \quad$ A. It stops somewhere in the middle. I can't show it.
THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it's difficult, but can you describe it with words?
A. Yes. Somewhere there. No, no a bit more to the right, and up. Up and to the left. Keep on the blue thread, please. Whoever is working with it. And come down, down, down, down. Stop. And a bit higher. Yes, somewhere there.
THE PRESIDENT: So that's very close to the V-shaped forest. A. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And then it goes all the way up --
A. Towards --

THE PRESIDENT: -- the blue line. Further. Continue. Can you continue along the blue line, please. Up to here?
A. Yes. That's the junction that was shown on the pictures before, where it connects to the asphalt proper road.
THE PRESIDENT: Exactly. And the drilling site is next to the --
A. Where the red point was in the beginning.

THE PRESIDENT: -- corner of the forest, here?
A. Yes, and a bit down to the left. No, to the left. And bit up.
THE PRESIDENT: Around here?
A. Somewhere there, yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

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MR DRYMER: Ah, okay.
But as I scroll down -- sir, could you scroll down on the image, down to the legend. It's at page 4 of 6 . There it is.
It looks as though -- and again, I'm not creating evidence, gentlemen and ladies, I'm just looking at this. It looks as though it says "material dump".

So let me just ask you this: was there ever any sort of material dump in that --
A. No, it must be a mistake. It was a field and a swampy area, because there's some kind of stuff.

Exactly the plot where there was this -- I mean,
level -- it was levelled for the drilling there, but not that material dump at all. No way.
MR DRYMER: Do you have any reason -- do you know what this rectangle on the map means?
A. No. I see -- I notice for the first time. I thought -you know, I never read this, as you said.
MR DRYMER: And you see leading to the rectangle is a dotted line?
A. Mm-hm.

MR DRYMER: Sir, that's back on the first page, right? Am I correct to interpret this, as far as you're aware, that this is some road off of the track -- call it what you will -- a path off of the road or track leading to

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this rectangle? Is that what it's showing me?
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: Okay. Thank you.
Sir, could you pull up C-419 for one quick minute?
A. If I -- might there have been a road connecting the road, if we refer to the road, from Smilno village to the V-shaped forest?

## MR DRYMER: Yes.

A. And the junction towards the drilling site which was created by the company, the connection between the road --
MR DRYMER: I understand.
A. -- and the drilling site.

MR DRYMER: But you don't know whether this represents the drilling site or some other geographical feature?
A. I have no idea what else it could be.

MR DRYMER: And --
THE PRESIDENT: Just so that we're clear, I understood you to say this is the drilling site.
A. Yes, because --

MR DRYMER: Well, in the area of the drilling site, but not necessarily -- or are you saying that's what the map purports to represent?
A. The drilling site was actually there, where ...

MR DRYMER: That's my point. Okay. Okay.
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11:05
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: Okay. And I just note, for the record, that the same rectangle, or a similar rectangle, seems to appear on that map as well. And includes what seems to be the access between the forest track or road and the rectangle.

One last question. You spoke earlier, sir, about -and we saw pictures. I think you said the current state of the road is not exactly as on these maps. Here we see the road continues into the forest.
A. Mm-hm.

MR DRYMER: But the pictures we saw were below the point in the V, and that's where you said the road has been -I would ask you to repeat that -- modified by users in recent years, or something like that? Just, I want to understand what you're saying.
THE PRESIDENT: Let me just summarise what I understood, because I see the time flying and I'm a little concerned.

I understood you to say that the original road goes into the forest, and continues in the forest.
A. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: But people have also used a track that was outside of the forest, along the forest?
A. Exactly so, yes, when it was too muddy in the one-third

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Can you clarify?
MR PEKAR: Some questions?
MR DRYMER: Without giving evidence?
MR PEKAR: I may ask a question.
MR DRYMER: Yes, you may.
MR PEKAR: So, sir, assuming the map is from 2019, that would be after the construction of the platform on the drilling site; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. So the map would show that structure which was built by AOG; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And could the rectangle represent this platform built by AOG?
A. Yes, that's what I said before.

MR DRYMER: Very good, thank you, and those were precisely the sort of questions which I did not want to ask -- no, no -- because they're better coming from counsel, I suggest.

Now let's look at C-418, please, very quickly. I said I like legends, but there's not much of a legend on here. Are we to understand that all of the -- that the description on the left that's in yellow, local, purpose-built communication, loose/unpaved, that that describes the road or track that's shown in yellow?

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> that I told you. Because if you, please, where the junction is on the right side, there's a junction like towards the right of the -- up, up, up. Yes. And there is a junction, and that roads leads to Mikulášová.

> So that's why I said these two-thirds were much proper, and before, they were like stones, like these gate heads, you can see them, they're still there in places. And the rest, the one-third that was referred to by Mr Pekar, was the less-used road. That's why it looks to him like, you know, not being used on an everyday basis. So I refer mostly to that track.
> MR DRYMER: Understood.
> A. This one was used much more towards the village of Mikulášová, because they are also employees, and when it's good weather they go by terrain vehicles towards the farm, not using the main road.
> MR DRYMER: That's helpful, and just to be clear, I used the word "modified" before. I didn't mean it in the sense that it's used in the case; modified isn't gravelled or anything. I understood what you just clarified, that people take an alternate route, if you will, that goes by the bottom of the forest there.

> Thank you very much.
> A. You're welcome.

> MR PEKAR: Mr Baran, do you recall the picture where you

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11:08 1

[^0]11:10 1

Can you see that, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. So this is actually the same legend that I showed you on the map which is included in document C-315, and which we know was sent by AOG's lawyer to the police in Bardejov in 2016; correct?
A. Yes, sir. It's correct what it says here.
Q. Yes. And again, if I look at this official document from the land cadaster, which is publicly accessible, I cannot tell from the document if it is a road, if it's a local road, if it's a special purpose road, if it's forest road, field road, sidewalk, or uncovered parking lot and parts thereof; correct?
A. Correct. Must be one of those.
Q. And only one of those; right?
A. I don't say only. Maybe two of those.
Q. Does the extract from the Land Registry tell you who owns the field track?
A. No, I can't see it now.
Q. No, because it's not a title deed. So we will pull up the title deed, which is C-140. So if we zoom in, this is an extract from the Land Registry, extract from title deed number 1367. We can see that the date of execution is 20 June 2016.

So, sir, do you agree that this is the title deed
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11:12 $1 \quad$ for the field track, or field road?
A. Yes.
Q. And then if we just scroll down, we can see that there's hundreds of co-owners, if I am not mistaken, on the last page -- or actually it's not the last page of the document, but there are 209 co-owners there. Yes.

So we can see that the last one was --
Mrs Klimovicová is the 209th co-owner at the time.
Is it consistent with your recollection that the road had approximately 200 co-owners?
A. Yes.
Q. And this information is again publicly available in the Land Registry, right?
A. Yes, it must insert the time that the road -- I think it was in the year 2000, when there was this overall registration of land conducted in Smilno and other neighbouring villages. And it must have been changed from the roads to a field with those owners. And I'm one of those.
Q. So in May 2016 you got a written request for information from AOG's attorney. It's document R-155A. So this is an email which is -- so, first of all, this Smilno2001, is that your address, sir?
A. Yes. My email address, yes.
Q. Is it your official address or your private address? restrictions."

And then if we scroll down, we can see the attachments. So the first attachment is a request for information, on a letterhead in a more official form. And it states it relates to the land plot, and where the road is. The title deed, 1367, which we just saw. And then three questions are asked:
"(i) Is the aforementioned field road a public or non-public special purpose road?"

So you are not given much a choice there, it's either public or non-public, but in any event special purpose road.
"(ii) Is the Town of Smilno the owner of the above-mentioned special purpose road?

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"The field road located on the land parcel [and so on] is a public special purpose road."

And the suggested answer to the second question is:
"The Town of Smilno is not the owner of the above-mentioned special purpose road."

And the suggested answer to the third question is:
"The Town of Smilno does not have knowledge of who conducts the management and maintenance of this utility road."

Sir, do you recall receiving the document at the time?
A. No, I don't recall receiving that. I might have.

I don't recall receiving it.
Q. Mm-hm.

But you do recall receiving the email; right?
A. No. No, I don't.
Q. Not even that?
A. I said before, no, I don't recall it. I might have, but I don't recall.
Q. So if we go back to the email, the email says:
"As a follow-up to our phone call ..."
Do you have an idea which phone call it may refer to?
A. No, I don't.
Q. So you don't recall having a phone call with Mr Sýkora

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(iii) Who conducts the management and maintenance of this special purpose road?

We kindly request the response to this request to be sent to the following address: Alpine Oil and Gas ... Bratislava."

Do you recall receiving this document at the time?
A. Not exactly, but I must have received it, yes. I don't recall receiving, yes.
Q. You don't recall or you must have received it or you do not --
A. I don't recall. I don't remember when I received it, but if -- depends. If I answered to that letter I must have received it. But I'm not sure. I don't remember whether I received this particular letter. It's been years. What date it says? 2016.
Q . It was presented by counsel to Discovery as attachment to the email, which is on the first page of this document, which dates 17 May 2016.
A. Okay. I must have received it.
Q. And then there is another page of the same attachment, or a second attachment, which is actually a draft response. So it's a draft response sent by the town of Smilno to Alpine Oil \& Gas, which provides the following suggested answers to the questions. So question (i), the suggested answer is:
in mid-May 2016?
A. Not exactly. I know that he called me, the lawyer, Mr Sýkora, but I don't know exactly whether that call refers to the letter or so. I don't remember it.
Q. Mm-hm. And so if we go back to the third page, we see some -- you know, the suggested answers that I read out loud to you. Is it your recollection that -- you know, could it be that these answers summarised the advice that you gave to Mr Sýkora by phone?
A. No, I don't recall that. No.
Q. Thank you. So let's look now at document --

MR DRYMER: If I may. Had you met any representatives of AOG by this point?
A. You mean in this ...

MR DRYMER: By this date, 15/16 May?
A. I don't recall exactly. No, I cannot say for sure.

MR DRYMER: Okay.
A. I met them, but I don't know exactly whether at this date or that date. It's years back, I don't remember.
MR DRYMER: I appreciate that. I don't know if this is helpful or not, but at paragraph 6 of your witness statement you say you initially met with representatives of AOG on or around 18 May 2015.
THE PRESIDENT: This is 2016.
MR DRYMER: I understand.

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11:20 1 A. I don't remember.
MR DRYMER: Okay.
THE PRESIDENT: Should we not let counsel proceed with his examination, because we are disrupting, I am afraid.
MR DRYMER: Very good. Very good.
MR PEKAR: So you actually did provide an answer. It is document R-156. So this is an answer sent to Cesty Smilno on 6 June 2016. So that would be approximately three weeks after the document I just showed you, R-155A.
A. Mm-hm.
Q. And here you state:
"The Smilno Municipality received your request for information pursuant to Act [on public access to information] ... concerning free access... [regarding the land plot on the] Title Deed No. 1367 in the Real Estate Registration Area of Smilno ..."

So could it be that this is your answer to the email 155A and its attachments? Do you recall?
A. It could be, but I'm not sure.
Q. Okay. But you are sure that this is your answer; right?
A. The answer in my statement. Yes. I'm sure about that.
Q. So this is a document you sent?
A. Have I signed that?
Q. We can show you the Slovak original with the signature.

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11:23 1
A. Mm-hm. Yes.
Q. So from these options which are available here, you pick the field road, the option which is listed last on the first line; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. You did not pick "local and special-purpose road"; correct?
A. That is obviously so, yes.

MR PEKAR: Thank you. That concludes my cross-examination.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Could I just ask on that, the request for information pursuant to Act No. 211/2000 is dated about three weeks earlier. So there's three weeks between the request and the response.

This response, if we could bring back the original of R-156, please, on the screen -- the original and the English would be great. And if you could put the original just so that Mr Baran can have his original text next to it, that would be fantastic. Thank you so much.

So three weeks pass, about, between the request and the response, which is perfectly reasonable. You've signed this document. Did you carry out the research to prepare the response, or did someone else in the council prepare a draft for you?
A. No, I did myself.

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## A. The last paragraph

"The Village of Smilno is not the owner of the ..." I don't remember exactly, because it's many --
I might -- and that on the right, I remember, yes.
Q. And so in the answer that you provide, actually you answer first:
"the field track ..."
And in Slovak it's "polná cesta", so this could also translate as "field road":
"... situated on parcel of land ..."
Et cetera, and then you describe the historical use of the road; yes?
A. Yes.
Q. And in the second part you state:
"The Village of Smilno is not the owner of the above mentioned field track."

Correct?
A. Still, true. Correct.
Q. Yes. So in your answer you do not use the expression "public special purpose road", do you?
A. No.
Q. And so if we go back to the extract from the Land

Registry, C-945 -- sorry, C-139. When we see "Way of using the plot", you know, 22, and there is several options; right?

PROFESSOR SANDS: So you carried out the assessment of how
to characterise the field road or the track or the path or the road, or whatever it is?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: So you're explicitly asked, with the draft response, to characterise it as a special purpose road, that characterisation, and you don't do that. So you've gone through an intellectual exercise of your own, and you appear to have rejected that characterisation, and used a different characterisation.

Could you explain to us your thinking on why you did not follow the suggestion that was put in the draft, and instead characterised it as a field track? What was your thinking behind that?
A. Because it's me, I don't need to be, you know, advised or told what to do, and I said it's, as it was, and it is called by the local people "polná cesta", which means field road. There are no road signs, so it rules out the possibility of being a special purpose road, in spite of the fact that it has been used for a century and it's known among all villagers in Smilno that it's a road. But you know, it's -- the paved(?) works, it's -- you know, it's field road. Field road, yes. We call it field road.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Can we take it from that that your view in

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

I think out of respect for the court reporter, we should now really take a break, and then you can come back with re-direct questions if you have any, and the Tribunal may add a few questions if there are still some questions left.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you, Madam President. I can tell you I have no re-examination. I have no re-examination.
THE PRESIDENT: Fine. Do my colleagues have further questions?

Then you surprise me! I'm not ready. Let me just check whether I have questions left here, if you will bear with me. (Pause)
MR DRYMER: If it's less surprising, I'll say that I don't because Professor Sands just put the questions that I would have put to the witness. (Pause)
THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that was one of my questions too, but it is answered.

No, I have no questions left either. So, Mr Baran, thank you very much for your assistance.

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DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Yes, correct.
THE PRESIDENT: You're heard as a witness, and you're under
an obligation to tell us the truth. Can you please read
into the record the witness declaration.
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: I solemnly declare on my conscience and
mind that I will speak the truth and nothing but the
truth.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. So I first turn to Respondent's
counsel, and then you will have questions from Claimant.
(11.47 am)
Direct examination by MR KAMENICKY
Q. Thank you, Madam President. Good morning,
Dr Slosarcikova.
Have you had a chance to review your two submitted
witness statements recently?
A. Yes, I had.
Q. And do you have anything to change or modify in either
of your two witness statements?
A. No.
Q. Thank you. No further questions.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
Mr Tushingham.
(11.47 am)

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11:29 1 MR BARAN: Thank you, madam.
THE PRESIDENT: And this ends your examination.
MR BARAN: Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: Let us take 15 minutes now, and resume at 11.45.
(11.29 am)
(A short break)
(11.45 am)

DR JUDr VLADISLAVA SLOSARCIKOVA (called)
(Evidence interpreted)
THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, madam. Do you hear the Slovak translation when I speak?
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Yes, I can hear well.
THE PRESIDENT: Excellent. Welcome here, thank you for being with us. You are Vladislava Slosarcikova?
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Yes, I am, indeed.
THE PRESIDENT: If I have pronounced it correctly.
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Absolutely correct. Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: You are the prosecutor of the District Prosecution Office Bardejov?
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Yes, I am.
THE PRESIDENT: You provided two written statements, the first one was dated 24 March 2023, and the second one 11 December 2023; is that correct?
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Yes, that is correct.

Cross-examination by MR TUSHINGHAM
Q. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Dr Slosarcikova, I am counsel for Discovery, the Claimant, and I will be asking you some questions this morning. If you do not understand the question that I ask, please tell me, and I will try and rephrase it; is that clear?
A. I understand.
Q. You have served as a prosecutor in the Bardejov District Prosecution Office for about 20 years; is that right?
A. Yes, that is correct.
Q. In 2016, how many prosecutors worked alongside you in your office?
A. If I recall well, approximately seven. Seven at that time.
Q. That's what I had thought.

The town of Bardejov is about 13 kilometres by road from the village of Smilno; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And in your first witness statement at paragraph 1, you say that you currently reside in Bardejov; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. Where did you live in 2016?
A. In Bardejov.

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11:53 1
Q. Before you arrived in Smilno, on 18 June 2016, were you aware that AOG was carrying out an oil and gas exploration project in the region?
A. No, I was not.
Q. Had you heard about any company in the region that was exploring for oil and gas prior to your arrival in Smilno in June 2016?
A. No.
Q. Had you heard about a protest that had taken place in the city of Prešov in January 2016 about an oil and gas exploration project?
A. No.
Q. The office that you work in has a close working relationship with the Bardejov District Police Force; is that right?
A. I don't understand the question correctly.
Q. Forgive me. The Bardejov District Police Force is another office that is responsible for enforcing the law in the town that you are based in; correct?
A. Yes, we could use those words as well.
Q. And if the police noticed criminal activity taking place, then it would be likely that your office would be informed about that; correct?

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left-hand corner if we scroll up, of the Bardejov District Police Department, dated 15 February 2016; do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see them.
Q. I think the witness's screen has a dialogue box which is obscuring the view of much of what is on the page. I wonder if we could pause for a moment while we sort that.

Yes, Dr Slosarcikova, on your right there's another screen that you could look at, if that's acceptable. So, do you see at the top of the page a document dated 15 February 2016 from the Bardejov District Police Department?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And I will represent to you that this is a resolution relating to a criminal complaint which AOG filed against Ms Marianna Varjanová.

Do you see the stamp at the top of the page?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And that's the stamp of your office, isn't it?
A. Yes, it is.
Q. Do you recognise the signature?
A. This would be one of the administrative clerks at the office.
Q. And once the administrative clerk has accepted the

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11:51 $1 \quad$ A. Yes, indeed.
Q. And so you would presumably know many of the police officers who worked in the Bardejov Police Force in 2016; is that right?
A. Not in person.
Q. But you would be aware of who, generally, was working for the Police Force in 2016, even if not by their specific names?
A. Well, the managing police officers, yes.
Q. And what was the name of the managing police officers that you refer to?
A. Well, the director of the district directorate of the Police Force, this was Dr Stefansky at that time. In contact, we have been in contact with the director of the police investigation unit. This was Dr Kovacova(?) and the head of the operational activities was Dr Reichor(?) at that time.
Q. Were you aware that the police had been called out to AOG's drilling site in Smilno on a number of occasions in early 2016?
A. No, I was not.
Q. Could I show you a document, please, which is Exhibit R-150, page 1. And if we could pull up the Slovak version on the right-hand side.

This is a resolution, which you can see in the top

Is it your evidence today that you have no recollection of any -- I'll withdraw that question. I'll start again.

Is it likely that this document would have been received by Dr Tuleja that you referred to earlier?
A. It is quite certain, because all such documents go directly to the desk of the district prosecutor. There is not a single case which would be delivered to the district prosecution service of Bardejov, which wouldn't be seen by the head district prosecutor, so it must have been on the desk of the district prosecutor. At that time this was still Dr Tuleja.
Q. And do you recall having any discussions with Dr Tuleja in or about early 2016 about complaints involving Ms Marianna Varjanová?
A. No.
Q. Do you recall having any discussions with anyone else in your office about criminal complaints in early 2016 involving Ms Marianna Varjanová?
A. No. No.
Q. Your office has six other -- you have six other colleagues in your office. We established that earlier; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And one of those six people is Dr Tuleja; correct?

12:00 $\quad 1$
where she was a participant in the proceeding. What was the nature of that proceeding?
A. Well, I was not interrogating any single party to the proceeding. This was not the case.
Q. What was the task that you were given involving Ms Marianna Varjanová?
A. I was allocated a file which started with a similar criminal complaint, with a similar resolution. My task was to read through, to investigate the resolution, to look into the different proofs and different files, and I was to assess whether the criminal complaint and resolution was in line with the penal code and with the criminal code.
Q. And what do you recall about the nature of the resolution which you were asked to look into?
A. One item was related to the damages to a motor vehicle, motorised vehicle. I'm not quite certain, it might be one of the files which I discussed also here. I came to the conclusion that this is not a criminal offence, but this was a civil dispute for payment of damages. And therefore the resolution was not quashed(?).
Q. So you were aware of events in Smilno at some point in 2016 before June involving Ms Marianna Varjanová?
A. No. I was looking into the damages on a motor vehicle.

No protests and no other activities which were carried
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11:58 1 A. He's the seventh.
Q. He's the seventh. And I'm going to put it to you that it's likely that you would have heard about a criminal complaint involving Ms Marianna Varjanová in early 2016?
A. At the beginning of 2016 I was not aware about any criminal complaint by Madame Varjanová. Every single one is an independent acting prosecutor. I am not aware of the cases proceeded or processed by other colleagues. I was not given any tasks submitted by Madame Varjanová early 2016.
Q. What about later in 2016 but before you arrived at the drilling site in June of 2016?
A. I don't understand the question.
Q. Your answer initially was:
"At the beginning of 2016 I was not aware about any criminal complaint by Madame Varjanová."

I'm asking whether you are aware about any criminal complaint involving Madame Varjanová between the beginning of 2016 and June of 2016 ?
A. I remember that I was given one task where she was a participant in the proceeding, on one or the other side, Madame Varjanová, yes.
Q. Can you tell us a bit more about that, please?
A. In what direction, do you mean? How can I elaborate?
Q. Well, you say you recall that you were given one task

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out in the municipality of Smilno, these were not discussed in the file.
Q. But you'd read her name, at least?
A. The prosecutor is given approximately 500 files every year. These are not immediately closed down. So I can have 700 or 800 living cases on my desk. I might have read the name, but it was a name as any other in the numerous cases I was. I had no reason to specifically remember this particular name.
Q. Could we look at another document, please. Pull up C-316, both in English and Slovak. And specifically page 3 of each document. Page 3 .

Do you see this is a letter, the letterhead at the top is referring to AROPANE, dated 25 May 2016, addressed to the National Council of the Slovak Republic; do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And do you see in the first paragraph the letter begins:
"On behalf of the dissatisfied inhabitants of the municipalities of Smilno ... we ask the Members of the Parliament to investigate ... observance of the stipulated conditions for the determination of the exploration territories ..."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see the text.

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Q. And do you see in the next paragraph it begins:
"We are frustrated by the presence of the foreign [oil] company Alpine ..."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And then over the page, please, at page 4, do you see in the final paragraph it says:
"As citizens we have used all legal possibilities, we have addressed ... the prosecutor's office ..." Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And it's signed by Mr Noga of AROPANE?
A. Yes.
Q. Have you ever heard of Mr Noga?
A. This is the first time I hear that.
Q. Have you ever heard of AROPANE?
A. This is the first time.
Q. Could you turn to your first witness statement, please, at paragraph 12. And if we could have open on the right-hand side the English version.

Sorry, I think on the right-hand side we need the English version. (Pause)

Do you see in the second sentence on the final line it says:
"... the police called the prosecutor [and then over
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12:08 1 A. I have it right here in front of me.
2 Q. Yes. And at paragraph 5 of your second statement you say in the second line:
"... I was on emergency service duty on ...
18 June... when I was sent to the scene ..."
Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. But then, later down, you say:
"... I decided to go to Smilno."
So which one was it: were you sent to the scene by your superiors, or did you decide to go there of your own volition?
A. I was first contacted by the Police Force. I was given an explanation, they explained that they are afraid a crime might be committed on-site. So as the prosecutor on duty, they would welcome my presence there.

In the meantime, I was also called by the district prosecutor, so I received a phone call from the district prosecutor. He was contacted by the regional prosecutor, because the Police Force also needed guidance on how to proceed, and they called their superiors. And on the level of regional police director and the regional prosecutor, they've communicated, and again they contacted me on the service phone and I was

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Do you see that? Sorry, we need to go over to page 5. Sorry, on the English we need to go over to page 5, I think.

Yes, and you were the prosecutor on duty that day; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. So is it your evidence that you received a phone call from the police directly to you?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you -- and do you see in the final line it says:
"... I decided to go there."
Do you see that?
A. Could you please say which part of the testimony are you now referring to, which specific part?
Q. The very last five words of paragraph 12 : "... I decided to go there." Sorry, it may be more words in Slovak.
A. Okay, I can see it now.
Q. Could you now turn, please, to your second witness statement at paragraph 5.

It may be easier, Dr Slosarcikova, to do this by the hard copies, so we don't waste quite as much time bringing up the documents, if that's okay? Is that okay with you?
contacted by the district prosecutor in that case.
Q. But you don't refer to any discussions with the district prosecutor or the regional prosecutor in your first witness statement. So it's likely that you were sent there by your superiors, isn't that right?
A. No. I was not sent there. I was not given an order, or an instruction in this way. This was more information sharing. So he was informed by the superior prosecutor that something is happening in Smilno, and that it might be good to see it in person.

But I was not given a specific instruction that I was to go there. This was not the case. This was my own personal assessment.
Q. Could we open, please, Exhibit C-245. Do you see that document?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you recognise this as a map of Smilno?
A. It is clearly stipulated there.
Q. And do you see the curved road in black leading away from the village down to the drilling site that you went to on that day?
A. Yes, I can see that road.
Q. And did you drive down that road that day?
A. Yes, but not -- I was not driving in person.
Q. Who did you arrive there with?

12:15 1
Q. And who was that police unit from Bardejov?
A. This was the service on duty, the police officers on duty.
Q. Is it usual that you would be transported by a police unit to the scene of a protest?
A. Well, a place where a protest is being held, no, this is the first time. But a place of crime, or the site of crime, definitely, yes, this is quite normally the case.
Q. But all you were told in the phone call was that the police were concerned that crime could happen, not that crime was happening.
A. They said that there is a risk that a crime might be committed.
Q. Did you ask for permission from anyone before you entered onto the road that you were driven down by the police unit?
A. No.
Q. Did you have any reason to believe that this land that you were being driven on was private land?
A. This was a field road.
Q. Exactly. And if it was private land, you would have needed to execute a search warrant in order to access that land; is that right?
MR KAMENICKY: We object to this question.
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what happened that day on 18 June 2016?
A. No.
Q. And it's therefore difficult for you to recall the precise details of what you saw, what you said, and what you did that day; correct?
A. I remember very well. Such events do not happen in the city of Bardejov very frequently, so it really got stuck in my memory.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-332. Do you see this is an email dated 28 July 2016 from Mr Jackiewicz? Do you see that?
A. I only see the English version.
Q. Apologies, well, I will represent to you that this is an email dated 28 July 2016 entitled "State Attorney at Smilno". The last line of the email says:
"I attach a few images which I made during that situation."

Could you then be shown, please, page 2 , which we may need to zoom in to. And does this picture show what you saw when you arrived at the scene on 18 June 2016?
A. No.
Q. Could you be shown page 3, please. Is that you on the right-hand side with the white trousers and the hat?
A. Yes.
Q. And police officers are standing next to you in green

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12:13 1 MR TUSHINGHAM: On what grounds?
THE PRESIDENT: Can you state the reason for the objection, please?
MR PEKAR: There is an assumption there that permission is needed to enter privately owned land. There is no foundation for that assumption provided by counsel.
THE PRESIDENT: So maybe the witness can explain that to me best.

To drive to a place where there is a protest and you say there is a risk of criminal activity, and the place is accessible by a road that is on private land, would you need a search warrant to access the place?

12:17 $1 \quad$ shirts; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. Are they the police officers who drove you to the scene?
A. No.
Q. Do you see the man in the pink-striped T-shirt?
A. Yes.
Q. He was AOG's attorney, Dr Vargaeštok; is that right?
A. Yes, that's how he introduced himself to me.
Q. And the police officers would have been able to hear what you were discussing with Dr Vargaeštok; correct?
A. Yes, they could.
Q. And you appear to be holding a document in your hands; do you agree?
A. Yes.
Q. And that document was the interim injunction which

Ms Marianna Varjanová had obtained against AOG; correct?
A. It is a document I was given by Dr Vargaeštok. I don't
remember which document it exactly was, but it could have been that interim injunction.
Q. Could you turn to the next page, please. Do you see you are still standing in this image with the white trousers; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you see a person dressed in a green T-shirt?
A. Yes, I see.
Q. And that was Ms Marianna Varjanová; correct?
A. I'm not sure. You're the one claiming it. I don't know what person that is on the picture.
Q. Well, do you remember seeing someone in a green T-shirt when you were there that day?
A. Definitely not. I don't remember. It's been eight years.
Q. Do you remember talking to a woman on the road in that location on that day?
A. I did not speak with any woman there at that time.
Q. Did you speak to the man dressed in the beige T-shirt?
A. No.
Q. And the police officers in black in this picture, were they the ones who drove you to the scene?
A. No.
Q. So who are those police officers, and where are they?

Where were they on that day?
A. These police officers, it's an intercept unit. It goes under the jurisdiction of the original Police Force headquarters. I am in no contact whatsoever with them. It's a completely different unit of the police. We do not corroborate with them.
Q. So the regional Police Force is based in Prešov; is that correct?
A. Yes.

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[^1]yourself, and let me know once you've read that yourself. Don't read it out loud: just to yourself. (Pause)
A. I've read that.
Q. And this document, which was published by Ms Marianna

Varjanová the day after the events in question, is an accurate summary of what you told AOG's attorney on that day, isn't it?
A. No.
Q. You accept that you were holding a copy of the interim injunction in the image that we looked at earlier; correct?
THE PRESIDENT: No, that's not exactly what she said. She said she was given documents and it may have been --
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: -- the preliminary injunction.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Forgive me.
You accept that you read a copy of the interim injunction when you were in Smilno that day; correct?
A. Dr Vargaeštok gave it to me, into my hands, and he let me read it, so I had the opportunity in time to read the injunction. Yes, indeed.
Q. And once you had read the injunction, you then asked Dr Vargaeštok to check whether he understood the text of it, and asked him to respect it, didn't you?

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12:24 $\quad 1 \quad$ A. I don't remember this.
MR TUSHINGHAM: I have no further questions in
cross-examination.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
Any questions in re-direct?
(Pause)
MR KAMENICKY: We have no questions, thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: Do my colleagues have questions?
MR DRYMER: Not here, thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: I don't have any questions either.
So this concludes your examination, Dr Slosarcikova.
Thank you very much for your assistance.
DR SLOSARCIKOVA: Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: The next witness is Mr Sólymos. Should we
hear him? How long ... let me just see what the estimate is.

Yes, I think he is over in an hour so we might not
be able to complete the cross before lunch, but we could as well start.
MR TUSHINGHAM: We had scheduled two hours for Mr Sólymos in total, so it breaks before lunch and after.
THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Oh yes, sorry, it carries on.
MR TUSHINGHAM: The only question I had was whether we wanted to take a lunch break now and start, or --
THE PRESIDENT: No, because I understand that lunch is not


12:33 1
A. Yes, we were given the opportunity.
Q. The SNS party is the Slovak nationalist party; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And the SNS party were given the opportunity to make appointments to the Ministry of Agriculture; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. In 2016 do you recall that AOG was carrying out oil and gas exploration in eastern Slovakia under licences granted by the Ministry of Environment?
A. Yes.
Q. And as you say in your second witness statement at paragraph 6, as a minister you were:
"... aware of their problems with activists."
Do you see that?
A. Yes. I see it.
Q. The activists were opposed to AOG's project, weren't they?
A. Yes, they objected. You could put it that way.
Q. And do you recall having any meetings with any of the activists?
A. Do you think meetings with activists at the Ministry, or with someone from the Ministry? I misunderstood your question.

12:37 1
Q. And who was providing you with that information?
A. Well, of course it was given to me by those people at the Ministry who are in charge of this type of work.
Q. Was that information provided to you by Ms Mat'ová?
A. Usually as the Minister I would keep in touch, communicate with a director general of a DG at the ministry, it was Jana, who would attend ministerial meetings I held weekly with all the DGs, director generals.
Q. Perhaps we can just establish some basic points about the organisational structure of the Ministry and this might assist the line of questioning.

So at the top of the Ministry you have the Minister's office; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And you're supported there by a team of Ministry officials in your office; is that right?
A. Yes, we had a team at the Ministry, at the Minister's office.
Q. Next level down, you had two state secretaries; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And they also had a team of officials?
A. Yes, they do each have their own office.
Q. And then you have a number of different departments

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[^2]within the Ministry; is that right?
A. Correct.
Q. And each department has its own team of officials; is that correct?
A. Correct.
Q. Approximately how many officials worked within the Ministry in any given year while you were the Minister? Are we talking hundreds, thousands; ballpark?
A. Ballpark, it would be hundreds. It would be between $3-400$ if I remember correctly when I was there.
Q. One of the departments within the Ministry was the Department of State Geological Administration; do you recall that department?
A. I know that we did have such department, of course.
Q. And that department was responsible for issuing licences and other decisions in the name of the Ministry under the Geology Act; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And while you were the Minister, the director of that department was Ms Viera Mat'ová -- please forgive my pronunciation.
A. Yes.
Q. And Ms Mat'ová would have reported to you as the Minister; is that right?
A. Of course she would report -- everyone at the Ministry,
through a chain of command, as it were, would report to me, of course, at the end, ultimately.
Q. And in the weekly meetings that you referred to earlier, would she be attending those meetings?
A. If I remember correctly, she would only attend when madam director general was unable to attend. So she would be replacing from her director general. So from time to time Madame Viera Mat'ová would attend in place of the director general missing.
Q. And is the director general Ms Vlasta Jánová?
A. Yes, the DG was Vlasta Jánová, correct. The geology DG.
Q. And would the Ministry take minutes of those weekly meetings that you referred to?
A. I think it -- yes. I think minutes were made.
Q. And you attended these meetings?
A. Usually I would. When I was unable to attend it would be led -- the meeting would be led by one of the two state secretaries, or head of the office, or chief of staff.
Q. But if an important matter was happening within the Ministry that had reached your desk, it's likely that you would have attended those meetings; is that right? A. I would always attend when I was able to. Well, let's say I would be travelling, or away at another site, away from the Ministry, I would not be able to attend.

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12:44 $1 \quad$ Q. So he was a very junior official, was he?
A. There were $3-400$ people only at the Ministry proper. Of course I did not meet every one of them in person.
Q. If you had had discussions with any particular officials, would those discussions have taken place by email?
A. No, I would not customarily speak with my staff through email. Whenever I would try and resolve something, it would go through the hierarchy, through DGs or through state secretaries.
Q. But if you had had a discussion with the DGs or the state secretaries, there's likely to be some documentary evidence of that, isn't there, in the Ministry's files?
A. Not always. Sometimes we would just discuss in person about issues. We would stop the discussion and move on, meaning that I think that minutes were only made whenever an official important meeting were to be held. With regular daily business, not.
Q. Could you look at paragraph 12 of your second witness statement, please.

You say here:
"... it was standard practice that officers [of] the Ministry ... informed me about important matters that were happening at the Ministry. This, of course, became an important matter ..."

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12:42 $\quad 1 \quad$ Q. And the minutes of those meetings that we established were taken, would they be held somewhere within the Ministry's internal files as a written document?
A. I am not sure where it was archived.
Q. But it's likely that some archive would exist of those weekly meetings?
A. I'll tell you honestly, I don't know whether such existed or not, or if there was a procedure in place, or what was customarily done with these minutes from these meetings.
Q. We would need to ask Ms Mat'ová or someone else who attended those meetings?

So the director, Ms Mat'ová, that we referred to before, she had been the director of the department since 2014, before you became a minister; do you recall that?
A. Yes. Even both Madame Jánová and Mat'ová were there.
Q. And do you recall another MoE official at the time, Mr Tomáš Hrvol?
A. I'll tell you honestly, I do not remember.
Q. You don't recall anyone by the name of Mr Tomáś, Mr Hrvol? Maybe I'm not pronouncing it correctly.
A. The name Hrvol, now that I've looked at the documents, I notice his name there in the documents, but I do not remember him.

12:46 $\quad 1 \quad$ Do you see that?
A. Yes, I see it.
Q. And the important matter that you are referring there to is AOG's application under Article 29 of the Geology Act; that's what you're referring to as the important matter, correct?
A. What I had in mind, the overall problem with AOG, not only specific the submission. The way I perceived -what I meant by saying, I perceived the AOG issue as an important one overall.
Q. Well, look back at the previous paragraph to read the context in which you've made that statement, please. Just read the first paragraph to yourself. (Pause)
A. Which sentence do you have in mind specifically?
Q. The whole of paragraph 11 , if you just read that to yourself. Don't read it into the record. It begins:
"I also understand from Counsel ..."
In your second statement.
A. May I have the Slovak version up on the screen? Thank you.

Yes, I see it.
Q. So you understand that Discovery alleges that:
"... someone 'from high levels of the Ministry' issued instructions to reject AO's request under Article 29 of the Geology Act."

You understand that?
A. Yes, I see it.
Q. And the paragraph goes on to say:
"Discovery infers that this instruction was issued in response to the Information for Minister dated 13 February 2017 ..."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I see it.
Q. And then on to paragraph 12, you say:
"Although I do not recall the specific Information for Minister dated 13 February ... it was standard practice that officers at the Ministry ... informed me about important matters ... This, of course, became an important matter ..."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I see it.
Q. So the important matter that you're referring to is AOG's application under Article 29 of the Geology Act. That's what you're referring to there?
A. Yes. What I'm speaking about is that the whole case, what I had in mind during my previous statements, the entire case as such was an important one as an event for a Ministry, even for myself.
Q. And given that it was an important event for the Ministry, there are likely to have been internal

12:52 $\quad 1$
A. Of course, we've discussed that, as we have had to address the problem somehow. So it has been an important matter to us. It was important also because we knew, or we were given information from AOG that when their investment will be marred or somehow thwarted, they will be requesting compensation from the Government, from the Slovak Republic. So we were not in any way impersonal to it. We tried to address the matter.
Q. And so there is likely to be some documentary record of those internal discussions that you're referring to?
A. I don't know if there are such records, if such records were ever made. As I said, records were made when the meetings were held of such nature requiring minutes made out. If there was a regular business of the Ministry, no records or minutes were made out.
Q. Now, AOG's application under Article 29 concerned state-owned land located in Krivá Ol'ka; do you recall that?
A. Yes. It just refreshed -- reoccurred to me now.
Q. That land was managed by a state-owned entity called Lesy; is that right?
A. Yes.

12:50 $\quad 1$ discussions about that event; do you agree?
Q. And are you aware, or were you aware at the time that
you were a minister, that in order for Lesy to enter into a lease over this state-owned land, it needed to obtain the approval of the Ministry of Agriculture?
A. I became familiar with the issue when I was required to act on it, when the problem emerged regarding the lease. But I do not personally, I'm not familiar with relations at other ministries, what they were.
Q. Now, your first witness statement in this arbitration was signed in March of 2023; is that right? You can see it in your signature block on the last page.
A. Yes, but I'm not sure which part are you referring to.
Q. I'm just establishing the date of your first witness statement.

And your second witness statement was signed in December of 2023. Do you see that?
A. The second one, yes. Yes.
Q. In your first witness statement, you made no reference to AOG's application under Article 29 of the Geology Act concerning the land at Krivá Ol'ka; do you agree with that?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you please be shown Discovery's Memorial, which can be found in pleadings, Claimant document number 2. It's pleadings 01, subfolder A Claimant, document number 2, Claimant's Memorial.

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Do you see that this document is dated 30 September 2022, in the middle of the page?
A. Yes.
Q. And so that's before you signed your first witness statement in March 2023; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you please be shown page 64 of that document?

Paragraph 152. And I will read to you what it says, and it can be translated:
"Discovery's understanding at the time was that the relevant department of the MoE was initially minded to grant the [section] 29 application. However, this was reversed after an order had come from 'above' that it should be refused. As AOG noted in a report dated 10 March 2017 sent to JKX and Romgaz:
'On 9 March we were advised by the Ministry of Environment that our application for a compulsory access order under [section] $29 \ldots$ would be rejected. The legal department indicated to us that they had been preparing to issue an order in our favour when they received an instruction from "above" to refuse the order, instead'."

My question is, before you signed your first witness statement, were you aware that Discovery had made these allegations at paragraph 152?

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A. I don't remember that. With the first testimony, that we would actually discuss this specific issue.
Q. So if I can just clarify, you don't recall having any discussion about this issue before you signed your first witness statement; is that correct?
A. This problem has been addressed by me in my second testimony witness statement. So I probably did not address this in my first statement.
Q. And all I'm trying to establish is whether that is because you weren't told about it, or whether you made a decision not to address it in your witness statement?
A. No. I was not informed to speak on this issue.
Q. Now, before you signed your second witness statement, were you shown any internal Ministry documents about AOG's application under Article 29?
A. Before I signed the second ... which document are you referring to?
Q. I'm asking generally were you shown any internal documents of the Ministry about AOG's application under Article 29?
A. No, I don't think so. I was -- I did not see any document. I did not have any such document. I only had information that I remember.

And afterwards I was given the documents, an opportunity to read them, to refresh my memory, how

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13:02 $1 \quad$ Q. And apart from the documents that you refer to in footnotes 8 through 13 , were you shown any other documents about the Article 29 application?
A. There were, I think, two or three such documents, which I have seen regarding this, and I remember my rejection; I remember rejection of the application of the geological administration. I remember my -- when I've sustained AOG's application in the appeal, and then I remember there was another document about delays in proceedings. But I do not remember when exactly I have seen this document, to be honest with you.
Q. And the document about delays in proceedings, was that an internal Ministry document?
A. No, this was the decision. I think it was a filing by AOG to resolve the original filing. I think this has been also made -- this was no internal document of the Ministry. Participants of the proceedings were put in copy.
Q. So your testimony in paragraph 12 is based, number one, on your own attempt to remember what happened over seven years ago, and number two, from the documents that you're referring to in footnotes 8 through 13 ; have I got that right?
A. Yes. I was refreshing the information that were in 2017 and 2018, which I no longer remembered. So I had

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12:59 $1 \quad$ the events unfolded during 2016 and 2017.
Q. When you say "I was given the documents, [and] an opportunity to read them, to refresh my memory", which documents are you talking about?
A. It was my decision about sustaining the application, the appeal against the paragraph -- Article 29 of the act. I think it was a decision of the director general for geology refusing the application.

I have seen such documents.
Q. Right. And are those the documents that you've referred to in the footnotes of your witness statement?
A. Which one do you mean again?
Q. So do you see paragraph 11 and specifically from footnote number 8 , which is where you're talking about the Article 29 application, over the page, through to footnote number 13.

Are those the documents that you were shown before you signed your second witness statement?
A. I do not know.
Q. Did you draft these paragraphs yourself, Mr Sólymos, or were they drafted for you by someone else?
A. No, I wrote these.
Q. So if you wrote these paragraphs, it's likely that you would have looked at the documents, isn't it?
A. Yes. You are not wrong.

3 Q. When was the last time you spoke with Ms Mat'ová?
A. About a month ago.
Q. And what did you discuss with her?
A. I was refreshing my memory, knowing I was to attend this hearing, to try and recall what the processes were back then because I have not directly participated in all of the processes. It was done by the geology department.
Q. When was the last time you spoke with Mr Hrvol?
A. I do not remember ever communicating with him. I don't remember.
Q. Could we look at a document, please, Exhibit C-336.

Do you see this is a letter from Mr Hrvol in the name of -- sorry, I'll rephrase the question.

Do you see this is a letter from the Ministry, the Department of State Geological Administration, addressed to Lesy; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And in the "Contact" section, there is a reference to JUDr Hrvol? That's Mr Hrvol; right?
A. Yes, I guess.
Q. And this document is dated 10 October, which was after AOG filed its Article 29 application. Do you see that in the first paragraph:
"... further to the application filed by [AOG] ...
[on] 30 August 2016..."
A. I can see the dates, yes.
Q. And over the page, do you see the letter is signed by Ms Mat'ová, the head of department?
A. Yes.
Q. And so it is likely that Ms Mat'ová and Mr Hrvol would have been involved in internal discussions at the Ministry about AOG's application; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And the Ministry is likely to have some documentary record of those internal discussions, isn't it?
A. I don't know. Maybe yes.
Q. We would need to ask Ms Mat'ová or Mr Hrvol directly, would we?
A. I don't know how they communicated and what records they have about this.
Q. Could you now be shown, please, Exhibit C-337 and page 2. There's only the English version, I am afraid. I will represent to you that this is an email from AOG's attorney, Mr Baran, dated 17 October 2016, subject, "[section] 29 Krivá Ol'ka", and I will just read you a few sentences from this email and it will be translated for you, in the first paragraph:
"we were able to get in touch with Mr Hrvol."
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> AOG's Article 29 application?
> A. I don't remember that I would discuss this with Mr Hrvol.
> Q. You would need to look back through the Ministry's
> internal records in order to refresh your memory about these events; is that right?
> A. If such records exist.

> MR PEKAR: Sorry to interrupt, but we need to correct the
> [draft] transcript. There is a significant mistake.
> A "not" is missing.
> MR TUSHINGHAM: Sorry, in which line?
> MR PEKAR: That was about ...
> MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, 13.10.41 (page 118, lines 21-22) "I did not enter those proceedings".

> But it appears from this email, Mr Sólymos, that
> you, as the Minister, the highest authority in the
> Ministry, had the power "not [to] allow the decision to be taken". And that's right, isn't it, because you were the highest person in the Ministry?
> A. I did not want -- have or did not want to, and nor did I do, such decision, and when an appeal had been filed by AOG against the Geological Administration's decision, Mr Hrvol, Ms Mat'ová, I've sustained that appeal, and returning the case for further proceedings. So me, as a body that was an appellate body, I never entered

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13:09 $1 \quad$ Next paragraph:
"He was fairly communicative. He told us that during his time at the Ministry, they decided ... approximately 10 section 29 cases ... It typically took 2 to 4 months ...

We enquired more about the Krivá Ol'ka proceeding. He informed us that based on the request we submitted, he sees no reason why the Ministry should not decide in favour of Alpine, and due to the fact that there are only two participant, he expects that the decision should be issued sometimes between middle to the end of November ..."

And then over the page:
"However, one thing that could in his view cause a problem is the position of the minister. So it appears that there is still a risk that the minister will not allow the decision to be taken, even though it would not be on legal grounds."

Now, my question is: it appears from this email that Mr Hrvol was concerned that you, as the minister, might cause a problem for AOG's Article 29 application?
A. Maybe Mr Hrvol did have such concern, but I did not enter those proceedings.
Q. Do you recall, having now seen this email, having any discussions with Mr Hrvol in about October of 2016 about

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proceedings of lower level bodies.
Q. We'll come to the appeal in a moment, but I'm just interested in one last sentence in this email, and I'll ask you a few questions and then that may be a convenient moment to break, if that would be acceptable.

Reading on a bit more in this email, the email says:
"... as the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture are controlled by persons from different, most of the time very antagonistic, political parties, let's hope that no one from Ministry of Agriculture will be able to influence the minister of Environment."

Now, my question is, we established earlier that the Ministry of Agriculture was controlled by SNS and the Ministry of Environment was controlled by your party, Most. Do you agree that Most had an antagonistic relationship with its coalition partner, SNS?
A. It could not be put this way that we would have an antagonistic relationship. We did not have an antagonistic relationship.
Q. Did you ever have --
A. We were coalition partners.
Q. But as coalition partners did you agree on absolutely everything, or was there any occasion when you disagreed?

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14:00
will have a somewhat lonely lunch, and the counsel will tell you where you can have it. And I wish you, nevertheless, a good lunch.

We'll resume at --
MR SÓLYMOS: Thank you very much.
THE PRESIDENT: Sure.
Would you wish to resume at 2.00 ?
MR TUSHINGHAM: If that would be acceptable.
THE PRESIDENT: Maybe I think that would be good, because we still have quite some progress to make this afternoon. 2.00.

MR TUSHINGHAM: Could I just raise one matter on that front? THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

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Q. And that was the email where Mr Hrvol was expressing concern that you might cause a problem for AOG's application; do you remember that, the contents of the email?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you now be shown, please, tab 14 of bundle 1, 01, and scroll to page 5, please.

Now, I'm not going to ask you any questions about the contents of any of these documents, which were identified in the Slovak Republic's privilege log. But I just want to ask you some other questions.

Before you signed your second witness statement, were you shown a copy of this entry recording a document dated 17 October 2016 ?
A. I do not know what document this is concerning.
Q. Neither do we. But my question is simple: have you seen a copy of this page before?
A. I couldn't have seen it then.
Q. But my question is, were you shown this page before you signed your second witness statement?
A. I don't remember. Maybe I did.
Q. Do you see that in the first box there is a document described as:
"Draft of the information for ... Minister.
Author: [Mr] Hrvol.
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13:15 1 MR TUSHINGHAM: We are sort of slightly behind and we're concerned there is a risk that Mr Leško, we may not get to him today.

But I am in the Tribunal's hands as if you wish to sit later today so we could complete the witness testimony, or whether you would prefer to spill into Monday.
THE PRESIDENT: Right now I would still hope that we can complete the schedule, and we'll see where we get in the course of the afternoon. But for now this is the plan.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, understood.
Thank you, Madam President.
( 1.16 pm )
(Adjourned until 2.00 pm )
( 1.59 pm )
THE PRESIDENT: Mr Sólymos, you are ready to continue? MR SÓLYMOS: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: And Mr Tushingham is too?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, thank you, Madam President.
THE PRESIDENT: Good. Please go ahead.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Mr Sólymos, just before lunch we were looking at this email at C-337, which, if you go back to the previous page, was dated 17 October 2016; do you see that?
A. Yes.

Recipient: Minister of Environment.
Dated: 17 October 2016."
Do you see that?
A. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Just explain what the privilege $\log$ is, because it may not be obvious to the witness what he is looking at.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, please forgive me for not explaining that.

Mr Sólymos, this is a log prepared by counsel for the Republic where they have withheld disclosure of particular documents on the grounds of legal privilege; do you understand that?
A. Not really. This is not exactly my domain, this legal area.

THE PRESIDENT: No. In the arbitration some documents are requested by one party from the other. The other can either give the document, or say: yes, the document exists, but I cannot give it to you because it contains privileged, protected, sensitive information. And then, rather than giving the document, what the party that refuses to give the document does, is write some kind of a list of these documents, saying just what it is, draft of the information for the minister; who wrote it,
Mr Hrvol; who was receiving it, the Minister of

THE PRESIDENT: Good.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you, and can I focus your attention on one other entry in this table entitled "Subject matter":
"The document contains ..."
And this is in the first table, so if we just scroll up a bit on the page. No, no, the table -- this one, "Subject matter", the other subject matter.
"The document contains an assessment of potential implications of denying AOG's request under Article 29 of the Geology Act to the Ministry of Environment." Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. I'm going to suggest to you, Mr Sólymos, that in or about October 2016 you were considering whether to deny AOG's Article 29 application; do you agree?
A. I don't remember me actually addressing, even considering, some kind of a request or application, because that has also been addressed at other level than mine, as Minister.

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Essentially this is what it is. So that you understand, this is a document prepared for the arbitration, but that refers to documents that were not produced because they were protected. Is it clear now?
A. I understand. Yes.
ial

he received such an information, or has he not?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: Is there an allegation that he has received
it?
MR DRYMER: Was he the actual recipient or the intended
recipient?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Well, we don't know the answer to that
question. But I would, with the Tribunal's
permission --
THE PRESIDENT: Well, the Respondent prepared the privilege
$\log$, so would you be able to help us on this or not?
MR PEKAR: Yes. Yes, the draft was prepared, but it was not
delivered to the Minister.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
No, so we understand that you did not receive this
memorandum entitled "information", because it was in
draft, at a draft stage?
A. I'll tell you honestly, I do not remember at all ever
receiving such document. I don't remember. So I likely
have not received it.
THE PRESIDENT: That's what we understand, yes.
MR DRYMER: Right.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Could you please be shown Exhibit C-348.
And on the right-hand side if we could pull up the

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the Minister has -- he says he doesn't remember, but has
he received such an information, or has he not?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: Is there an allegation that he has received it?
MR DRYMER: Was he the actual recipient or the intended recipient?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Well, we don't know the answer to that question. But I would, with the Tribunal's permission --
THE PRESIDENT: Well, the Respondent prepared the privilege log, so would you be able to help us on this or not?
MR PEKAR: Yes. Yes, the draft was prepared, but it was not THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

No, so we understand that you did not receive this memorandum entitled "information", because it was in draft, at a draft stage?
A. I'll tell you honestly, I do not remember at all ever receiving such document. I don't remember. So I likely have not received it.
THE PRESIDENT: That's what we understand, yes.
MR DRYMER: Right.
AR ThS And on the right-hand side if we could pull up the

14:05 $1 \quad$ Q. When you were the Minister, would you ordinarily receive documents entitled "Information for the Minister"?
A. Yes. Sometimes I would receive some information.
Q. And if that information --
A. They would draft such information for me.
Q. And "they" being officials within the department; is that correct?
A. Yes, the staff of various departments of the Ministry, its director generals; there are 14 other organisations outside of the Ministry which fall under the Ministry's jurisdiction.
Q. And if an information for minister document reached you, that would indicate that it is an important matter, wouldn't it?
THE PRESIDENT: Can I just ask for a clarification.
Here it doesn't say "information", it says "draft".
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: The recipient is specified as the Minister.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: However, I read this as there was a draft in
the files of the Ministry that was intended for the Minister, but did not -- was not given to the Minister. Do I misunderstand, or do I have to ask the Respondent?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Well, I wasn't going to go that far, but --
THE PRESIDENT: No, because it's important to know whether
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Slovak original version, please.
Mr Sólymos, this is an article that you wrote on
3 December 2016, published in the newspaper Denník N; do you recall writing this article?
A. Yes, I remember.
Q. And Denník N is one of the main national newspapers in Slovakia; is that right?
A. Let's say it is. It depends for whom.
Q. And you wrote this article in response to comments that had been made by Ms Iveta Radicova; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And Ms Radicova is the former Prime Minister of Slovakia; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you turn, please, to the second page of the document. Do you see there is a grey bar with a heading entitled:
"Tutti quanti, do you still sleep well with Fico? (events of the week)"

Do you see that?
A. Mm-hm.
Q. And that was the title of Ms Radicova's weekly column which was published in Denník N; is that right?
A. I don't remember that. Perhaps it is.
Q. But do you recall that she wrote a weekly column in

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A. I did not remember that. I remember her writing an article back then, regarding the Ministry of Environment.
Q. Yes, and in her article she had issued a public call for your resignation as the Minister, isn't that right?
A. I don't remember that, I'll tell you honest, what she wrote in that article.
Q. Well, you said earlier on you remember writing the article; is that your position?
A. I do remember my article. But the article of Madame Radicova, I do not remember what all she wrote therein. I would have to read it again.
Q. Well, please take your time to read the first -- why don't you, just to be fair, read the article yourself so you can refresh your memory. And the Tribunal can read the English at the same time. If we scroll back --
THE PRESIDENT: That's the second page?
MR TUSHINGHAM: No, just go back to the first please, and the same on the left-hand side. Thank you. (Pause).

Can we move to the second page, please, if that's convenient? And on the left-hand side, if we can just scroll up slightly. That's fine.

And if we turn to look at the last page on the English.

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MR PEKAR: In the Slovak language, yes.
        It's the third one from -- in Slovak it's:
        "Ministerstvo na základe odborného posudzovania..."
MR TUSHINGHAM: That's the paragraph I'm looking for. Do
    you see that, Mr Sólymos?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. Yes, and so do you recall that in July 2016 AOG's
    exploration licences had been extended for a period of
    five years by the decision of the Ministry; do you
    recall that?
A. I know that happened.
Q. And in this paragraph, you are taking personal
    responsibility for that particular decision, aren't you?
A. As a minister I had to assume the responsibility. Even
    though I was not the one making the decision, it was
    a department in charge of that, but me as the Minister
    had to assume responsibility for that politically.
Q. And Mrs Radicova was not from your party, the Most
    party, was she?
A. No. But when we were in government together, we were
    coalition partners.
Q. But she is issuing criticism about your decision to
    extend the exploration licences -- or, should I say, the
    Ministry's decision to extend the term of the
    exploration licences; correct?
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14:18 1
I'm just waiting in case the Tribunal needs any more time.

Mr Sólymos, have you now had a chance to refresh your memory about this article?
A. Yes, but this is my article, not that of Madame

Radicova. And what I was saying, referring to her article, is something I don't remember.
Q. No. Perhaps we can take it this way: so in the first paragraph on page 1 you're saying:
"... I must reject purposefully connecting the extension of exploratory well licenses with the issue of mailbox companies."

That was the criticism that the Prime Minister had made to which you were responding; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And then if you could turn to page 3 of the English, and I think it's page 2 of the Slovak, and the paragraph beginning:
"Based on expert assessment ..."
Perhaps Mr Pekar could help me with the particular paragraph?
MR PEKAR: Yes, I'm trying to find it because there's no paragraph starting with "Based on expert assessment ..."
MR DRYMER: In the Slovak?
A. Yes.
Q. Now, it's clear that by the date of this article in December 2016, you were coming under some considerable pressure in the media about AOG's project, weren't you?
A. Well, major pressure is not the way I would put it. But of course the media picked it up and they did report about that.
Q. Yes.
A. There was an issue, of course.
Q. Yes, and there were quite a lot of media reports in the national news that were expressing negative views about AOG's project and the exploration licences; correct? Is that consistent with your recollection?
A. Yes. Negative articles would appear against it, of course.
Q. And sometimes you yourself would be personally identified in those articles, and also in social media; is that right?
A. Of course, it resulted from my capacity as Minister.
Q. And so you were, therefore, reluctant, as at

December 2016 and following, to take any decision, or to have the Ministry take any decision, which might be portrayed negatively in the media. That's what was going on at this time, isn't it?
A. Definitely not. We would, and I myself, would stay within the limits of the law, and we had had to do so whether it was popular or not. Regardless of that.
Q. But if the Ministry had made a decision in favour of AOG in its Article 29 application at Krivá Ol'ka, that would have generated a significant amount of negative publicity in the media, wouldn't it?
A. I don't know what the reactions would be. Of course there would be some negative reactions, because there were people in favour or against such activities, interfering with the environment, not only in this case but in many other cases.

But in August we have extended by a further five years the application for exploration. So the Ministry did not act based on any moods of society, but based on what we deemed right and lawful.
Q. But it's possible that there were other people high up in the Ministry who would be concerned about negative publicity and drilling at Krivá Ol'ka on state-owned land. That's possible; do you accept that?
A. I have to say no, because at the Ministry, people working there, they had been in the field, each on their field, for instance, geology. And they would not be in favour of any exploration companies be operating in Slovakia.

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14:23 $\quad 1 \quad$ Q. And do you recall that you discussed AOG's Article 29 application at Krivá Ol'ka at this meeting?
A. I do not remember that.
Q. Can you please be shown Exhibit C-160. And if we could get up the Slovak original as well, please.

Do you see that this is a letter addressed to you, and for the Tribunal I will note at this point that the English translation appears to have a date error, 13 December, whereas the original Slovak is dated the 14th. But I understand that the translation is consistent. But my friends will pick me up if that's incorrect.

Minister, do you see in -- this is a letter addressed to you entitled "Exploration for oil and gas in north-eastern Slovakia".
A. Mm-hm.
Q. And could you read item number 2 to yourself, please?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. So one of the points that Mr Lewis, the CEO of AOG and Discovery wanted to discuss with you at this meeting, was the status of AOG's application under Article 29 of the Geology Act.
A. Yes.
Q. Could you now please be shown Exhibit R-213.

Now, you were not copied into this email, but this
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14:22 1 THE INTERPRETER: Correction by the interpreter: they were in favour of granting applications to geological companies.
MR DRYMER: Counsel, may I ask you, when you refer to other people high up in the Ministry, are you referring to the civil service, what perhaps Canadians and the British would understand as the civil service, the director general and others?
MR TUSHINGHAM: No, I'm referring to political appointees.
MR DRYMER: That's what I wanted to know.
MR TUSHINGHAM: So, Mr Sólymos, I'm specifically referring to officials and other political appointees that were associated with your party, the Most party, that were appointed after the election in 2016 to the Ministry.
MR DRYMER: Who were allegedly high up in the Ministry of the Environment, whatever that might mean.
MR TUSHINGHAM: And so do you accept that those people would be opposed to exploratory drilling taking place in Krivá Ol'ka?
A. No. I had no such knowledge that anyone at the Ministry would be doing or interested in doing anything like that.
Q. Okay. Do you recall that you had a meeting with AOG on 15 December 2016?
A. Yes, I know that meeting took place.
is an email dated 15 December 2016, entitled "How did the meeting go?", and it's from Mr Fraser, who was one of Discovery's representatives at that meeting. And I'm going to read into the transcript, so that it can be translated to you, some words in this email:
"It was well attended - by the Minister and 5 of his colleagues, who were very aware of and sympathetic about our challenges. Although the Minister was most keen on addressing his domestic concerns, he was prepared to be helpful provided he got some positive PR in return."

Now, pausing there. The domestic concerns referred to in this email was the negative press attention that you were facing in the media, such as the article from Ms Radicova that we looked at earlier; is that right?
A. I don't know. This is the first time I see this email. I don't know from whom to whom it was written or addressed, and based on what.
Q. Well, you accepted earlier that there were quite a lot of articles in the national media being published at this time which were negative about AOG's project; is that right?
A. I said there were such articles, of course, that would be putting it into a negative light.
Q. And those articles were also putting the spotlight on you as the Minister, weren't they?

14:30 1 the issue.
Q. Well, could you point to any document in the record which contains the Ministry's minutes of that meeting?
Have you seen any minutes of this meeting on 15 December 2016?
A. I don't know whether such minutes exist. Whether a minutes has been made out or whether it exists, I don't know.
Q. I will state for the record that we are not aware of any

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"It was done by the office. It was the [director] general for geology ..."

Is that Ms Jánová?
A. It was geology directorate general, or DG. Or it was either that department of the Ministry or the -- I can't remember the name of the office -- it's an authority -exactly what it's called.

Madame Mat'ová was the head of that. I'm not sure which one was the one -- which department or office was in jurisdiction to make the decision on behalf of the Ministry. I think it was the geological office, rather.
Q. So you say you're not sure --

MR PEKAR: If I may interrupt, there was one slightly incorrect translation or transcript, because in the previous answer it refers to the director general, but the answer was the directorate, the institution, not the person.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Sorry, are you referring to which line in the [draft] transcript? At 14.29.59?
MR PEKAR: So in 14.30 .55 , for example, it says:
"It was geology [director] general ..."
And it was "directorate", not "director".
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, but are you quarrelling with the interpretation at [draft transcript] 14.29.59?
"No it was done by the office, it was a [director]

Page 139 happened was set out in this email.

Could you look down to the paragraph beginning:
"The [section] 29 application in relation to Krivá Ol'ka is still in process and appears not nearly as negative as we were lead to believe. We understand the Minister will get a recommendation from his senior legal officer to approve the application. The final decision is in the Minister's discretion and is now due in early January."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And so do you accept that the final decision in relation to AOG's application rested with you, as the Minister?
A. No. It was done by the office. It was a directorate general for geology where there was a geology department issuing those decisions. It was not me addressing that. I have never interfered with that process of this kind.

Of course, it did end up with me because of the appeal. I was the one making the final decision on appeal, on granting the appeal, and the geology department initially rejected the application. But the decision was made by the geology department because it was their jurisdiction. The geological administration.
Q. So you referred in your answer there:
section, was that person a political appointee or a civil servant who remained in place as governments changed?
A. Of course the Minister would always have the authority or opportunity to choose their most immediate colleagues. But this was a professional civil servant position. The DGs, we have about eight to ten of them, water, geology, air, and so on, these would be highly expert positions, expert individuals serving as civil servants, director generals, covering for each respective directorate general.
MR DRYMER: Thank you.
MR TUSHINGHAM: So just to be clear who we're talking about here. So it's Ms Jánová in the directorate; is that correct?
A. Madame Jánová was the director general of the directorate, and Madame Mat'ová was her deputy, and she was the head of the geological administration office, if I remember correctly.
Q. Yes.

Now, in order to work out what went on internally within the Ministry in connection with AOG's Article 29 application, we would need to look at the documents that were being exchanged between Ms Jánová and Ms Mat'ová; isn't that right?

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14:37 1 A. No, I did not.
2 Q. Do you recall being informed about this meeting by any official after the meeting had taken place?
A. No. Such hearing and meetings at the Ministry, at the variety of departments, there were dozens or more a month. Annually there would be a great number. So they did not inform me. They would usually only brief me on the results thereof.
Q. Could you please be shown document C-366, and page 2. If you could scroll down slightly, please. Again, you are not copied into this email, but this is an email from AOG's attorney dated 17 February concerning the hearing under Article 29, and the minutes that we looked at earlier established that Mr Baran was present at that meeting on behalf of AOG. I'll represent that to you.

And do you see in the third paragraph, the email says:
"The hearing ended with no specific conclusion whatsoever, with Mrs Mat'ová ... saying that they have not moved anywhere. I think they wanted to persuade the Ministry of Agriculture to grant their approval to the lease agreement, as the Ministry of Environment does not want to be the one that will have to decide. However, the Ministry of Agriculture did not want to grant the approval and they refused to state anything else on the

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14:35 1 A. Of course they have communicated together. I'm not sure.
Q. And you haven't looked through those internal documents yourself before coming here to give testimony; correct?
A. No.
Q. Could we now move forward, please, to Exhibit C-365.

And if we could bring up the Slovak as well, please, and we're looking at page 2 of each document.

Do you see, Mr Sólymos, these are minutes of an oral hearing held by the Ministry of Environment in connection with AOG's Article 29 application; do you see that at the top?
A. Yes.
Q. Have you seen this document before coming here to give evidence today?
A. No.
Q. And do you see it says:
"On behalf of the administrative authority ..."
Ms Mat'ová, the director of the Department of State Geological Administration, and Mr Hrvol, state counsellor of the same department. Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. Now, were you aware that an oral hearing was taking place by the Ministry to discuss AOG's application under Article 29 of the Geology Act?
hearing besides saying that they are not the participant..."

Were you aware of any discussions taking place at the time about this, the events discussed in this email?
A. No, I was not following that particular process that was underway at the geology institute. I was not involved in that; I would put it that way.
Q. But it appears that what's happening at this time, as shown in this email, is that the Ministry of Environment is trying to pass the buck back to the Ministry of Agriculture, so that the Ministry of Environment wouldn't need to make any decision in favour of AOG. That appears to be what's going on; do you accept that?
A. It is logical, as the owner of the land and administrator was the Lesy, or Forest of Slovakia; they had the jurisdiction and right to conclude a lease agreement. So in its first instance, approval must be granted by the owner or administrator of the land, so it's quite obvious.
MR PEKAR: I'm sorry, there's one misinterpretation. I believe the Minister didn't say "jurisdiction". He just said they had the right.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Could the interpreters confirm that?
I don't think it really matters.
THE INTERPRETER: Correct.

14:41 1 MR DRYMER: It might matter.
2 MR TUSHINGHAM: Well, I will ask this question then.
Mr Sólymos, are you aware that in late 2016 the Ministry itself accepted in correspondence that no agreement had been reached between Lesy and AOG concerning access to Krivá Ol'ka land?
A. No, I did not notice that, this problem. As the Minister.
Q. And so if no agreement had been reached between the manager of the forestry land and AOG, then it fell to the Ministry to make a decision under Article 29. That's the correct position, correct?
A. Well, Ministry or -- not Ministry, but the geological administration office did make some decision. They would address this issue and they would address the procedure. It was their jurisdiction.

MR DRYMER: I have one question --
A. In the first instance, first steps.

MR TUSHINGHAM: Please. Please.
MR DRYMER: No, no, if you're going to leave the document?
MR TUSHINGHAM: I'm not, I'm just going to ask a few more questions.
MR DRYMER: Then I shall wait.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you, Mr Drymer.
Now, if the Ministry of Environment could find a way

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discussing. Which decision?
Q. I think I've concluded my questions on this document, so Mr Drymer, if you would like to ...
MR DRYMER: No, that's quite alright. I think you've covered the points I might have discussed with the witness. Thank you.
MR TUSHINGHAM: This is an email dated 7 February. Could you now be shown bundle 1 , tab 14 , the privilege $\log$ again, page 5. And I'm now interested in the second table, and again, this is a document dated 13 February, a draft that has been prepared by Mr Hrvol, intended for you, as I understand the position, and do you see the subject matter says:
"The document contains an assessment of potential implications of positive and negative decisions on AOG's request under Article 29 of the Geology Act to the Ministry of Environment, as well as a description of the proceedings ... to date."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And were you shown this entry from the Slovak Republic's privilege log before you signed your second witness statement?
A. I was informed that I was supposed to receive some information from Mr Hrvol. But I don't remember that

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14:43 $1 \quad$ of passing the decision back to the Ministry of Agriculture, then you as the Minister, or the Ministry itself, wouldn't receive any negative press attention in the media by making an order in favour of AOG. That's correct, isn't it?
A. This was not. It means not the Ministry of Environment should be the one in the application or granting it, because we had no relation to the land. It was administered and owned by Lesy Limited. It was their land and they had to basically issue a decision and make a decision. We could enter the game only after they were unable to agree with the owner. So it was not us forwarding our responsibility to someone else.
Q. But that's what happened when the decision was ultimately issued on 9 March, wasn't it? You passed the buck back to the Ministry of Agriculture?
MR PEKAR: Objection. There is no "you". I mean, it's been well established that the decision --
MR TUSHINGHAM: Please -- I will rephrase the question.
That's what happened when the decision was ultimately issued on 9 March. The Ministry of Environment passed the buck back to the Ministry of Agriculture. That's what happened, wasn't it?
A. I don't know. Which decision are we discussing now and who issued the decision? I'd like to know what we are
information at all. I don't even remember ever receiving it. I have no recollection of that.
Q. You were informed by whom?
A. The law firm.
Q. Right, and that's the point --
A. Whether I could respond to that. And I did respond by saying I've never seen anything like that. I do not remember having anything like that.
Q. Right, and if we could turn to your second witness statement, because I think this is the point you're trying to make here, at paragraph 12. Do you have that in front of you, your second witness statement?
A. Yes.
Q. And you say:
"Although I do not recall the specific Information for Minister dated 13 February 2017 ..."

Now, the questions here are: before you signed your witness statement, were you shown a copy of the draft document identified in the privilege $\log$ ?
A. Apologies. I did not understand the question. What document?
Q. So you're referring here in paragraph 12 to a document entitled:
"... I do not recall the specific Information for Minister dated 13 February 2017 ..."
Q. So, without having looked at the contemporaneous

Do you see that?
A. Yes. Yes, I do not remember. I don't remember that information I was supposed to have received regarding AOG, at all. I'm not even sure I was involved in that.
Q. Now, do you agree that your recollection of events seven years earlier may be different if you had been able to see that document?
A. Well, definitely. I don't remember everything from seven years ago. I would be reading hundreds of documents back then. Had I seen something later on, recently, I would have remembered. It's quite logical.
Q. Exactly.

So without having looked back at that document, or any other internal documents of the Ministry, you cannot say that you never gave an instruction to deny AOG's Article 29 application?
A. I never gave such instruction to refuse, based on Article 29, to AOG.
Q. Mr Sólymos, in answer to my earlier question, you confirmed that your recollection of events may be different if you had been able to refresh your memory by reference to the contemporaneous documents, and that's true, isn't it?

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THE PRESIDENT: So are you saying that whenever you were the
    appellate body you would not enter -- you say you would
    not interfere, or "become involved" may be better -- in
    the first instance proceedings?
    A. Yes, because then I would have no free hands to make
    a decision in the second instance.
THE PRESIDENT: So your services were making the -- sorry.
        Your services were making the first instance
        decision without reporting to you, without asking
        questions about how the decision should go?
    A. Usually yes.
    THE PRESIDENT: "Usually" means there were exceptions?
    A. I did not interfere in those decisions.
    MR TUSHINGHAM: Mr Sólymos, do you remember we looked at the
        letter that AOG sent to you on 14 December; one of the
        points that was being discussed at the meeting on
        15 December was AOG's application under Article 29.
        That's the position, isn't it?
A. Yes. It was in that letter.
Q. And you attended the meeting on 15 December where the
    application was discussed?
A. Yes.
Q. So you did enter proceedings at first instance
    concerning this application?
A. I did not interfere into the process of the
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14:50 1 documents, you can't deny, from your own recollection,
that you gave an instruction?
MR DRYMER: You're asking him whether or not he did not give an instruction.
MR TUSHINGHAM: It's a double negative.
THE PRESIDENT: Mr Sólymos, I think what we would need to be explained is, on the one hand, you say that without seeing the document you are not sure whether your recollection could not be changed, and at the same time, you're very affirmative when you say that you did not give the instruction to reject the application.

So, how do you remember so well the fact that you did not give an instruction, when other things you say: maybe I could change my recollection if I could see the documents?
A. The reason I am so convinced of that is that because I have never entered first instance decision by the Ministry when I was the appellate body. And when the first instance decision was negative against AOG, they actually approached me with an appeal, as an appellate body. And I've granted the appeal, returning the case back to further proceedings, to the first instance body.

This was not only this case. Many other cases, various EIA, me as the Minister was the superior body -the appellate body, rather.
decision-making of the geological administration.
If I remember correctly it occurred, in my memory, eight years later now, that from the meeting, that the entire meeting, entirely almost, was discussed the issue of Smilno. That is why I say I don't really remember much of this issue of Krivá Ol'ka being discussed.

In that December, everything -- almost everything was around the Smilno site because of the public protests, of the activists and the papers reporting. So that's why I say I do not remember that we would even discuss that. Or that we would actually even be trying to agree about something regarding Krivá Ol'ka. I just acknowledged it, that it is underway, the proceedings at the geological administration. But I do not remember that we would actually agree on something and discuss anything regarding Krivá Ol 'ka or the Article 29 of the Geology Act.
Q. So do I understand you correctly to be accepting that at the meeting on 15 December, you acknowledged that the application was underway, but you didn't give any indication to AOG that it would be denied at that point; is that your position?
A. I did not claim that. Not sure if I've claimed that.

All I said was I do not remember that we would actually, regarding Krivá Ol'ka, agree on something with AOG on

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| $14: 56$ | 1 | that meeting, or even that there would be any serious |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2 | debate on that meeting about this issue. I rather |  |
| 3 | remember everything being about Smilno and the problems |  |
| 4 | there. |  |
| 5 | MR DRYMER: I thought you had covered everything but now |  |
| 6 | we've circled back, let me ask this question. |  |
| 7 | Do you recall whether or not at the meeting on |  |
| 8 | 15 December 2016 you gave AOG's representatives any |  |
| 9 | assurance regarding whether or not the application would |  |
| 10 | be approved or rejected? |  |
| 11 | A. Definitely neither nor, because it was still pending at |  |
| 12 | that time, at the geology administration. And I was not |  |
| 13 | that involved in that. |  |
| 14 | MR DRYMER: Thank you. |  |
| 15 | MR TUSHINGHAM: Could you please be shown now Exhibit C-370. |  |
| 16 | Now, again, I will read this into the record so it can |  |
| 17 | be interpreted for you, but this is an email from AOG's |  |
| 18 | attorney dated 9 March 2017, addressed to Mr Fraser, and |  |
| 19 | it says: |  |
| 20 | "Hi Alex, |  |
| 21 | We have a bad news, we talked to Mr Hrvol regarding |  |
| 22 | the decision under section 29 proceeding. He informed |  |
| 23 | us that the decision has been issued and sent to AOG, |  |
| 24 | but that it will be negative. It should be delivered |  |
| 25 | today or tomorrow. He said [and that's Mr Hrvol] they |  |
|  |  |  |

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2
to companies conducting survey work within Slovakia. We would rather try and help them in order for them to be able to proceed.
Q. So you're accepting here that a decision adverse to AOG
in March of 2017 is an obstacle that you would be
placing in the way of AOG's ability to carry out its exploration; that's your position?
A. How the geological administration decided? Well, they decide based on some legal arguments in a certain way. I don't want to hold it against them. And then Ministry, or myself as Minister, had decided differently. But this has not been an obstacle, definitely.
Q. So they've bent the rules, have they, to make a decision against AOG; is that what you're saying? They had made some legal arguments, but really what they were doing was finding a way to come up with a decision against AOG?
MR PEKAR: Objection. The witness didn't say anything about bending the rules or finding a way.
MR TUSHINGHAM: The Minister said:
"Well, they decide based on some legal arguments in a certain way."

Are you saying that those are the correct legal arguments, or --

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14:58 1 were finalizing the wording in favour of AOG, when they received instruction from the high levels of the Ministry, to decide negatively."

Have you seen this email before?
A. I did not see, but I've heard about such email existing.
Q. You've not seen this email before?
A. No.
Q. Could you turn back to your second witness statement at paragraph 11, please. And do you see in footnote number 8 a reference to this email from Mr Baran dated 9 March 2017; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. Mr Sólymos, did you draft these paragraphs yourself? Are you sure about that?
A. Yes. I had information about such email existing. But this is the first time I've just actually read it. I knew it existed.
Q. Okay. So it's the first time you've read this email. Do you have any reason to believe --
A. I think so, yes.
Q. Do you have any reason to believe that Mr Hrvol was not telling the truth when he spoke to AOG's attorney on 9 March, and the conversation as reported here?
A. I think that no, because it was not in the interest of the Ministry to act in this way, to be placing obstacles

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THE PRESIDENT: If you decide according to legal arguments that should not be bending the rules, no?

I don't understood this in this fashion.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Perhaps I will explore further with this witness, yes.
THE PRESIDENT: Yes.
MR TUSHINGHAM: If we go back to the email, please, at C-370, do you see the sentence which reads:
"In our view they are just scared to pass any decision that might rise negative public reaction. Mr Hrvol kept assuring us [the] whole time that there is no reason why they should not issue a decision."

Why would Mr Hrvol be making that assurance, Mr Sólymos?
A. I really don't know. I'm unable to answer why Mr Hrvol formulated his words what he did in this way. Simply, the State Geological Administration, according to certain legal -- I'm no lawyer, but, must have been based on legal aspects; they have leaned towards an opinion, and they had decided so.

So I think that it is completely okay. They had had to make some decision and they did. In any event, this is a very sensitive issue indeed because we are going into constitutional rights of owners with that particular act. And when there is -- despite the fact

15:07
that they are refusing to grant access to the land for this purpose, Ministry through this Article 29 grants such access to those companies.

So it is a very sensitive issue, and that is how they would have approached. The Ministry of Environment have approached the issue accordingly, including geological administration, when they have decided as they did. Based on certain legal aspects they have made such decision. It was their decision to make.
MR DRYMER: May I just state, I'm not sure whether or not it's established that Mr Hrvol actually made the statements that he says were made by him in a letter written by somebody else.
THE PRESIDENT: Yes.
MR DRYMER: So, not only can the Minister not know why Mr Hrvol may or may not have said certain things, we don't know even whether he in fact said them, as you have put it to him. At least we haven't determined that yet.
MR TUSHINGHAM: That's understood, Mr Drymer.
But just going back to your answer, Mr Sólymos. You mentioned that it was a very sensitive issue, this decision; is that right?
A. Yes, sensitive.
Q. And you referred to the fact that:

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A. Yes.
Q. Is that -- when you were the Minister, did the Ministry have a filing system that was sort of broadly consistent with that description?
A. I guess so. I don't know. I think this is the way it's been kept, yes.
Q. So when an application is made by a contractor under the Geology Act, a file is opened in the Ministry; is that right?
A. I tell you honestly, I don't know which departments, how, would address these processes. Then, likely, if a file or something was opened, they would put it on record and issue that file a number, some ID number. It could be that way.
Q. And is that file likely to contain internal documents about the application on the part of the Ministry?
A. I don't know. Honestly, I don't know. I have not seen that file.
Q. So prior to coming here to give evidence today, you didn't look through that file.
A. You mean this decision specifically? I don't know how many pages it has. Five, is it?
Q. No, my question was slightly different. This is the decision that you're discussing in your witness statement; correct?

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A. Yes.
Q. And at the top right-hand side it records a file number. We established that earlier; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. So before coming here to give evidence today, did you look through that file?
A. No, not the file. I have read the decision to refresh my memory of what it was about, because there were hundreds of such decisions made by individual Ministry departments and I didn't read all of them. Many never made it to me. This one did, because it turned into a problem.
Q. Yes. Now, if an instruction had been given from high levels to decide negatively, do you think it's likely that there would be some evidence of that instruction in file no. 2205?
A. I don't know. I'm not aware of any instructions from above, whether they would be there or not.
Q. But any drafts of this decision are pretty much -- it's likely that those drafts are going to be held in that file, isn't it?
A. Which are you referring to? What draft of what decision?
Q. Let me ask it this way: when the Ministry prepares decisions, when officials prepare decisions under the

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Geology Act, are those decisions normally drafted in the first instance by officials? Is that consistent with your recollection during the time you were a minister?
A. I guess it did. The file has a person responsible assigned to it, and then the body empowered, having jurisdiction, would issue a decision about this, and it was the State Geological Administration having jurisdiction over making such decision.
Q. And you said the file has a person responsible assigned to it. Do you remember we looked earlier at Mr Hrvol being the contact person identified in the correspondence with State Forestry in late 2016? Do you remember that letter that we looked at before lunch?
A. Yes. And the question is?
Q. My question is, is it likely in your -- based on your own time at the Ministry that if Mr Hrvol was identified as the contact person in a Ministry letter, that he would be the person responsible for that file?
A. As far as I can recall, Mr Hrvol was the employee, the civil servant at the State Geological Administration. So likely he would work on that decision, or on that issue, but what specific position and task he had, I don't really know.
Q. Could we now move forward, please, to page 5 of the decision. And I am interested in the words in bold.

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legal regulation". That is how they decided. I don't know about any other reason why that body would -- why that body had decided that way.
Q. Can we now move forward to document C-174.

Now, do you see that this is a decision issued by you on 13 June 2017?
A. Yes.
Q. And you annulled the decision that we just looked at on

6 March, dated 6 March 2017; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And you did that on the proposal of a special commission
that was appointed by you; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And who formed part of that special commission?
A. This commission is so-called appeal or appellate commission of the Minister, which consists of about 12-13 members. From various -- staffed by various experts from independent institutions, including academia, academic bodies, that were dealing with the issues the Ministry was also dealing with. It included legal experts. It included experts from the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Environment, from various areas. The reason for it being that, for them to be able to prepare for the Minister in such cases when it involves some appellate proceedings, prepare some kind of

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15:13 $1 \quad$ Could you read those to yourself, please.
A. What's in bold?
Q. Yes, just read those words in bold to yourself, "Due to the fact ..." (Pause)
A. Yes.
Q. Now, the application was rejected, purportedly on the basis that granting an order in favour of AOG "would accede to the competences of another governmental agency". That's the Ministry of Agriculture, isn't it?
A. Excuse me. Yes.

The state administration. It could have been the forest administration. I don't know exactly whom they meant in that paragraph. I'm no lawyer, so I'm not exactly -- what competences they were interfering with at the Ministry of Agriculture.
Q. Mr Sólymos, this wasn't the real reason why AOG's application was rejected. The real reason was because an instruction was issued from above to decide negatively. That's what happened, isn't it?
A. You keep speaking about some kind of instruction I'm not aware of. I'm reading a decision of one body -- our body -- that leaned towards the legal opinion that they didn't want to interfere. It says in the English translation, "accede to the competences", because it's "another governmental agency", "regulated by a special
an expert and legal paper or opinion how the minister should approach the issue at hand, because a minister is not omnipotent; there were many things from many areas we had to tackle, so that is how and why this commission was annually appointed, and it included highly qualified experts from a variety of fields. They would then judge issues at hand, including this case under discussion.
Q. So this commission, comprising the experts, prepared a legal paper for you about how you should approach the issue at hand; in summary, is that what you're saying?
A. Yes.
Q. They recommended that you should annul the decision at first instance?
A. Yes.
Q. And did you discuss the paper that was prepared by the special commission with anybody?
A. Well, I don't remember that, whether I have discussed this with anyone. I might have. I don't know.
Q. You'd need to look back through the records of the Ministry in order to tell us; is that your position?
MR PEKAR: That's a mischaracterisation. He didn't say anything about having to look back through the records. He said he could not remember.
THE PRESIDENT: That's right. The witness says he could not remember, and then the comment was more like

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down slightly?
A. Yes.
Q. And did you draft the entirety of this decision yourself, or was a draft prepared for you by officials?
A. It was drafted by a civil servant for me.
Q. And if we go back to the first page -- if we scroll down, please, to the bottom -- you returned the matter to the Ministry, specifically the Department of State Geological Administration, for a new discussion and decision; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. So at the time of this decision you were the highest representative of the Ministry; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And as the highest representative of the Ministry, you would have had authority to amend the decision under appeal and grant an order in favour of AOG under

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AOG against the decision of the State Geological
Administration.
Q. Yes. And during --
A. And I've returned. So I disagreed with the decision of the State Geological Administration, returned the case back to further proceedings for them to decide in favour of AOG; that they are able to decide in favour of AOG. I was not able to make that decision.
THE PRESIDENT: Can I just ask for a clarification?
Many appellate bodies have a choice between annulling and remanding to the first instance, or amending a decision, annulling and granting the application. Did you have this choice, or not?
A. I'll tell you honestly, I don't know whether I had such power. We would always proceed in this way. The body is supposed to decide, and if we viewed the first instance decision, or me as Minister, as incorrect, we would return it back to the body overruling the initial decision for the procedure -- proceedings, rather. I'm not sure. This is how it worked.
THE PRESIDENT: You have rendered a number of these appellate decisions, I suppose, during your four years at the Ministry?
A. Yes. We did have such appeals where we would have to address them.

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15:21 $1 \quad$ Article 29 of the Geology Act; correct?
A. I don't know whether I as Minister was able to do anything like that. It was in the jurisdiction of the State Geological Administration to issue a final decision.
Q. But I'm talking about the position before you returned it back to the Department of State Geological Administration. Do you accept that as the Minister, the highest representative of the Ministry, you could have granted an order in favour of AOG, rather than returning it back to the Department of State Geological Administration?
A. I don't think I was able, or authorised to make such decision. There are procedures in place. That is why I took this procedure, because that's by law [how] one should proceed. I had the right of either agree or disagree with the opinion of the State Geological Administration first instance decision, but they are the ones issuing the final decision. That is why we proceeded in this fashion. The proceedings is in their hands to be completed by them.
Q. But at this stage the proceedings are -- before this decision is issued, the proceedings are pending before you as the Minister; correct?
A. No. The decision came to me, an appeal came to me by

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THE PRESIDENT: And would you always follow this practice of either confirming or annulling, and if you annulled you would return to the first instance, whatever it was? Or did you sometimes amend the decision yourself?
A. I myself have never approved. So I don't remember making such approval.

But we simply, when we disagreed with the first instance body, we would overrule the first decision, giving the case back to them proposing what they should further do ... what they should further to in order to decide again. So they could complete the proceedings.
MR DRYMER: Minister, if you take a look at the very first paragraph of the decision, your decision, it says:
"Pursuant to ... Section 61 [et cetera] of the Administrative Procedure Code [I make the following decision]."
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: Is that where somebody should look to find what the authority of the Minister is on appeal? Either to remand or to amend? Is that the basis on which you made the decision here?
A. I tell you honestly, I'm no lawyer. That means that I proceeded based on what the professional departments,
including legal department, prepared for me. So I usually would have leaned -- not usually; almost
ore that have addressed the problem. In legal cases, it was a legal department.
MR DRYMER: Okay, so when you say you would have relied on the view of the experts, you don't mean the special commission: you mean lawyers within the Ministry? I'm trying to understand. Or both?
A. Both. In this case it means if -- in that appellate commission, that would give opinions on appeals. Within the commission it included highly regarded lawyers as well. So the legal opinion would come up from the commission -- both expert and legal opinions would come out of that commission as a recommendation to the Minister. That appellate commission would give it.
MR DRYMER: Okay, and just to be clear, it's clear from the decision, and it's near the bottom of page 9, that the special commission recommended that the case be remanded back.

The question is whether you were required to follow that advice, or whether you had authority to say: no, I take that into consideration, but I'm deciding not to remand it; I'm deciding to change it.

And if I understood your answer, you're saying you don't -- you never exercised your authority in that way?
A. I have -- to my best recollection, I was able either to

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Can we now look, please, at Exhibit R-075. And do you see, this is a decision dated 27 June 2017, the same file reference number that we saw earlier, suspending the proceedings; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And that's signed by Ms Mat'ová.
A. Yes.
Q. So this is on remand, the Ministry, the Department of State Geological Administration, suspending the proceedings:
"... pending the resolution of the preliminary question, which is the submission of documents demonstrating the results of negotiations between parties to the proceedings on the conclusion or non-conclusion of an agreement on the use of the real estate concerned ..."

Do you see that?
Do you see that, Mr Sólymos?
A. I do, but this is the first time I see this.
Q. And is it likely that you would have discussed this decision before it was issued in the name of the Ministry?
A. This is the first time I see this decision. I don't even know what it's about. It was not issued by the Ministry; it was issued by the State Geological

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15:29 $1 \quad$ accept the decision of the State Geological
Administration, that I agree with their interpretation based on which they have rejected an application, or I would overrule that decision and give the case back to them.

In this case, I've leaned towards the commission's recommendation that the first instance body did not do everything they needed to do in order to come to a final decision.
MR DRYMER: Very good. We'll let the lawyers tell us what the administrative procedure code says or doesn't say. Thank you.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Can I clarify one translation point here. At 15.29 you said, the transcript reads:
"... I was able either to accept the decision of the State Geological Administration, that I agree ..."

I think the question that I have is: is that correct? Do you mean the special commission? You mean the original decision?
A. Which original decision do you refer to?

THE PRESIDENT: I really understood this to say: I have the choice between upholding the first decision or --
MR TUSHINGHAM: Or quashing.
THE PRESIDENT: -- quashing and returning.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, I just wanted to double-check that.

15:34 1

[^3]15:38 $\quad 1 \quad$ A. Only single time I have recommended to AOG
representatives this thing, it was at the December 2016 meeting when the Act was not yet in force. So no one pursuing back then geological survey were obliged to undergo EIA in order to go ahead with geological drilling. I have suggested that to them. Once or twice I mentioned that to the media as well when I was asked about that.
Q. Yes. And when you mentioned it in the media, you would have known that AOG would be listening to what you were saying; that's right, isn't it?
A. Well, of course. When they read the paper, it gets to them, it was one possible solution in order for removing the existing obstacles in the problem in Smilno, when we discussed in this case the Smilno site, and those obstacles occurred there.

So that was the suggestion I made in order to address and resolve this problem.
Q. Could you turn, please, or be shown the Exhibit R-144.

Now, this is an interview that Ms Marianna Varjanová gave to a newspaper on 22 November 2016; do you see that?
A. Yes. Yes.
Q. Could you turn on to page 5, please. She was asked:
"What would be the impact of the drills on nature?"

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And she responded by saying, according to this article:
"I don't dare to assess that, I'm not a professional, that's why I'm asking the minister to designate somebody to assess that and assume responsibility for the drills. As a resident I request that interventions like that be official procedures. In the EU, it is the Environmental Impact Assessment
(EIA)."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. So in this paragraph Ms Varjanová was requesting you as the Minister to designate someone to assess the environmental impact of AOG's exploratory drills; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you go back to page 1, please. Do you recall ever meeting with or speaking with Ms Varjanová at any time?
A. I do not remember that. That I would meet her.
Q. But do you recall having any discussions with any other activists who were opposed to AOG's project?
A. I know that I have met with activists. I met a bishop who got involved in that as well. I also have met with a gentleman from the VLK, that is the Wolf civic association. I would be meeting activists on multiple
occasions but I don't know exactly whether about this issue specifically I would meet with someone. I do not exclude that I might have spoken about this with someone, but I do not remember that lady.
Q. Is the gentleman from VLK that you've referred to, VLK, is his name Mr Ferko; does that ring a bell?
A. I don't know. I don't know if it was Mr Ferko, whether it was him or someone else. But -- I don't know.
I don't remember debating Smilno at the meeting specifically with some activists.
Q. Could you turn, please, to Exhibit C-157. This is a press release dated 29 November 2016, which is seven days after Ms Varjanová's article was published on 22 November; correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And the press release quoted you directly, as we see in the italicised quotes; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And you had held a press conference where you had made certain remarks in the presence of certain journalists, I assume. Is that right?
A. I don't know whether this was a press conference, only a press release, to be honest with you.
Q. But it's quoting you saying:
"With the licence --"

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15:46 1
a preliminary EIA, were you, in this press release?
A. No. That was not done, of course. In this particular case the reason why I have done so, because there was a serious dispute and I wanted to release the pressure, so to say, the extra pressure which was between the activists and the drillers, for the drillers to be able to go ahead, and for people to live there in peace, knowing nothing is threatening them and nothing serious is threatening their nature, and the nature where they live.

So it was -- and I felt that the solution to that problem is such, when we make a compromise, that either one or the other side, ideally both sides, make a compromise to be able to move forward from the stalemate situation. That was a mere suggestion.
Q. Could you just be shown, please, Exhibit R-162. Do you see, this is an email dated 29 November 2016, and you obviously won't have seen this email before, but it's reporting on a conversation that has taken place with a spokesman of you. Who was that spokesman? Who was your spokesman at the time of this email?
A. Excuse me, the name Tomáš ...
Q. Don't worry if you don't remember. I'll just ask you this.

Do you see in the next sentence it says:
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"With the licence holder - Alpine ... - he plans to agree a compromise step ..."

That's a reference to you, isn't it?
A. Of course, when we would issue press releases, they would always be a couple of sentences as a quotation when describing a problem. But it did not necessarily have to be a transcript from a press conference. If there was a press conference I think this would look differently.
Q. So it seems though that your request that AOG offer to carry out an EIA was made in direct response to the article that Ms Varjanová had published one week earlier; is that right?
A. About the fact that Madame -- what's her name -- had such article, I did not know about that, and we did not address issues based on someone else, but based on what we deemed appropriate in the given situation that needs to be done.
Q. Now, do you see in the final paragraph there is a reference to the fact that there are currently 80 exploration licences in Slovakia; do you see that?
A. Yes. Yes.
Q. And you weren't making an equivalent request to any of those other licence holders, that they perform
"She said she didn't expect [this] kind of solution from him but that he was under big pressure from media and activists."

Do you see that?
A. Excuse me, back then I had also a spokesperson. And I can see the sentence in English, but I'm not sure what it's supposed to be about.
Q. What I'm going to suggest to you is that as at this date, it's true that you were under big pressure from media and activists, and that's correct, isn't it?
A. Well, I did not feel this as any extra pressure. I only perceived it as a normal issue that needed resolving, and over the four(?) years of my mandate there were million of such, but it was definitely a problem.

Perhaps the spokesperson/lady perceived it as such because she was the wall, or the firewall, between the journalists and me; be the spokesperson. Many times I was not aware of everything going on because she would be the one absorbing those pressures from the media.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you. I have no further questions, Mr Sólymos.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
Are there questions in re-direct?
( 3.50 pm )
Re-direct examination by MR PEKAR
Q. Yes, thank you, Madam President. language versions on the screen. Perfect. questions about this document?

Or which one is it? 30 minutes ago?
A. Yes, I guess this is the one. document.
A. Okay. the title "Reasoning". It states: number... dated 27 June 2017, the party to the

Just with respect to one document. Please could we look again at Exhibit R-75, that's the decision on suspension. And again, please, if we could have both

So, Minister Sólymos, do you recall answering
A. That was the second document that I had not seen, right?
Q. No; do you recall this document was shown to you, like
Q. At the moment there is only one page. I would ask you to take your time and read the Slovak version of the
Q. So now please focus on the one paragraph which follows
"On the basis of the Ministry's call, record proceedings Alpine Oil and Gas sro, Bratislava, represented by [Mr] Benada ... has been requested to submit the results of negotiations with the party to the proceedings Lesy Slovenskej republiky ... state enterprise ... on the conclusion or non-conclusion of

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lease to AOG.
In order for us to proceed with Article 29 of the Geology Act, we simply had to have a definite position/statement. That was a decision of that appellate commission. That is why I have returned the case back to further proceedings, because according to oral meetings that were held, under the appellate commission, our co-workers had come to an impression or an opinion that it is not definite that the Lesy company would not sign a lease extension because there was some kind of a communication problem between the forest administration and the Ministry of Agriculture, in order for us to apply Article 29 of the Geology Act.

So in order for us to be able to grant AOG access, despite the owner will not grant so, we would overrule the owner's approval, we needed a definite position/statement by the Lesy that they would not extend the lease.

Now, when I'm re-reading it now, understanding this paragraph, it's the fact that the state geology administration put requests upon AOG to deliver some kind of decision, whether they do have a lease agreement or they do not, from the Lesy, in order for them to continue proceeding. And that's when the geology department had suspended proceedings.

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A. Yes.
Q. So on the basis of your reading of this document, was this request the reason why the proceedings were suspended?
A. According to what is written therein, yes.
Q. And then if we look at the third paragraph of this reasoning part:
"The Ministry shall resume the proceedings as soon as the obstacle for which the proceedings were suspended no longer exists. During the suspension of the proceedings, the time-limits pursuant to Article 29(9) of the Geology Act do not lapse."

Can you see that, sir?
A. Yes.
Q. Would you agree with -- so what is it that AOG was required to do to end the suspension?
A. According to my knowledge AOG was supposed to, in order for us to proceed in the proceedings, after my revoking the original decision, we needed one definite position of the Lesy state company as the landowner, Lesy as the forest administration, that they will not extend the
from January 2017 meant: which new exploratory drills are subject to exploration areas." looking for a legal interpretation.
A. Yes, this is a -- well, to be explained. translation. Instead of "drilling" we had in this context.

You say in paragraph 15 that the press release
"... the Environmental Impact Assessment Act has been in effect since the beginning of this year ... to an environmental impact ... process. However, this does not apply to explorations that have already been approved. This press release thus confirms that the EIA is tied to new drills, not to decisions determining

Now, I know this turns on matters of legal interpretation, but I just want to get a sense of what you understood as Minister was happening. I'm not

Am I right in thinking that the change that took place with effect from 1 January 2017, was that in relation to any area in which drilling had not begun for exploratory purposes, an EIA would be required?

MR PEKAR: I apologise, there was a mistake in the Slovak
"exploitation", which here obviously is very different

So Arbitrator Sands, I'm really sorry I interrupted, but maybe you will repeat your question so that it can

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assessment.
PROFESSOR SANDS: So if I've understood it correctly, if AOG
had put a drill in the ground on 30 December 2016, is it
the case that they would not have required this new EIA?
A. They needed not to request an EIA. That's why I asked for a voluntary one. That's the information I was given. Because they already began drilling at that stage based on the then-applicable law before 1 January 2017, when they had the well in such state they did not need EIA.

If someone after 1 January started drilling, in order to start drilling they would need to have this so-called preliminary EIA. It was the European Union condition we had had to meet by 1 January 2017.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Sorry, just because the translation was slightly odd there. My understanding was that at Smilno there had been no drill that had entered the ground by 1 January 2017, and that in accordance therefore with this law, an EIA was required; is that correct?
MR TUSHINGHAM: Sorry, is it appropriate for me to ... PROFESSOR SANDS: Please. We're just trying to work out what's going on here.
MR TUSHINGHAM: So Mr Lewis' evidence, and he refers -I can give you the exact paragraph after the break, but do you recall that they did manage to drill the

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16:00 1 be translated properly.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Okay. You've added to the confusion. I'm just trying to work out ...
(Pause)
PROFESSOR SANDS: I just want to be very clear here, this is essentially going to be, I suspect, largely a matter for legal interpretation, so I'm not asking for a legal interpretation from you, but just your understanding as Minister.

Let me put the question very simply, or as simply as I can: what was the effect of the change of law which took place on 1 January 2017 in respect of the obligation to carry out an environmental impact assessment for drilling that was exploratory where no previous drilling had taken place?
A. The Act and the -- I'll try to be straightforward with my answer.

Simply, when someone wanted to drill into ground after 1 January 2017 an exploratory drill deeper than 600 metres, before they started to drill the ground they needed an EIA, the so-called small impact assessment. Prior to 1 January 2017, such obligation did not exist. The difference is this. When they wanted to drill, they needed EIA. Previously they could do so with a permit, but after 1 January they needed the small impact
,
0 P

> conductor hole on the site, but because of the blockade on the road they weren't able to bring the drilling rig to drill further beyond the conductor hole. The conductor hole was the first stage of the well being drilled.
> PROFESSOR SANDS: And to what depth did the conductor hole go?
> MR TUSHINGHAM: I can give you the exact depth; there's a document somewhere in the record that I can pull up.
> PROFESSOR SANDS: You will understand that this is --
> I think both on the factual stuff and the technical stuff it doesn't seem appropriate to put the question to the Minister, because he is not going to know those types of details, but let me put this a different way, then.
> Let me ask the Minister: as far as you were aware,
> was the situation that as at 1 January 2017 AOG had not started to drill at Smilno for exploratory purposes?
> A. I had the information at that time, from both
> representatives of AOG when they presented to me at our meeting their work, that already in Smilno they have begun drilling. That's the information I had. And that's what I was basing my further actions on and communications on.
> PROFESSOR SANDS: So if they had begun drilling before
January 2017, why would they need to carry out an EIA?
2 I thought I had understood your evidence to be that if
3 drilling has happened, no EIA is required. So
4 I'm slightly confused as to why, after 1 January 2017,
5 it's being said they required an EIA as a matter of law
6 rather than voluntarily, when drilling had already
7 happened.
A. I think we misunderstood each other. I never said they had to, or they were obliged to do an EIA in Smilno. What I said was as a forthcoming step, in order for appease the activists, for them to be able to complete the drill they could undergo a voluntarily EIA. And as said to me on many occasions, this is not required by law because they already began -- that's the information I had -- they already began before January 1, 2017, meaning that Act could not have been retroactive.
THE PRESIDENT: So are you saying that even in 2017 the small EIA would have been voluntary?
A. No.

THE PRESIDENT: I understand it was mandatory under the law, but those who had started drilling before January 1, 2017 were not under this --
A. Exactly.

THE PRESIDENT: -- obligation. And if you understood that AOG had started drilling in 2016, then they would not be

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"... the conductor rig ... [was] able to drill the conductor hole down to a depth of 21 metres..."

Query whether that constitutes drilling for the purposes of exploration. I'm not expressing any view on that; I have no idea.

But your testimony then, Minister, is that having voluntarily assumed the obligation to engage in an EIA, your belief was that an EIA would now be required as a matter of your Ministry's practice going forward? Is that correct?
A. I have suggested it due to the -- for them to resolve the problem with the activists and Smilno inhabitants. By law, after they have met everything, they did not need an EIA in order to continue drilling. If they only wanted to drill up to 600 metres, they needed no EIA. I had no knowledge to what extent they were going to explore the area. But the rules were such, if they wanted to drill up to 400 metres they could have gone ahead, but they were unable to access the land. That was the problem.

Now, in order to remove that problem, to gain access to the land, to agree with the locals, we have proposed EIA, small voluntary EIA.
PROFESSOR SANDS: And can I understand, was your thinking about this proposal -- no, let me put the question

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16:07 $1 \quad$ subject to the obligation --
A. No.

THE PRESIDENT: -- in 2017.
A. No, they did not. They were not under this obligation. At the end of the day they have actually agreed with the activists that voluntarily they would go ahead with the small EIA. What I proposed to them back in December, they've ended up agreeing on that same in March with the activists. Had they done it in December they could have begun perhaps drilling by March. They had done exactly what I suggested, but upon agreement with the activists. I don't know what the incentive was, but that's what they had decided.

When they started drilling before January 1, 2017, mandated by law they were not to have the EIA.
PROFESSOR SANDS: And just to further complicate the matter slightly -- because I'm not expressing any views on any aspect of this, I'm just trying to feel my way through it.

I've actually worked on EIAs for more than 30 years, so I do know about EIAs, but I don't know anything about Slovak law. I do know about the EU directive.

And at Mr Lewis' first witness statement, paragraph 66, we've got the information on the second drilling attempt, as you put it, Mr Lewis:
a different way.
To what extent if at all was your thinking about this voluntary EIA proposal influenced by the proceedings brought by the European Commission in relation to EIA and the inadequacy of the pre-existing Slovak law?

In other words, did you know there was a change coming as a result of the change imposed upon Slovakia by the European Union, or was there some other motivation for you to make this proposal?
A. Do you think adoption of the Act coming into force $1 / 1 / 2017$, mandatory EIA with exploratory drills; is that what you have in mind?
PROFESSOR SANDS: Well, you are the Minister, so you, I assume, were aware that there was a change taking place. There had been a judgment of the European Court of Justice in 2015 that imposed certain EIA requirement for certain forms of exploratory drilling. There was an infringement procedure against Slovakia in relation to the inadequate transposition of that 2011 European Union directive, and so I suppose what I'm asking is: did those factors influence you as you made your proposal?
A. Of course. Well, before I assumed my position at the Ministry, there was a commission that met in a Ministry

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that made a commitment to remove this shortcoming by the end of 2016, by the Slovak Republic. That is why we adopted this Act by 1 January 2017, having removed this shortcoming held against us by the Commission, due to which we have had infringement. That should have happened a long time ago.
PROFESSOR SANDS: And final question: are you aware of any other projects in Slovakia in which issues of this kind arose, with these transitional provisions and changes and projects that were crossing over a particular time period; and if there were other projects, how were they treated? Were they treated in the same way as this project, or differently from this project?
A. Do you mean that if there was any other company having the same problems with a similar drill like AOG, whether there was other such problem?
PROFESSOR SANDS: I'm thinking slightly more broadly in terms of other projects that were caught, or possibly caught, by the change of law that was going to take place on 1 January 2017, and whether the Ministry had a general policy on how to deal with these cases, or whether this case was unique, or was treated specially?
A. Definitely this has impacted every single company who after 1 January 2017 wanted to conduct such kind of an exploratory drill deeper than 600 metres, because they

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PROFESSOR SANDS: Thank you very much for your answers. (Pause)
MR DRYMER: Sir, in certain countries a former minister is still referred to as "Minister"; is that the case in Slovakia? Should I refer to you as Mr Sólymos or Minister Sólymos?
A. Thank you very much, but please go ahead.

MR DRYMER: Alright, should I refer to you as Minister Sólymos or Mr? I'll ask the question.

Two questions. One is a very picky question about a word you used, but you know lawyers; they will split words any hundreds of ways, and I'd like to close off any possible debate about this now.

At 15.38.08 of the transcript, Mr Tushingham asked you -- it's in the transcript, it's not in your report -- whether you mentioned your proposals regarding a voluntarily, little EIA on various occasions. Your answer was: (Page 174, line 21)
"[That is the] only single time I have recommended to AOG [that they conduct a voluntary, little EIA]."

So I just want to ask you, at any time did you recommend to AOG that they do that, or were, in your view, your suggestions mere suggestions or proposals, which was the question that you were asked?

Do you see the difference between a proposal and
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16:14 1 had to undergo additional responsibility before
2 commencing drilling. So every single company conducting
exploratory work in Slovakia. But this could have included the government, the state. They also do geothermal drills. The same obligation applied to everyone.

So after 1 January 2017, if you wish to start drilling, that's the way it is.

But in Smilno, this was not the fundamental underlying problem, the EIA. There was another problem there.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Did you know at that time when you made your proposal how deep the drilling would go and, in particular, whether it would reach to 600 metres or more than 600 metres, or whether it was going to be less than 600 metres.
A. Do you think in Smilno or in general?

PROFESSOR SANDS: Just in Smilno?
A. Well, I don't know. If you look for oil -- they were looking for oil -- that usually is a depth. I'm no geologist. So there was likely, or perhaps a certainty, that they were going to go beyond 600 metres because that was what they communicated. I'm not sure how deep they were intending to go. That was not even a question at hand, whether 600 metres or beyond.
a recommendation?
A. I'm no lawyer, so ...

MR DRYMER: Right.
A. I don't even know the distinction, in this case.

I wanted to resolve the problem. I wanted to resolve the problem that had occurred, proposing an option how to resolve this problem by this procedure, by which they could remove concerns of the population that some environmental threat is threatening them. That was all.
MR DRYMER: I'll leave it there.
My second question for you is on the theme of a number of questions by Claimant's counsel regarding record-keeping and records within the Ministry.

Please accept that there is certain evidence on the record that we heard from other witnesses that there were meetings with the Ministry prior to Mr Fico's third Cabinet, in which you were a minister, specifically meetings with representatives of the Ministry under Mr Fico's second Cabinet, where I saw from the internet your predecessor was a Mr Ziga, I think.
A. Yes.

MR DRYMER: That evidence, which you haven't heard, but which we have heard and we have to determine later on, is to the effect that certain representations were made by the Ministry to AOG's representatives that the
government, and any representations that may have been made to AOG by the Ministry in that predecessor government?
A. I did not see anything. No such document that would previously be addressing the AOG issue.
MR DRYMER: Very good. That answers my question.
But just for counsel's sake, I refer, among other things, to Mr Fraser's witness statement at paragraph 43 , if you're wondering where I pulled that from.

Those were my questions, madam, sir.
THE PRESIDENT: Mr Sólymos, I understood you to say that if the -- if AOG had started drilling in 2016 they were under no obligation to do a small EIA. You said, however, they committed to the activists in March 2017 to do a small EIA.

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other companies.
THE PRESIDENT: Was it -- the other exploitation was of oil and gas, or of other minerals?
A. These were other. There was uranium, gold, other minerals, other commodities.

THE PRESIDENT: Are there other -- is there other drill exploration and production, exploitation in Slovakia of oil and gas? Because we understand there is quite a good -- a strong exploitation in Poland; but in Slovakia?
A. Yes, indeed, it exists, there are companies conducting both exploration, others who also both do exploitation of oil and gas. But we are not such a large -exploitation in such large quantities in Slovakia as they do, for instance, in Poland.
THE PRESIDENT: And where there is exploitation, is it some wells that have been established for a number of years, or in the same period?
A. Well, I know that even now there is exploration underway, some exploratory drills, and companies have tackled the EIA requirement for drills. When they go ahead with exploitation, by law, a large EIA is required automatically, in order for them to receive an exploration licence.
THE INTERPRETER: Excuse me, interpreter correction:
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Does that mean, in your view, that they had an obligation now? Because this was an agreement with the activists; this was not a commitment towards the state. How did you see the situation after they agreed with the activists?
A. Let me tell you honestly, I don't know at what stage they were realistically, those drills by AOG. I based my decision, my actions on the information I was given. Once they have agreed with the activists, again, I did not know the grounds on which they've agreed, so -I received the information from the media, in fact. I'm unable to tell you.

However, it gave me a little pleasure, because finally there was a release to the tension, or how I would put it.
THE PRESIDENT: You speak in your second witness statement about the protests and the movement of the activists. It's in paragraph 6, I believe. And I was wondering whether this type of difficulties were common in Slovakia for oil and gas exploration and production, or whether this was an unusual situation?
A. We had similar problems, but it was not exploration but exploitation, rather, in other areas with other commodities. I do not remember that such problem as at Smilno would have occurred elsewhere in Slovakia with
exploitation licence.
THE PRESIDENT: Fine. Thank you. I have no further questions, so that completes your examination, Mr Sólymos. Thank you very much for your help.
MR SÓLYMOS: Thank you. Thank you very much.
THE PRESIDENT: It's a good time for a break, and then we will hear Ms Varjanová. That is quite ... one hour and a half. So we'll see where that gets us and then hear Mr Leško or not, depending on that.

Good. Let's take 15 minutes now. Resume at 4.45.
( 4.28 pm )
(A short break)
( 4.45 pm )
MS MARIANNA VARJANOVÁ (called)
(Evidence interpreted)
THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, madam.
MS VARJANOVÁ: Good afternoon.
THE PRESIDENT: Do you hear the translation into Slovak when I speak?
MS VARJANOVÁ: Yes, I can hear that.
THE PRESIDENT: Excellent. For the record can you confirm to us that you are Marianna Varjanová?
MS VARJANOVÁ: Yes, I can confirm that.
THE PRESIDENT: You're -- what is your occupation at this stage? You are in charge, still, of the swimming pool

Direct examination by MR PEKAR
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16:49 1
and skiing resort; is that right?
MS VARJANOVÁ: Yes, this is one of my activities. Apart from that I also work for the editor, for the publisher of Denník N, which is a major daily in Slovakia.
THE PRESIDENT: I was about to ask about that, yes.
Fine. You have provided us with two written statements, the first one was dated 24 March 2023, and the second one 11 December 2023. You have them there, I see.
MS VARJANOVÁ: Yes, indeed.
THE PRESIDENT: And, as you know, you're heard as a witness. As a witness you are under a duty to tell us the truth. Can you please confirm this by reading into the record the witness declaration that you will find just in front of you.
MS VARJANOVÁ: I solemnly declare upon my honour and conscience that I shall speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
So I'll first turn to Respondent's counsel for
introductory questions, and then we'll turn to
Claimant's counsel.
Mr Pekar.
( 4.47 pm )

The answer is either yes or no.
A. Yes, I can see the line.
Q. Yes. And that black line, to your knowledge, is that a public road?
A. No.
Q. That's the road that AOG needed to use to access its drilling site; that's right, isn't it?
A. Well, it can be -- it can be a land lot, which is on a similar site, as is the site where the AOG was trying to reach its drilling location.
Q. And that's the place where you were blocking with vehicles AOG's access, starting in December of 2015; that's right, isn't it?
A. Yes.
Q. And in December 2015, there was no injunction in place against AOG preventing it from using that road, was there?
A. Yes.
Q. Is it correct that in about 2015, December 2015, you started a Facebook page entitled "Oil in Smilno"?
A. Yes.
Q. And you gained quite a lot of followers of that page, didn't you?
A. It's difficult to estimate what is a high number of followers.

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[^4][^5]2016 on that page, and your name at the top?
A. Yes, I can see that, but this is not a blog in terms of a continuous publishing of information. This is a single event. The four articles are a finite number of articles.
Q. I understand. But in the description of this collection of articles you say:
"In my free time, I block road and give statements to the police."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. So one of the roads that you blocked during your free time was the curved black line we saw on the map we looked at earlier, and that's correct, isn't it?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-325. And the

Slovak, please, as well. Do you see this as a post on your Facebook page dated 23 June 2016; do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And do you see the sentence beginning:
"Until morning, my car was standing on the access road. In particular, I want to say to the people of Smilno that I know very well how annoying it is to bypass it and I want to thank them for their patience." Do you see that?

17:00 1 Q. Now, this Facebook post suggests, on my reading of it, that the people of Smilno used the road quite frequently; is that right?
A. I cannot assess what the term "quite often" means.
Q. Well, you're apologising in this post, as I read it, for the inconvenience that you are causing them by having your car standing on the access road. Isn't that what's happening in this post?
A. Yes, that sentence has been read correctly.
Q. Now, if the road was a private road, you wouldn't have needed to make that public apology to the people of Smilno, would you?
A. Could you please repeat the question?
Q. Of course. If the road was a private road, you would not have needed to apologise to the people of Smilno for how annoying it was for them to bypass your car that was on the access road?
A. It's a hypothesis.
Q. You then go on to say, a few sentences forward: "We towed the car and the road is clear. Anyone except miners can use it." Do you see that?
A. No.

## (Pause)

THE PRESIDENT: You can carry on.
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16:58 $\quad 1 \quad$ A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And at this time in 2016, Smilno had a population of about 600 people; is that right? 600 to 700 ?
A. I don't have the precise information on the number of inhabitants. I cannot confirm this information.
Q. Well, not all of the residents of Smilno were co-owners of the land plot which you co-owned and that you were trying to -- that were the subject of disputes with AOG; correct?
A. Could you repeat the question, please?
Q. You were a co-owner of a land plot in Smilno; is that right?
A. Yes. I'm a co-owner of multiple land lots -- land parcels in Smilno. To this extent the information is correct. I don't know which specific land lot you refer to.
Q. If you just cast your mind back to the map we looked at earlier with the curved black road, do you co-own a land plot that runs along that road?
A. Yes.
Q. And so not all of the residents of Smilno were co-owners of that land plot, were they?
A. Yes.
Q. You're agreeing with my proposition; is that right?
A. Yes.

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MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes, of course. Thank you, Madam President.
    Just reading on a few sentences in that Facebook
    post, Madame Varjanová, it's the passage that's been
    highlighted. Could you please read that to yourself.
    (Pause)
        Have you read that now?
    A. Yes, I have.
    Q. And you're acknowledging here that this is a public road
        which everyone can use apart from AOG, aren't you?
    A. I don't agree with this interpretation to the full
    extent.
        (Pause)
    THE PRESIDENT: Good, I think we can continue.
    MR TUSHINGHAM: I am going to move on to a new topic.
        Ms Varjanová, is it true that in 2016 you developed
    a nickname in Smilno as "the one standing on the road"?
A. I don't recall anything like that.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit R-144, page 7. This
    is an interview you gave on 22 November 2016 to the
    newspaper Denník N, and on page 7 you were asked:
        "You had to stand six hours in freezing weather.
    What did you feel?"
        And you said:
        "'The One Standing on the Road' is my indigenous
    nickname ..."
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Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see the text.
Q. And the road you're referring to is the road we saw on the map, isn't it?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you please turn to your first witness statement at paragraph 14 , which you may have in paper copy in front of you. And you say in the second sentence:
"In fact, we came to believe that AOG was intentionally pursuing a policy of sharing as little information as possible."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see the text.
Q. Do you accept that AOG held a town hall meeting on 16 June 2015 where its project to drill an exploration well in Smilno was explained to the local community?

If you don't recall, please tell me and I can show you a document, if that would assist.
A. Could you please repeat the question again?
Q. Maybe I'll just show you a document instead. If you could please be shown Exhibit R-17. And the Slovak, please, as well.

This was an invitation to an all-day public meeting to be held on 16 June 2015 in the municipal office in Smilno; do you see that?

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17:11 1 A. I cannot confirm that these were plans.
2 Q. Could you please be shown C-286. We looked at this document just before, but do you see the photographs there of the town hall meeting, which is referred to as having taken place on 17 June 2016?

Sorry, the Facebook post is dated 23 December, but I think you're referring to the meeting that took place in June of that year; do you see that? (Pause)

Does this refresh your memory about what happened on that day at that meeting?
A. Well, the picture is not from the -- from 2 June 2016.
Q. If you just read on a few sentences, you say:
"So it happened and we all met at the Municipal Office on June 17. Anyone who wanted to hear information directly from the main actors and ask them questions could do so."

Do you see that?
A. Everyone who came to the municipal office during the time of the town hall meeting could raise questions, yes. What I am describing in the Facebook post refers to 2 June, but this public meeting did not take place in Smilno.
Q. Okay. Could you please be shown now Exhibit C-287. This is another post from your Facebook page dated 24 December 2015, but you're reporting on a pamphlet

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17:09 $\quad 1 \quad$ A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And do you see that in the second -- or that in the box it says:
"The meeting is convened due to Alpine ... planning to commence oil and natural gas exploitation in the cadastral area of our municipality.

Attendees shall include:
The company's representatives who will explain and present the whole course of the exploration and exploitation as well as the related context."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see the text.
Q. And do you recall attending that town hall meeting in June of 2015?
A. Yes.
Q. And that meeting was attended by the mayor, members of the council, as well as citizens and journalists; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And at that meeting AOG presented their technical plans about the project, didn't they?
A. I don't recall exactly whether these were technical plans.
Q. They explain their plans in general; would you accept that?
that you appear to have received, or that reached you, on around 22 June 2015; do you see that?
A. I can see my post where I refer to the written document that we have been given.
Q. Yes, and in that pamphlet or in the document, AOG provided technical information about its proposed well in Smilno, didn't it?
A. I wouldn't fully agree. In this case, this is not the full disclosure of technical information. This is a very brief information.
Q. Well, if you look at the table, it shows you the depth of the well, the type of casing that's going to be used, the cementation, the rinsing and the drilling time, and it also gives a cross-section of the well, doesn't it?
A. Would you please enlarge the Slovak original on the screen?

Could you now please repeat the question?
Q. Yes, do you accept that in this section of the document, AOG is providing technical information about the nature of the gas well that it's proposing to drill in Smilno?
A. I wouldn't really agree. This is a very brief information that can hardly be regarded as a full technical description of the project.
Q. In July of 2015 you then organised a petition against AOG's project; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And so by the time you had organised your petition, you and other residents had already attended the town hall meeting and it's likely that you and other residents would have received this document; do you agree?
A. I did receive it. I cannot confirm whether other citizens had received it as well.
Q. And do you agree that a significant number of the residents of Smilno actually supported AOG's project?
A. I have no such information.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-348. This is an article published by the Minister of Environment, Mr Sólymos, on 3 December 2016, and in the penultimate paragraph of his article, on the third page in English, and the second page I think in Slovak at the bottom, there is a sentence where he says:
"At the same time, however ..."
And he is talking about the village of Smilno:
"... I want to say that there is also a significant part of the residents of this village ..."

Sorry, I think we've gone to the wrong page on the English. It's page 3 on the English.
Yes, so you say -- Minister Sólymos says in his article here, he's talking about Smilno:
"At the same time, however, I want to say that there
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17:20 $\quad 1$
2 A. Could you please enlarge it? (Pause)
that?
Q. And do you see, in the penultimate paragraph of the letter, the Ministry says to you -- this is a letter addressed to you:
"Since there is no illegality in the procedure or the decision-making activity of the Ministry in the given matter, and since all decisions regarding the Svidník licence exploration area are final and for this reason they are presumed to be factually correct and legal, and in the given matter there is also no contradiction with the public or other general interest, the petition submitted by the residents of the village... cannot be granted."

Do you see that?
A. I cannot see the whole of the paragraph.
Q. Do you see it on the right-hand side of the image, where you see the stamp, the paragraph that begins -- please forgive me my pronunciation:
"Nakol'ko ..."
Do you recall receiving this letter from the
Ministry in August 2015?
A. I cannot recall very well.
Q. But do you recall in general terms the Ministry of Environment telling you in August of 2015: we do not

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17:18 $1 \quad$ is also a significant part of the residents of this
village that supports the company's geological surveys, so the whole matter cannot be viewed in black and white."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And what the Minister said here is true, isn't it?
A. It's his opinion.
Q. You then attended a further town hall meeting in Smilno on 23 July 2015; is that right?
A. I cannot really confirm the date, but there was a second meeting at the municipal office.
Q. Yes. And at that meeting you requested the Smilno council to express its support for your petition. Is that correct?
A. In the description of the petition is a call to the municipal assembly to support it. So yes, we asked the municipal assembly to support the petition.
Q. And did you then send the results of the petition to the Ministry of Environment in Bratislava?
A. Not me in person, definitely.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-288. This is a post on your Facebook page, dated 24 December 2015, and you refer to a letter from the Ministry of Environment addressed to you, dated 21 August 2015. Do you see
agree that in about July 2015 there wer various media stories published, or broadcast on TV channels, about AOG's plan to carry out drilling in Smilno?
A. Yes, this was an issue that has been present in the media.
Q. And do you recall a protest taking place in Prešov in January of 2016 about AOG's project?
A. Yes.
Q. And that protest was covered quite extensively in the regional media in around that time, early 2016; is that right?
A. I don't recall whether it was covered by the regional media outlets.
Q. Could we look, please, at Exhibit R-016. Do you see this is an article published by the media outlet Korzár Prešov dated 12 January 2016?
A. Yes, I can see it.
Q. And if you go over to the next page, do you see references to protesters, together with conservationists and members of the National Council marching down to the office of the governor of Smer; Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. Do you recall attending this protest in Prešov in January of 2016?

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witness statement and he has only given it in English,
but ...
THE PRESIDENT: Can you ask the question without reference?
Because otherwise you really have to translate it to
her. It is not fair otherwise.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Please forgive me.
Could you please explain, is TV JOJ a national news broadcasting outlet?
A. This is a question that should be addressed to TV JOJ.

I have no idea what the coverage of TV JOJ is.
Q. Have you watched TV JOJ ever in your life?
A. Very seldomly.
Q. Is it based in Bratislava, to your knowledge?
A. According to my information, it is based in Bratislava.
Q. And your coverage about AOG's project also extended onto the radiowaves; is that right?
A. This wouldn't be a correct interpretation.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-304. Now, this is an email, of course, that you won't have seen, but
I'm going to just read into the record some words from the email and they will be interpreted to you in Slovak, and then I will ask you a question.
This is an email dated 6 April 2016, subject line "Radio Regina (Slovak radio) today", and the email reads:

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A. I did take part.
Q. Do you agree that in about January of 2016 you turned up at the Smilno site, together with a camera crew from a TV station called TV JOJ?
A. I don't recall whether I came to the site precisely with the camera crew from this TV.
Q. Could you please be shown Mr Fraser's first witness statement at paragraph 41. And do you see in the penultimate sentence he's talking about events in January 2016:
"Ms Varjanová then appeared, with two other activists and a camera crew from TV JOJ."

Do you see that? It's Mr Fraser's first witness statement. Yes, on the left-hand side, Ms Varjanová, in the penultimate sentence it reads:
"Ms Varjanová then appeared, with two other activists and a camera crew from TV JOJ."

Do you see that?
A. I see English sentences.
Q. Yes. And so it's fair to say by this time, in January 2016, the opposition to the project was gaining coverage on TV. Could you just tell us what TV JOJ is?
A. Could I please see this document in Slovak, the one that you refer to?
Q. I am afraid we don't have it because it's Mr Fraser's

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"Ms Varjanová arguments:

- The company does not communicate with landowners.
- AOG is for people unreliable form - literally she says that there is nothing to convince her to cooperate with AOG."

And that's what you said in your interview on Radio
Regina in April of 2016; is that correct?
THE PRESIDENT: I think you didn't say who wrote it and to whom it was addressed.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Apologies, yes.
So this is an email from a PR advisor, who
I understand was engaged by Discovery, an email addressed to Mr Fraser, Mr Lewis and others, and he's reporting on a radio interview that you appear to have given that day on Radio Regina. Do you recall giving that interview?
A. Yes, I did take part in an interview with Mr Benada in Radio Regina.
Q. And do you agree that during that interview you said:
"... there is nothing to convince her to cooperate with AOG."
A. I don't recall this exact form of words.
Q. Do you recall that during this interview, AOG's representative invited you to join them on a coach trip which had been planned for local residents to visit

17:33 $1 \quad$ wells in Moravia in the Czech Republic?
A. It is possible that such invitation was given.
Q. But you declined that invitation; is that correct?
A. No.
Q. But you visited Moravia on your own; is that my understanding of your testimony from your witness statement? (Pause)
THE PRESIDENT: I'm not sure, did we get an answer to the question. No?

You said you did not decline the invitation to visit the sites -- AOG's invitation to visit the sites in Moravia. Did you get an invitation?
A. I don't remember saying no to an invitation during an interview for a radio.

THE PRESIDENT: Did you remember receiving an invitation?
A. It is possible that during the interview with Mr Benada there was an invitation given, but I don't remember refusing it.
THE PRESIDENT: But you did not go to this site visit in Moravia?
A. Not with Mr Benada.

THE PRESIDENT: You went on your own; is that right?
A. Yes. I visited it privately.

MR TUSHINGHAM: And do you recall, Ms Varjanová, in November 2016 you gave an interview with the

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17:38 1
A. I have no such information.
Q. Can I now ask you some questions about the interim injunction. Could you turn to your first witness statement at paragraph 27. Do you have that?
A. Yes, I have the paragraph 27 in front of me.
Q. And you say that -- you refer here to the court proceedings that you filed on 21 January 2016; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And you refer to Ms Rajtáková as your lawyer; is that correct?
A. Yes, Madame Rajtáková is indeed mentioned in paragraph 27.
Q. And did you know her before you instructed her in January 2016?
A. I did not know her.
Q. But she had previously acted for VLK; is that correct?
A. I have no such information.
Q. Were you aware, if you go to the next paragraph, paragraph 28 , you say here:
"I do not remember all the details of the court cases and all the legal technicalities. My lawyer handled these for me ..."

You would have been aware though of the details of your claim for an interim injunction against AOG,

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A. It's possible. I don't recall exactly the interview, but it's possible.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit R-144. And at page 5, this is an interview -- sorry, if we just, in fairness, go back to the first page so I can show you what it is.

Is this the interview that you gave on 22 November -- or the interview that was published on 22 November 2016?
A. Yes, I can see the interview.
Q. And on page 5 the journalist appears to have asked you: "What would be the impact of the drills on nature?" And you said: "I don't dare to assess that, I'm not a professional, that's why I'm asking the minister to designate somebody to assess that and assume responsibility for the drills."

Do you see that?
A. Yes, I can see the text.
Q. Do you recall ever meeting with the Minister to discuss the question of environmental impact assessments?
A. I did not meet the Minister.
Q. Do you recall whether anyone associated with VLK, including Mr Lukac, attended a meeting with Mr Sólymos in about November 2016?
A. Yes, I agree with the wording in paragraph 28.
Q. But my question was: were you aware of the details of your request for an interim injunction that you sought against AOG in 2016?
A. We did partially consult these issues with my legal counsel, so I was relying on her legal opinion, and we were in contact.
Q. Understood. Could you please be shown Exhibit MS-5, which is in bundle 4, subfolder C. And if we could get the Slovak original, please.
As I understand it, the document on the right is your claim filed with the Bardejov District Court, accepted on 21 January 2016; do you see that?
A. There is a window over it so I can't see it, exactly.

MR DRYMER: If you look at maybe the small screen next to you; is that helpful? I think it's the same.
A. Yes, I can see it now.

MR TUSHINGHAM: And my question is, if you read through this document to page 3 and then on to page 5 of the Slovak.
If you turn to page 3. That's your signature, is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And if you look down the page a bit, if we scroll down
the page on the Slovak -- are we on page 3 on the

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Slovak? Do you see it says "Request for an Interim Injunction"; do you see that?
A. Yes. I can see the request for an interim injunction.
Q. And my only question is: are you aware of any other documents that you submitted to the court in support of your application for an interim injunction, apart from this document here?
A. Well, this would fall under the responsibility of my legal counsel. I was submitting all these issues in her name. She was representing me. So this was not an activity that I would be personally involved with.
MR TUSHINGHAM: Thank you very much. I have no further questions.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
MR PEKAR: No questions, Madam President.
THE PRESIDENT: No questions in re-direct.
Do my colleagues have questions?
( 5.44 pm )
Questions from THE TRIBUNAL
MR DRYMER: Hello, Madame Varjanová. It's a pleasure to see you since your name has appeared in so many of the writings. I'm very pleased, I think we're pleased to see you here in person. Thank you.
Please take it from me that even if you haven't seen it, it's been suggested to us during this hearing that

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17:47 1 A. I feel like a citizen. Not like an activist.
MR DRYMER: Very good.
Can you, sir, turn up C-418, please. It's a map. Of course!

Do you see that, Madame Varjanová?
A. Yes, I can see the map.

MR DRYMER: We've heard, again, a lot about the ski resort and the ski hill where you worked. Are you able to describe where that is on this map? I'm not sure how, but in relation to the drilling site are you able to describe, left, right, up, down, where the ski hill is? Is it on this map somewhere?
A. It cannot be located on this map.

MR DRYMER: Ah, okay. Okay, that's good. Alright, it's nowhere in the -- very good. These are the only maps, or some of the only maps we have.

Have you participated in campaigns related to other oil and gas activities in the Slovak Republic, or neighbouring countries?
A. No.

MR DRYMER: Thank you. Those are my questions, madam.
THE PRESIDENT: Ms Varjanová, we heard a lot about your actions and what is striking is that you were very determined and carried on in a quite consistent manner over quite some time. And I was asking myself what your

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17:45 1 you were completely unwilling to discuss your
2 environmental concerns with the company, and that no matter what they said, you wouldn't listen, you simply wanted them to go home and go away. That's what we've heard, and it remains for us to decide what to do with that. But I'd like to ask you how you respond to that?
A. This is the first time I hear such a claim.

MR DRYMER: Alright. Having heard it, do you think it's accurate?
A. It's not a good wording, I would say -- a good description.
MR DRYMER: Were you willing to listen to what representatives of the company might have said at the time in response to the concerns that you expressed?
A. I was willing to listen to them where they were present, for example, during the town hall meeting in the Smilno village.
MR DRYMER: Alright, I'll move on.
You have been referred to, again, in evidence that you haven't heard but we've heard, you've been referred to as an "activist". Does that offend you in any way?
A. It is not an exact description or a good description, but it doesn't offend me at all.
MR DRYMER: Do you agree with that description? I think you just said no, but I'm not sure.
motivation was. You said just before, you're a citizen, you're not an activist. What is your main reason for being so engaged? There are other people in Smilno who may be worried, but no one really made this commitment that you had, or showed this commitment that you had all through several years. What's your motivation?
A. I'm a person of principle, so therefore my motivation -and I would like to remain in the civic dimension. So my motivation is to demand respect towards my property rights, because they were not always respected. I obviously value -- I respect values, including the values of the environment, I very much mind the protection of the environment. I pay good attention to the possible dangers and threats to the environment. And the reason for that is also the fact that I work in the field of tourism, and all these motivations are mutually interlinked, but they remain to be the main motivations for me to work.
THE PRESIDENT: When you say you are a person of principle, what was the principle at stake?
A. The main principle is the protection of private property.
THE PRESIDENT: That was more important than other principles or values, or, how would you say that?
A. It wasn't more important, but this was the one that was
the most easiest to approach because I was an owner of the land lot, and therefore that was the one that was on top, in terms of accessibility.
THE PRESIDENT: And you mentioned just before that, you work in tourism and that this was also a motivation. How did this play in your determination?
A. It plays an important role because I work for a company which is a natural swimming pool. Its whole value is based on a natural, clean, pristine environment.
Therefore its protection of the environment is a priority for me.
THE PRESIDENT: How far away is it from Smilno, from the village or from the drilling site?
A. By bird's flight, approximately 3 kilometres, less than that.
THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Is this also where there is a ski resort?
A. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Is there a lot of skiing? Because it doesn't seem very high up. So is there a lot of snow, even with climate change, or how is it? I'm just trying to visualise things.
MR DRYMER: The three of us are skiers, by the way.
A. Very nice, I'm very pleased to hear that. Yes, you can have fantastic skiing holidays there. Obviously, given

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I have no further questions, so I would like to thank you for taking the trouble to discuss this with us. Thank you.

You can stay here or you can be released.
MS VARJANOVÁ: I will be very happy to stay, and it was a pleasure for me. Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: It is almost 6 o'clock. Should we carry on? Should we do it on Monday morning? We can also start half an hour earlier on Monday, because -- I see my co-arbitrators nodding quite forcefully.

But how do the parties see it?
MR PEKAR: Mr Leško would prefer to be cross-examined today but I think it depends on the length of his cross-examination.
THE PRESIDENT: It's short, according to the schedule.
MR TUSHINGHAM: It's pretty short, but -- could I just take a moment to just confer for one second, would you mind?
THE PRESIDENT: Please.
(Pause)
MR TUSHINGHAM: I think I can probably cut it down to about between five to ten minutes, depending on ...
THE PRESIDENT: I mean, you should have -- you have the right to ask your questions, right.

MR TUSHINGHAM: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: So we're not pressing you to cut down if you feel you have to ask these questions. If you can cut it down having considered this, then of course it's fine.
MR TUSHINGHAM: I think I would prefer, if it would be acceptable to the Tribunal, if we could sort of -I will be 10 minutes, I think, at most, and would that be sufficient to sort of -- so we can wrap up his testimony today?
THE PRESIDENT: You would prefer to do it now, is that what you're saying?
MR TUSHINGHAM: I think I would, if that's alright.
THE PRESIDENT: What is it on the other side?
MR PEKAR: That's the same; we would prefer to do it today. THE PRESIDENT: Yes, then we have to obey.
MR TUSHINGHAM: We are very grateful for your indulgence.
THE PRESIDENT: Let's bring Mr Leško in, then.
( 5.57 pm )
MR L'UBOŠ LEŠKO (called)
(Evidence interpreted)
THE PRESIDENT: Good evening, sir. You had to wait for a long time. Do you hear the translation into Slovak?
MR LEŠKO: Yes, the interpreting works well. Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: Good. Can you confirm that you are L'uboš Leško?

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MR LEŠKO: Yes, I am L'uboš Leško.
THE PRESIDENT: You provide accounting and economic advisory
services as a consultant; is that right?
MR LEŠKO: Yes. That as well.
THE PRESIDENT: And in 1997 you joined the forest protection organisation, VLK.
MR LEŠKO: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: You have given us one written statement --
no, you have given us two witness statements, apologies.
The first one, 24 March 2023, and the second one,
11 December 2023.
MR LEŠKO: Yes.
THE PRESIDENT: You're heard as a witness and under a duty to tell us the truth. Can you please read the witness declaration that is in front of you.
MR LEŠKO: I solemnly declare upon my honour and conscience
that I shall speak the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
So I first give the floor to Mr Pekar.
MR PEKAR: Thank you, Madam President. In the interests of time we have no questions.
THE PRESIDENT: Then I turn to you, Mr Tushingham.
( 5.59 pm )
Cross-examination by MR TUSHINGHAM

Mr Leško, good afternoon. I will be asking you some very brief questions this afternoon. Could you turn to your first witness statement, please, at paragraph 20.

Now, in this paragraph you are describing in general terms the concerns that you and others had about AOG's project; have I got that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And in the sentence beginning:
"I recall that many people were concerned about shale gas ..." And then over the page:
"... fracking, and use of dangerous chemicals."
Do you see that sentence?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. And is that true that that was -- those were some of the concerns that you held at the time about AOG's project?
A. Yes.
Q. And as you say, fracking in particular had been heavily discussed, and had that been discussed in the media?
A. What was the question, please? If you could repeat it?
Q. My question was: you say that fracking was heavily discussed at the time. Do you recall that it was being discussed in the media?
A. I think yes, it was also mentioned in some newspaper

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2015, 2016 and 2017; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you see in this document that one myth that AOG
was reporting on was the suggestion that:
"Shale gas and oil will be extracted in the area."
Number 1; do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And AOG says:
"Fact: not true. The anticipated oil or gas
deposits in the study area are of the conventional type.
These are not shale gas deposits."
Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you accept that AOG was not trying to explore for shale gas in Smilno?
A. That is okay at the beginning, or very early. The information arrived quite late. So at the beginning the information did not have precise information about what is going to happen.
Q. But as at the date of this document, which is November 2016, you knew that that was not going to be undertaken by AOG, didn't you?
A. I cannot confirm whether I knew it at that particular point in time.
Q. Okay. Do you see the second myth that's being referred

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Q. And could you please be shown Exhibit C-344. So you should see on the screen on the right-hand side a press release by AOG in November 2016 in Slovak, and on the left-hand side the English; do you see that?
A. Yes, I see it.
Q. And if you turn to page 2, do you see there is a section entitled "Myths and facts"?
A. Yes.
Q. And the press release says:
"Exploratory drilling is opposed by local activist groups who use false arguments, most notably ..." Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And were you one of the activist groups who was opposing the exploratory drilling? Were you part of one of the local activist groups?
A. If you could please repeat the question: whether I was one of the activists who what?
Q. So, please forgive me. I understand -- I understood from your witness statement that you have been associated with the forest protection association VLK; is that correct?
A. Yes, that is correct.
Q. And VLK was a group who was opposed to AOG's project in

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to there:
"The exploration area will be contaminated with hexavalent chromium".

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you recall hearing discussions about the chemical hexavalent chromium associated with AOG's project?
A. It is possible. It is possible that it has been mentioned somewhere.
Q. And do you see that in this document AOG's says again:
"Fact: Not true."
A. I understand that this is what the document says.
Q. Yes, and then the third myth that's being referred to here is:
"Extraction contaminates groundwater."
And then again over the page it says:
"Fact: Not true."
Do you see that?
A. Yes, I see that.
Q. Now, VLK was one of the organisations which was responsible for spreading these arguments about AOG's project; is that right?
A. This wouldn't be fully true. This wouldn't be true to the full extent.
Q. But do you accept that VLK, or persons associated with

VLK, were raising issues concerned with hexavalent chromium, potential contamination of groundwater, and potential use of shale gas exploration?
A. Yes, I can concur to that extent that it was, to a certain degree, possible or somehow possible that these methods will also be used and that these risks will also arise. However, it was never claimed in terms of this being a fact.
Q. Now, do you recall that in 2017 AOG submitted preliminary environmental impact assessment applications for its three exploration wells to the districts officers?
A. Yes.
Q. And if you turn to your first witness statement at paragraph 27, you say here that:
"When the screening procedure commenced ..."
And as I understand it, that is after AOG has filed its preliminary EIA applications:
"... AROPANE (another activist organisation), other activists, and numerous local citizens exercised their right and filed official comments within the proceeding."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And in addition, VLK also submitted comments and these

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Slovak, at item number 17:
"[VLK] requests that the proposed activity be further assessed on the grounds that it poses a high risk of deterioration of the environment, with an emphasis on water bodies and, in particular, the wetland water body, which will be destroyed by the activity proposed."

Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And so VLK's concern was, in that regard though, not supported by any evidence, was it? VLK didn't refer to any evidence in this passage?
A. Well, VLK basically used the opportunity to make sure that this activity would be assessed in terms of its environmental impact.

But I still don't understand what's your point, where you're heading.
Q. Well, my question is this. In the myths and facts document that we looked at earlier, one of the myths that activist groups were spreading was a concern about groundwater contamination; do you remember that?
A. I remember the document that I have seen, but this doesn't mean that this is what VLK has been saying.
Q. Were you involved in VLK's submission to the Medzilaborce district office?

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18:12 1 process; do you recall that?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-186. And in the English version it is page 2, and in the Slovak version it is page 122.

Do you see item number 17:
"Forest protection grouping VLK ..."
Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And this was the submission that was made by VLK to the Medzilaborce district office in connection with the environmental impact assessment proceedings at Krivá Ol'ka; correct?
To be fair, please could the witness be shown page 1 of that document.

Do you see a reference there to the Medzilaborce district office?
A. Yes.
Q. Dated 8 March 2018, in relation to the proposed activity site of the exploratory well at Krivá Ol'ka. Do you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. And if you go back to the page we were looking at before, so page 2 in the English, page 122 in the
A. Not me in person.

MR TUSHINGHAM: I have no further questions, then, to ask about this.
THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.
MR PEKAR: No questions, Madam President.
( 6.12 pm )
Questions from THE TRIBUNAL
PROFESSOR SANDS: I just wonder if I could just understand correctly what the interest of VLK was with relation to the previous witness; the President asked questions about what her intentions were.

Would it be right to summarise the objective of VLK as being to obtain a complete environmental impact assessment of the project in the round?
A. The association VLK, and the interest we had, was to make sure that the exploration sites were a part of a larger area. And the intention in the individual locations, in the individual sites where the exploration drills were proposed, this could have a possible impact on other areas. And what VLK was trying to achieve was to exclude the possibility of damaging these other areas.
PROFESSOR SANDS: So you managed to obtain a voluntary commitment by AOG to carry out a preliminary environmental screening; is that correct?

18:14 $1 \quad$ A. Well, I wouldn't attribute this solely to VLK. Simply there were other factors which basically forced AOG to voluntarily undergo the environmental impact assessment procedure.
PROFESSOR SANDS: And you then say in paragraph 27 of your first witness statement that on the basis of that initial voluntary screening, you say:
"... the environmental authorities ordered mandatory assessment of the exploration drills."

So that took you to the next stage; is that right?
A. What next stage, you mean?

PROFESSOR SANDS: A full environmental impact assessment.
A. Yes. Yes. Indeed. The initial assessments came to the conclusion that further assessment is necessary, and therefore a full EIA needs to be launched.
PROFESSOR SANDS: And if we turn to the document that counsel raised, C-186, if you go this time to page 3 of C-186 in the English, we see halfway down, in the context of the participation in this full environmental impact assessment:
"A total of 17 statements of state administration bodies and the municipalities concerned were received... [and] a total of 174 statements ... from the public concerned ..."

Is that a significant number, or is that roughly

18:18 1

> impact assessment, but I suppose that this would mean that the assessment of individual negative impacts will need to be carried out. Those that would stem from the technical implementation of the project. And this basically is also something that the public would accept, where independent experts would be able to assess and to give a final verdict, whether it is okay or not okay in terms of possible damages to the environment.

PROFESSOR SANDS: So from the perspective of VLK, would your organisation's assessment be, this is an example of the law working as it should: you as an organisation raised certain concerns, others raised concerns, the project developer expressed its views, and other state authorities expressed views, and the decision-maker then said: we want a further assessment?
A. Well, yes, this is how I envisaged it. This is how it should work, and this is what we've missed. People simply did not believe the declaration of the AOG company because they heard only one side. They needed to have the other side as well and they needed to be assured that it is okay, and yes, as you described it, this is how it should work and this is what the procedure should look like.

PROFESSOR SANDS: And what was your reaction when you then

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18:16 $1 \quad$ what you would have expected, or was it less than what you expected? Can you give us a sense of how significant was that interest, and what were the state administration bodies involved?
A. I cannot reply. I cannot respond to this question. Whether it's a higher, smaller extent in terms of the scope, unfortunately this is not my expertise.
PROFESSOR SANDS: Okay. And then if you go to the next page -- well, in fact, two pages down, the bottom of page 5 , right at the bottom of page 5 and on to page 6 :
"On the basis of the examination and assessment..."
That's sort of seven lines up from the bottom:
"On the basis of the examination and assessment of the submitted project, the comments of the authorities concerned and the public concerned and in view of the assessment of the overall level of environmental protection ... the competent authority [that's the decision-maker] concluded that it was not possible to exclude the likely significant impact of the proposed activity, in particular in terms of nature and landscape protection and public health, and therefore decided as indicated in the operative part of this Decision."

If you could explain to us what happens next in the process, under the law, as far as you understand it?
A. I am not an expert on the Act on the environmental
heard that AOG was not going to proceed to the next stage? Were you surprised?
A. Yes.

PROFESSOR SANDS: Thank you very much.
MR DRYMER: Very quickly, sir. Did you and VLK ... how can I put this. Were you confident that these EIA procedures would resolve your environmental concerns; in other words get to the bottom of the issues and potentially allow the project to go forward?
A. Well, yes, sir, because there were multiple open-ended questions and there was a large volume of distrust towards what the company presented, or how they carried out their activities, and this would be a truly independent assessment. And I think it would contribute towards calming the atmosphere.
MR DRYMER: Very good. Thank you.
THE PRESIDENT: I have no further questions. So that ends your examination. Thank you very much, Mr Leško. You're now released. You can stay with us if you wish, or you can leave.

We are almost done, but before we break for the weekend, or what is left of it, we'll look at the time records tonight and see where we stand. I think we're caught up now, and we are doing fine. If needed, we can stay a little longer on Monday, just to make sure that

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we're not pressed as we get to the end, like on
2 Wednesday or so; we should make sure that we have 3 sufficient time.
4 Having said that, I assume that you will get some 5 rest, but you will also prepare for next week, and we 6 thought that we should let you know we had discussions $7 \quad$ within the Tribunal over these last days, and we would 8 appreciate if, in respect of the quantum experts, you 9 could focus your examination questions on the methods 10 other than income-based methods. That is on costs and 11 market-based methods. That really goes to Mr Howard and 12 Mr Duarte-Silva.
13 Are there any questions, comments, that you'd like 14 to raise before we close for the day? On the Claimant's 15 side?

MR TUSHINGHAM: Nothing from the Claimant's side.
MR PEKAR: Nothing for the Respondent.
THE PRESIDENT: No. Then I wish everyone a good Sunday, some rest, and we'll see each other at 9.30 on Monday.

Goodbye, everyone.
MR PEKAR: Thank you.
( 6.23 pm )
(The hearing adjourned until 9.30 am on Monday, 5 February 2024)

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Anne-Marie Stallard for Trevor McGowan


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Re-amended for Trevor McGowan by the parties


[^0]:    so they don't use the main road. They rather cross through the fields.
    MR PEKAR: And that would be because of Mr Stefansky, right?
    A. Sorry?
    Q. That would be because of Mr Stefansky, the police director who lives in the village?
    A. No, not in that village. He lives in a different village.
    Q. But he might see them on the state road, right?
    A. Not him. He was a director. He never stopped vehicles. It was his subordinance, I suppose.
    Q. So now going back to how the road is described in official documents, now in official documents. Let's look at document C-139.

    So this is the extract from the Land Registry for the same plot, C-945, that we have been discussing all the time; correct?
    A. Yes.
    Q. And then when we read the legend, "Way of using the plot".

    It says:
    "22 - Land, on which an engineering structure is built - road, local and special-purpose road, forest road, field road, sidewalk, uncovered parking lot and parts thereof."

[^1]:    Q. So in order for police officers in the larger city of Prešov to drive you to the scene, it must have been a fairly important matter to them, mustn't it?
    THE PRESIDENT: I understood the witness to say that the policemen in black were not those who drove her.
    MR TUSHINGHAM: I'm sorry, I misunderstood the answer. Yes. Could you now be shown Exhibit C-321. And the original Slovak on the right, please. (Pause)
    THE PRESIDENT: Can you read it?
    MR TUSHINGHAM: Maybe to the right of your -- if you look at the monitor on the right it might be easier. Yes, could we zoom in please on the text in particular.

    Yes, that should be fine.
    Dr Slosarcikova, have you seen this document before?
    A. No.
    Q. Could you open your witness statement, we don't need to bring it up on the screen, but could you just look at your second witness statement on paragraph 7, footnote 5.
    A. Yes, okay.
    Q. That's the same document you referred to in your witness statement.
    A. Okay.
    Q. This is a post dated 19 June 2016 by Ms Marianna

    Varjanová. Can you please just read the text to

[^2]:    A. Of course I was aware of the fact that there is an interest by some people, activists, for us to, as the Ministry, somehow tackle the problem that had occurred
    in Smilno in relation with the drilling well. That's the information I had, of course.
    Q. Forgive me. Any type of meetings that you were personally involved with, with the activists.
    A. If I remember correctly, with regard to the Smilno,

    I have -- the people, the activists who were conducting the protests, I have not myself met them or spoken with them personally. I do not remember that.
    Q. In your second witness statement in the third sentence you say:
    "... local activists communicated with the Ministry
    of Environment and sought the Ministry's intervention."
    Do you see that? (paragraph 6)
    A. Where is this supposed to be in the text?
    Q. It's highlighted, if you look on the right-hand side, on
    the monitor on your right-hand side, it's actually
    highlighted.
    MR DRYMER: Paragraph 6, sir.
    A. Thank you. I was looking at it in my hard copies.

[^3]:    a suggestion to try and release the tensions in Smilno present at that time.
    Q. So do you accept that AOG had no legal obligation to perform an EIA for its exploratory wells when you made -- as from 1 January 2017?
    THE PRESIDENT: No; I think when the suggestion was made it was at the meeting --
    MR TUSHINGHAM: On 15 December, yes.
    THE PRESIDENT: Exactly.
    MR TUSHINGHAM: But my question was a follow-on from that point.

    Minister, do you accept that with effect from --
    A. What with?
    Q. Sorry?
    A. What with do I agree?
    Q. I'll rephrase my question.
    A. Very well.
    Q. And I'll focus on the last sentence of paragraph 8 if you turn over the page, please, in the English.
    "I confirm that this was the first and the last time I suggested to AOG to voluntarily undergo a Preliminary EIA."

    Do you accept, Mr Sólymos, that you mentioned your proposals on a number of occasions both before and after this meeting on 15 December?

[^4]:    Q. Thank you, Madam President.

    Good afternoon, Ms Varjanová.
    A. Good afternoon to you as well.
    Q. Ms Varjanová, have you had an opportunity to review your witness statements recently?
    A. Yes, I had.
    Q. Is there anything you would like to change?
    A. No.

    MR PEKAR: Thank you. No further questions.
    THE PRESIDENT: Good. Mr Tushingham.
    ( 4.48 pm )
    Cross-examination by MR TUSHINGHAM
    Q. Thank you, Madam President.

    Ms Varjanová, I am counsel for the Claimant and I will be asking you some questions this afternoon.

    Could you please be shown Exhibit C-245. Do you recognise this document as a map of Smilno?
    A. Yes.
    Q. I am afraid, I think, the witness' screen has the dialogue box obscuring most of the view in front of her. THE PRESIDENT: You can look at the screen on your side. MR TUSHINGHAM: Madam, this map was published in the year 2000, and looking at the map in the middle grid, do you see a curved line in black? Do you see that?

    My question is, do you see the curved black line?

[^5]:    Q. Are we talking the couple of thousands? (Pause) Is that about a ballpark figure?
    A. It is possible.
    Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-286. And the Slovak please, on the right-hand side. Is this the Facebook page that you ran from December 2015 onwards?
    A. Yes.
    Q. And the logo of your page appears to be a person holding a road sign which reads "Stop"; is that right?
    A. No.
    Q. Well, your objective, though, from about December 2015 was to stop AOG from carrying out exploratory drilling in Smilno. That's what you were trying to do; correct?
    A. No.
    Q. What were you trying to do, Ms Varjanová, in establishing this Facebook page?
    A. By establishing that page, I was trying to achieve for the community in which I live for the people in the municipality to be informed about what's happening in relation to the exploration drilling.
    Q. Is it true that during 2016 you also published a blog on the website Denník N about AOG's project?
    A. No.
    Q. Could you please be shown Exhibit C-290 in both Slovak and English. Do you see a number of articles dated in

