**UNSR Thematic Report on Natural** **Exploitation**

**and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association**

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are regulated by the Constitution, the international treaties in force for the Republic of Bulgaria, and the national legislation. The Constitution sets forth the principles and guarantees the basic rights of Bulgarian citizens, such as the right to a healthy environment, access to information, freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and of opinion.

The main international treaties on environmental issues in force for the Republic of Bulgaria, are: The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) [Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf); The UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention.

Following its international obligations, the state cannot, in any way, interfere and restrict these rights and their legal fulfillment.

The national legislation regulates these matters in the [Environmental Protection Act](http://www3.moew.government.bg/files/file/PNOOP/Acts_in_English/Environmental_Protection_Act.pdf), the Water Act, the Waste Management Act, the Clear Ambient Air Act, etc. Those legal acts set the rules of public participation and consultations with interested parties on the realisation of investment projects, in the context of environmental protection and natural resources management procedures.

The state has created possibilities for regular participation of NGO representatives in the ecological policy, by sitting in various consultative bodies to the Ministry of Environment and Water - the Supreme Expert Ecological Council, the National Biodiversity Advisory Council, the Supreme Advisory Council on Water, as well as in expert councils to the Executive Environment Agency.

An example for the importance of civil society in the environmental decision-making is imposing a moratorium on shale gas extraction after protests from NGOs, civil associations and local communities.