

21 December, 2011

To the President of Georgia Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili

Mr. President,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, urge you to suspend the implementation of large and other hydropower plants (HPP) in Georgia that pose a serious threat to the people and environment.

We would like to draw your attention to a number of outstanding issues related to projects like the Khudoni and Dariali HPP and cascades like Namakhvani, Nenskra and Chorokhi.

Implementing these projects will flood at least 2000 hectares of fertile agricultural land, ancient Georgian villages, cultural and archeological heritage sites; destroy the biologically rich gorges of Rioni, Enguri, and Tergi; and threaten with erosion Georgia's Black Sea coast. These projects will further impact already alarmingly damaged vital space and will accelerate ecological disasters in Georgia.

The economics of the proposed projects are also dubious. The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources promotes principle that entails transfer of Georgian land to the investor at a symbolic price of only one dollar. Such approach will not bring any real benefit to the Georgian budget now or in the near future. The projects do not promote local employment and the damage to local economies will be massive.

In recent years Georgia has succumbed to the deplorable practice of viewing project impact assessment processes as only a formality – not for optimizing decision-making but for substantiating ready-made Government decisions in favor of the projects. The democratic rights of communities living in the towns of Adjara, Svaneti, Lechkumi, Mtianeti and other regions are violated under the pretext of implementing 'necessary' and obscure projects of 'state importance'.

These processes clearly demonstrate disastrous tendencies in Georgia today – complete disregard for environmental issues during project planning and implementation; infringing on constitutional guarantees, including the right to live in safe environment and the right to property for both project-affected people and Georgian citizens; and violating rights to access information and decision-making. Continuing down this path will have serious consequences for the social demographics in the mountain regions of Georgia and will cause irreparable harm to the natural resources and cultural heritage of Georgia.

We believe that the best decision for Georgia and its people – whether to build these projects or not – can only be made with considerations of the environmental, social, humanitarian, economic and political aspects through active participation of Georgian society. Without these processes first in place, announcing *a priori* the launch of different hydro projects extends beyond the limits of legality and good governance.

In order to avoid past mistakes in the energy sector and to provide the path for sustainable development in Georgia's energy sector, we ask the following:

1. To suspend ongoing works on construction of large HPPs planned in Georgia; to halt immediately and investigate construction of the Dariali and Chorokhi HPPs, which are currently in violation of Georgian legislation.

2. To develop with wide civil engagement a state strategy for the development of Georgia's energy sector, that will include considerations of all realistic alternatives like small hydro systems, wind and solar energy and biomass, in order to select the most optimal scenario for Georgia's people and environment and in line with the World Commission on Dams recommendations; and
3. To suspend the active lobbying with use of administrative resources by representatives from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and other public institutions for the Khudoni HPP, Namakhvani HPP Cascade and other projects until the relevant project assessments have concluded.

Respectfully,

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| 1. Naira Gelashvili, Caucasian House, Georgia | 22. Malkhaz Saldadze, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Georgia |
| 2. Nino Chkhobadze, Georgian Greens Movement / Friends of the Earth, Georgia | 23. Nino Evgenidze, Economic Policy Research Center, Georgia |
| 3. Manana Kochladze, Association Green Alternative, Georgia | 24. Natia Gigiadze, Student-Youth Council, Georgia |
| 4. Ana Gabriadze, Safe Space, Georgia | 25. David Narmania, Caucasian Institute for Economic and Social Research, Georgia |
| 5. Lasha Chkhartishvili, Association Lobo, Georgia | 26. Nanuli Ramishvili, Union of Teachers Education and Universe, Georgia |
| 6. Irina Gurchiani, Meokhi-2010, Georgia | 27. Temur Vekua, Association EcoTeq, Georgia |
| 7. Zaur Chartolani, Svaneti Tourism Center, Georgia | 28. Mariam Jorjadze, Biological Farming Association Elkana, Georgia |
| 8. Khvicha Vashakmadze, Kutaisi Information Center, Georgia | 29. Tamar Chugoshvili, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Georgia |
| 9. Paata Zakareishvili, Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts, Georgia | 30. Tamar Uchidze, Samkhetis Karibche, Georgia |
| 10. Nana Sumbadze, Institute for Policy Studies, Georgia | 31. Nukri Kvelashvili, Movement Youth Alternative, Georgia |
| 11. Zurab Putkaradze, Healthy World, Georgia | 32. Mariam Tsatsanashvili, International Foundation for Sustainable Development, Georgia |
| 12. Irina Putkaradze, Public Defender, Georgia | 33. Nicholas Hildyard, The Corner House, the UK |
| 13. Nikoloz Mjavandze, Ecological Law Center, Georgia | 34. Huub Scheele, Both Ends, the Netherlands |
| 14. Oleg Shatberashvili, Association European Studies for Innovative Development of Georgia, Georgia | 35. Alexey Zimenko, Biodiversity Conservation Center, Russia |
| 15. Guliko Shoshitashvili, Association for Georgian Civil Society Development, Georgia | 36. Andrey Zatoka, International Social-Ecological Union |
| 16. Ucha Nanuashvili, Human Rights Center, Georgia | 37. Inga Zarafian, Eco-Lur, Armenia |
| 17. Nino Elizbarashvili, Association Woman and Business, Georgia | 38. Regine Richter, Urgewald, Germany |
| 18. Madona Kharebava, Association DEA, Georgia | 39. Himanshu Thakkar, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People, India |
| 19. Alexander Rusetski, South Caucasus Institute for Regional Security, Georgia | 40. Elena Kruglikova, RussiaSocial-Ecological Union(RSEU), Russia |
| 20. Maka Jakhua, Association and Radio Green Wave, Georgia | 41. Jaromír Kyzour, Hnutí DUHA/Friends of the Earth, Czech Republic |
| 21. Irakli Absandze, Argomedia, Georgia | 42. Peter Bosshard, The International Rivers, the USA |

43. Kate Watters, Crude Accountability, the USA
44. LinasVainius, Atgaia Community, Lithuania
45. Teodora Donsz, Magyar Termeszettvedok Szovetsege, Hungary
46. Yann Louvel, BankTrack, the Netherlands
47. Sona Ayvasyan, Transparency International, Armenia
48. Daniel Popov, Centre for Environmental Information and Education, Bulgaria
49. GenadiKondarev, For the Earth, Bulgaria
50. Alda Ozola, Latvian Green Movement, Latvia
51. Anna Golovic, Eco-sense, Macedonia
52. Iryna Holovko, National Ecological Center of Ukraine, Ukraine
53. Anna Drazkiewich, Polish Green Network, Poland
54. Triinu Vaab, Estonian Green Movement, Estonia
55. Ondrej Pasek, Center for Transport and Energy, Czech Republic
56. Zvezdan Kalmar, Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development, Serbia