

## Anhui Conch response to reports on the construction of cement factory in Ulyanovsk, Russia

*Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited Anhui Conch to respond to the following reports:*

- «На сход протестующих против строительства китайского цементного завода в Подкуровском сельском поселении подослали провокаторов из министерства внутренней политики», 4 Mar 2018  
<https://www.ulnfox.com/2018/03/Skhod-protestuyushchikh-protiv-stroitelstva-kitayskogo-tsementnogo-zavoda.html>
- «Судьбы Россия и Китая решаются в ульяновском лесу – анекдот?», Bellona, 3 Oct 2017  
<http://bellona.ru/2017/10/03/anhoy/>

*Anhui Conch sent the following response to the Resource Centre:*

[Unofficial translation of title and excerpt from original Chinese provided by Business & Human Rights Resource Centre.]

### **Clarifications on the Ulyanovsk cement plant report**

...We would make the following clarifications:

#### **...The report contains obvious subjective judgements**

The report states that European cement firms did not fulfil promises to respect environmental standards when working in Ulyanovsk, leading to issues such as “cement villages” ...

Publicly available information shows that a large part of Russia’s cement manufacturing uses the wet process: an out-of-date technique which hugely increases energy consumption and causes serious pollution. Conch’s production lines use the new drying process and have the strictest online environmental monitoring and control, from raw materials to production to packaging and transportation (see authoritative data published by environmental authorities local to Conch cement plants and the company’s annual corporate social responsibility reports). Our environmental standards are even higher than international and European standards. We can also use waste heat from production lines to generate electricity and incinerate urban domestic waste in our kilns. This is a genuinely environmentally friendly project - and not, as claimed by the opposition party for ulterior motives, a traditional dirty and low-standard wet-process plant...



A beautiful, environmentally-friendly and modern Conch cement plant.

### **...Selective reporting, inaccurate content and a lack of authoritative information**

...**First**, the issues of noise pollution, air pollution, restrictions on water use, destruction of forests and restoration of quarry pits are all “terrifying” . But in fact, back when the opposition started maliciously attacking Conch and the Ulyanovsk government under the banner of environmentalism, Levitas Lev, head of a genuine Ulyanovsk non-governmental environmental association, made an authoritative statement. He said that, as a non-governmental environmentalist, he had personally visited a Conch cement plant in China, recorded video about its environmental protection techniques, and fully approved of Conch’ s modern and environmentally friendly processes and supported the building of the local plant. He therefore published relevant video on a popular local website and signed a statement saying “Don’ t use 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking to judge a 21<sup>st</sup> century cement plant” , offering an authoritative rebuttal to distorted reporting and inaccurate comment in certain media.

(<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y8ED0cPAUU&t=0s&list=PLIDkvQfXAEMKXR19HwzDXF1xQlnQ1naRG&index=22>)

Meanwhile, on August 24, 2017, chairman of the Ulyanovsk government Smekalin held an expert hearing, which was broadcast live on television. Over 10 well-known experts from relevant sectors in Ulyanovsk attended, and several representatives of the opposition also accepted invitations to attend. Based on the location of the Conch plant and the manufacturing processes to be used, experts in environmental protection, forestry, mining and water resources gave expert and systematic responses on mining, forest protection and groundwater safety. As recognised experts locally and even within their sectors, their authoritative answers left the opposition representatives unable to respond, and they left in silence. We are confident that after watching the broadcast the people of Ulyanovsk will have a new and correct understanding of the Conch cement project.



### Expert hearing

**Second**, the report stated that “the security authorities, with assistance from special forces, prevented protestors from meeting with the local government” , plainly cherry-picking its facts. In fact, the Ulyanovsk governor Morozov had already met the opposition and the so-called “local representatives” , and personally explained the truth about the Conch cement plant. However, the representatives seemed to be more focused on “promoting themselves” (as described in the report) and as a result of the meeting the governor lost confidence in the representatives and opted to not meet with them again – clearly a justified decision. However, the report paid no heed to the governor’ s well-intentioned meeting with the representatives, but rather focused on how the government and local courts had dealt with opposition interference in normal working practices and presenting a negative image of both Governor Morozov and Chairman Smekalin. Their intent in doing so is easily imagined.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjJxUsuFHeY>



Governor Morozov met personally with local representatives and explained the truth about the project.

**Third**, regarding opposition to the plant, the report says: “Protestors put up tents along the Ulyanovsk-Syzran highway and went on hunger strike” ; and “a social movement for a better environment was started, with participants collecting 3,500 signatures in opposition to the construction of the plant.” Setting aside for now the matter of whether or not that number has been exaggerated, local reporters have already confirmed these protests were a farce, with locals paid to play their part. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6du3i9zo\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6du3i9zo_Q))

On August 25, 2017, a report with the Ulyan Truth website mixed with the “hunger-strikers” incognito, with many spoken to saying “We can eat in the evening, someone’s bringing us barbeque and food,” and “I’m retired and bored at home, they were paying so I came along…” The video was broadcast and revealed the truth. It is almost an open secret in Ulyanovsk today that the opposition has promised a “reward” for anyone willing to hang a poster opposing the cement plant in their window or to attend protest marches. Also, the report was superficial and ignored root causes, saying nothing about the show the opposition put on and its underhanded behaviour. How can this be fair or trustworthy?



In-depth reporting by an Ulyan Truth reporter exposed the truth.

### **...Conch is taking real action to dispel rumours**

Actually, back in June 2016 when the opposition launched its series of protest events, the joint venture arranged for Ulyanovsk residents to visit China to see Conch's headquarters and a number of its cement plants, learning about dry-process cement manufacturing, power generation from waste heat, and the incineration of urban domestic waste in kilns. They experienced first hand the advantages of Conch's modern and environmentally-friendly cement plants and changed their views of cement plants as polluting and energy-hungry.



Ulyanovsk residents visit a Conch cement plant



Representative of Ulyanovsk businesses visit a Conch cement plant in Guiyang

The joint venture has also held many educational sessions for local representatives, using video, talks and discussions to advocate for modern cement manufacturing and dispel the lies of the opposition, winning support from many residents.



An educational session for local representatives

In August 2017 Conch Volga held a press conference with its partner, the Ulyanovsk Development Group, providing environmental, economic, employment and social responsibility information about Conch, and rebutting rumours. At the same time the Ulyanovsk labour authorities carried out a survey of residents and informed residents about the local-hiring policy of the Conch cement plant, creating a positive reception and earning general praise. The company's Russian employees also, on their own initiative, worked with the labour authorities to talk with residents, using their own experiences of Conch's local-hiring policy to persuade them.



The joint venture holds a press conference and gives an authoritative statement

...The positive activities we have undertaken cannot be listed individually. Conch and the joint venture partner have always worked to realise their mission of China-Russia friendship, and have been patient and honest with the genuinely

friendly people of Ulyanovsk. But the opposition remains selective in what it publicises and carries out malicious attacks – and their aim goes without saying... we believe the above will enable you to see the hidden motivations and aims of the opposition in producing this report ...

June 21, 2018