TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

**This letter is addressed to:**

*The Prime Minister of the Government (Georgia) - Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili;*

**Copies are sent to:**

*The President of Georgia - Mr. Giorgi Margvelashvili;*

*The minister of Environmental and Natural Resources Protection - Mr. Gigla Abulashvili (I know it’s Agulashvili but the letter says Abulashvili;*

*The Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure - Mr. Nodar Javakhishvili;*

*The director of the Solid Waste Management Company - Mr. Giorgi Shukhoshvili;*

*The Minister of Agriculture - Mr. Otar Danelia;*

*The Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia - Mr. Mikheil Giorgadze;*

*The head of the National Tourism Administration - Mr. Giorgi Chogovadze;*

*Georgian Orthodox Church patriarchy;*

*The Mayor of Kutaisi - Mr. Shota Murghulia;*

Mr. Giorgi,

We know that Integrated Solid Waste Management project, which foresees the construction of unified/common landfill for Racha-Lechkhumi – Kvemo Svaneti and Imereti regions, is being implemented.

For the purpose of project implementation preparatory works for the construction of the landfill are ongoing, near the border of village Chognari of Terjola municipality, in the village of Godogani, on the territory of a former Soviet military base, less than two kilometers away from Kutaisi population. The area of ​​26 hectares was given to the Solid Waste Management Company.

The eastern part of the Kutaisi population, in particular the residents of so-called "saghoria" and "Tskaltsitela", as well as the citizens of nearby villages of Terjola Municipality: Godogani community (includes Godogani, Nagarevi, Chalastavi, Broliskedi) Chognari, Kvakhchiri and Odilauri express following protest/concerns regarding the construction of this landfil:

1. The representatives of the public/society were not properly informed neither about the landfill site selection process nor about the project in general. Substantial part of the public has as a false information that allegedly, solid waste processing/recycling plant is going to be constructed.
2. The scale of the possible future landfill is unprecedented and represents garbage/waste mountain of tens of meters of height, spread over dozens of hectares and in very close proximity to the population. 500-meter distance from residential areas is extremely unacceptable and we demand 15 km buffer zone. Even this 500-meter distance regulation is violated.
3. The landfill territory itself is the beginning of a mountain’s eastern slope, where flowing waters create an outfall of river "Eklari (Viripsela)". Due to the steep relief/landscape, river Eklari provides the only way out for rain water or melted snow. This river flows in Chognari population (?- they might mean that it flows directly within the village) and supplies water to nine springs and few dozens of wells used by the local population as a source of drinking water.
4. This area is characterized by strong and durable winds, which can disseminate/spread harmful odors of trash and bacteria not only to the nearby villages, but also to the city. Threat of natural disasters and high amount of rainfall also exists, further increasing the risk/threat of river pollution/contamination. Fish, crayfish, turtles and other animals in the river will become extinct.
5. Endangered species of Zelkova, oak and other unique species of trees, included in the Red List/book grow near the landfill borders and will be threatened with desiccation. This poses a threat/hazard to the environment as well as to the forest animals and birds.
6. The environment will be visually disfigured. From the main road a beautiful view of Godogani Archangel Church and mountains will be lost, being replaced with a view of garbage mountain. The slope of the selected area for ​​the landfill is clearly visible from nearby Tbilisi-Kutaisi highway as well as from neighboring or remote villages.
7. The gate of the future landfill, is 20 meters away from the only and common entrance of Godogani, Nagrevi and Chalastavi (from the overpass) villages, as well as from the bus stop, where people wait for public transport on a daily basis. Abovementioned driveway is the only central road, not only for this village, but also for the tourists who want to see: The old-Tbilisi-Kutaisi highway, currently active "Bridge of Tamar" located on the river of Chishura, old preserved paved roadway in Godogani used by King David the Builder to enter the East gate of Gelati, the Golden Cross, temples of St. George, Our Savior, Archangel and others, Chalastavi, Sakazhia and Nagarevi caves, the old caravan route, medieval tower and many other interesting sightseeing places. These villages have a good tourism potential, unless of course a landfill is placed at their entrance.
8. Residents will suffer economically in any case. The prices of the real estates have already been devaluating, because no one wants to purchase a house or a land near a landfill, regardless of the high standards it is required to comply with. Due to the proximity to the landfill, eateries/restaurants located nearby, in the direction of wind and the wedding hall which is few hundred meters away, will be unable to compete with other business ventures and are doomed to fail and go bankrupt. Similar threat exists for a neighboring complex comprising a restaurant, hotel etc.
9. Due to its scale/size and proximity to the populated area, also due to expected/anticipated air and water pollution, landfill will cause the health of the population to deteriorate. Birds, insects, rodents etc. attracted by the landfill will contribute to the spread of bacteria, viruses and diseases.
10. Local peasants/farmers and agriculture will also be significantly damaged/harmed:
11. In the radius of dozens of kilometers, bees will die out because of the insect repellent and disinfecting liquid used on the landfill.
12. Incidents of bird and animal plague, which are already quite common even without a landfill, will rise further harming/damaging farmers.
13. In Chognari drinking water for poultry (especially ducks and geese) and cattle (cows, sheep, goats, horses, buffalo, etc.) in the form of river Eklari running directly through the village/population, will be poisoned. It has to be noted that the river is of small size and it will be less likely that harmful substances in it are neutralized.
14. Birds of prey attracted by the landfill will make it impossible for the nearby poultry farmers to grow and take care of domestic birds.
15. Farmers who live 500 meters away from the landfill and whose monthly income depends on selling agricultural products will face serious problems as whatever they will produce will lack credibility in terms of quality because farmers won’t be able to prove trustworthiness of their products. Everyone will avoid buying food grown with leachate "even if it’s cleaned" water. Especially considering the absence of any food quality control institution in the country farmers will be left severely damaged in the end.
16. The population uses water of river Eklari for small greenhouse and fishing farms, which makes the existence of any type of landfill near the outfall of the river unacceptable.
17. Notably, selected landfill area borders not only with the population, but with "Eklari Stone" quarry as well; Mining facilities directly depend on the river Eklari and its pollution will result in contaminating personnel and workers. To the west in direction of the wind, it also borders planned water reservoirs, which are being built to provide Kutaisi with drinkable water in future. Due to strong winds typical to this area, any virus or bacteria spread in the direction of reservoir may threaten the city population.
18. There is an Ascension temple located in the village and the tomb of father Giorgi Basiladze in front of it, where pilgrims often arrive from different parts of Georgia and from abroad as well. Unfortunately village guests and tourists may have to witness landfill site on the nearby slopes, which is totally inappropriate for this holy place. There is Virgin Mary's church - another ancient basilica located in Chognari, where according to a legend an old monastery was located, and ruins of an old fortress is still visible in the yards. Also there is a pitcher, a natural spring in two meters from the altar, century-old Zelkova trees and etc. the place has a great spiritual value and if arranged properly - a good tourism potential. This is a centuries-old cultural heritage. The planned landfill is located on a higher ground, few hundred meters away from this temple; River Eklari which is composed of leakage water runs so close to Virgin Mary church that during heavy rainfall, spring water in front of the altar gets flooded. Sometimes the spring is used for baptizing and leakage water from the landfill (even well-filtered) could damage its purpose.
19. The surrounding area is characterized by karstic caves and groundwater flows, which also may be endangered.
20. The above mentioned is supplemented by negative sentiments of population; by general experience of how promises are fulfilled and especially by a secure landfill of European standards, of tens of millions of GEL in Tbilisi, which was a failure. We are skeptical of company's allegations that for at least 50 years, clean water and air will not be at stake and nearby population; rivers and springs will not be harmed. There is no such guarantee. Unfortunately, there are many opposite examples. According to Georgian experience it is a crime to deliberately create an artificial threat in such close proximity with the population.
21. In case of force majeure situations (wars, natural disasters, landslides, flooding, economic and political crisis, global warming, influenza outburst, or even corruption, etc.) large uncontrolled hub of epidemics and devastating environmental pollution, will remain close to population for at least half a century. For a landfill of this scale, there could be any other dangerous circumstances that cannot be predicted beforehand. Therefore, In order to more or less evade such threats, it’s necessary to keep maximum safety distance with populated area, not a mere 500m buffer zone that is even so violated.

Based on the real hazards outlined above, we categorically demand that the selected area is considered incompatible for construction of any type of landfills. No further preparatory works are carried out and trenches made by the minesweepers for the purpose of drawing up landfill borders are immediately filled. In order to avoid future possibility/danger of constructing a landfill on this extremely inappropriate, unacceptable and dangerous site for the population, area given/transferred to the SWMCG should be immediately and definitely seized from the company.

Signed by the population, 2627 (Two thousand six hundred and ninety - ?) adult citizens.

Signatures 69 pages. In total 75 pages.

Berdia Tskhadaberidze – 555 67 53 00; Identity number – 21001020130 – Terjola, Village Chognari

Giorgi Berekashvili – 571 81 55 77; Identity number – 60001024102 - Terjola, Village Chgonari

 16.06.2016