

**Statement by Green Alternative
on Sanitary Landfill Construction Project in Adjara Autonomous Republic**

Tbilisi, 14 August 2009

The second round of public consultation meetings on the Environmental Impact Assessment report for the project “Municipal Solid Waste Management in the Adjara Autonomous Republic” was held in Batumi, Kobuleti and Chakvi on August 10-11, 2009. It is expected that the project will be financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) (a total of Euro 7 million will be allocated including Euro 4 million as a grant and Euro 3 million – as a loan).

The project aims at improving the management of municipal solid waste in Adjara; the key project component is the construction of a new sanitary landfill; hence, the assessment of the project’s environmental impacts is focused on this issue. The project consultants have selected the territory adjacent to the settlement of Chakvi (32 ha) as the best place for a sanitary landfill. The proposed area borders with Chakvi, Khali and Chaisubani and is located in a kilometer away from the seaside. Thus, visual pollution of landscape is irreversible, since it can be seen both from the coast and from the nearby villages.

The participants of August 10-11 public consultation meetings in Batumi and Kobuleti mostly focused on the following issues: improper study of alternative options for selecting a landfill site; methods of closure of landfills currently existing in Adjara; and the cumulative impact of new sanitary landfill project with another project planned to be implemented in Adjara – motor road bypass project¹.

During public consultation meeting held in Chakvi on August 11 the representatives of local authorities and population expressed extremely negative attitude towards the project; the concerns raised at the meeting can be summarized as follows:

- The existence of a landfill near the settlement will have a negative impact on the incomes of local population, for whom tourism-oriented business is the key source of incomes. The population explains that the immediate proximity of a landfill will make the nearby settlements unattractive for tourists and holidaymakers;
- The existence of a landfill will also have a negative impact on the price of real estate located on the adjacent areas that will significantly aggravate the economic status of the population;
- Construction and operation of a landfill will negatively affect human health and environment. The participants think that there are no guarantees that the project will be implemented properly, the landfill will be managed correctly and negative impacts will be avoided.

¹ According to the presently available information, the bypass will pass 30-35 meters away from the proposed sanitary landfill in Chakvi. The bypass motor road project is financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

As it was revealed during the Chakvi meeting, because of the above mentioned concerns, the local population is against construction of a sanitary landfill on the territory of Chakvi². The participants also expressed their mistrust towards the project consultants. Unfortunately, an unpleasant incident took place at the meeting – a verbal quarrel occurred between the local population and the consultant organization’s staff. The conflict was triggered by an unethical statement made by one of the representatives of the project consultant, who tried to insult the representative of Green Alternative as well as local residents participating in the meeting.

It should also be noted that the project “Municipal Solid Waste Management in Adjara Autonomous Republic” is financed under the 4.55-billion funding allocated after Brussels donors’ conference for the post-war rehabilitation of Georgia. Therefore, it is absolutely unacceptable that this sum is spent against the interests of local population. We call on public officials engaged in the project implementation to observe Georgian laws while making any decisions, to take into account the environmental requirements set by donors and to spare no efforts to fulfill the Georgian President’s call for public dialogue. We hope that time is over when “century projects” were implemented through neglecting local population’s interests and when the promoters of such situation remained unpunished.

Association Green Alternative

² In July 2009 the residents of Chakvi sent a joint letter to the President of Georgia and the Parliamentary Chairman, expressing their negative attitude towards the plans of construction of a landfill on the territory adjacent to their residential places.