

An die
Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel
Bundeskanzleramt
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
10557 Berlin

Berlin, 2nd March 2007

Dear Chancellor Merkel,

We were shocked to learn that the German government awarded an in-principle export credit guarantee to the Ilisu dam in Turkey in December 2006. The Ilisu dam project is highly contentious because of its expected environmental, cultural, social and human rights impacts and its potential for increasing conflicts around water in the Middle East. The German Government's preliminary commitment to this project breaches all relevant international standards, including the OECD's *Common Approaches on Environment and Officially Supported Export Credits* and the OECD *Statement on Export Credits and Hydropower Projects*, adopted as recently as November 2005. The project also utterly fails to meet European Union standards, and a number of EU laws and policies, including the European Convention on Human Rights. We, the undersigned 69 civil society organizations, therefore urge your government not to grant a final guarantee for this deeply flawed venture.

The Ilisu project is based on a decades-old plan to build a hydroelectric power plant on the river Tigris in the Kurdish region of Southeast Anatolia, Turkey. According to the project information available, the resettlement of approximately 55'000 people in the conflict ridden area of South East Turkey will not comply with international standards and will lead to impoverishment of the affected people, thus increasing the already existing tension in the area. In contravention of international standards, participation of the affected people has been negligent. The dam will destroy the ancient and unique town of Hasankeyf, which is internationally recognised as a cultural treasure, as well as hundreds of surrounding archaeological sites. The damming of the Tigris River will also destroy a rich natural ecosystem and heat up regional water conflicts between Turkey, Iraq and Syria as it increases Turkey's potential to control the flow of water into her neighbouring countries. The Iraqi government has already voiced great concern about the project.

Hermes and the other ECAs involved – Swiss SERV and Austrian OeKB - have admitted that the project does not meet international standards. The ECAs argue that conditions have been put into place in order to address the project's flaws. However, the fulfilment of many of these conditions, e.g. to consult with the neighbouring countries and to assess the impact on flora and fauna, are not a prerequisite for granting a final export credit guarantee. In addition, said conditions have not been disclosed to the public. Their substance, their adequacy to address the project's flaws, as well as their enforceability remain unknown. This mocks the dam-affected people who have trusted that if European countries are to provide financing for this project, they would respect the rule of law and the human and democratic rights of the local population. The shadowy manoeuvring surrounding the 'approval in principle' circumvents all transparency requirements put in place for ECA decision-making processes. The procedures surrounding Ilisu would never be allowed for a domestic project in Germany or any other country of the EU.

We are deeply disappointed that the 'approval in principle' came on the eve of Germany's EU presidency. Given your public statements we had hoped that Germany would play a role in

moving forward international standards, since you stated for example in September 2006 on the future of the European Union:

“Europe has to get its values clear. These are not only common historical experiences we have, but are based on common values, which we all share: freedom, democracy, rule of law, human rights. Therefore our policy has to be value based. This has to be discussed in relations with other countries that are not members of the European Union; this has to be reflected.”

You have emphasised this as well in a speech on shaping globalisation in November 2006: *“In how far do we need international agreements, that fix some minimum standards and where are we clear about a common value system? I personally am of the opinion that globalisation won’t work, if there is not a minimum set of values between the participants, meaning the countries of the world.”*

The secretive procedure around the in-principle export credit guarantees for Ilisu is unacceptable and contradicts your position on transparency and responsibility as expressed in your speech in November 2006 when you received the “Visions for Europe award”:
“But I think the highest amount of transparency, meaning that people take responsibility for what they decided politically, must be our task, in order to make Europe understandable for the people.”

Junking standards to which Germany has committed itself when they do not suit German business interests, and acting in secrecy to ensure the participation of a German company in one of the world’s most controversial infrastructure projects, jeopardizes the credibility of Germany’s ambitious political agenda for its EU and G8 presidency. It is exactly the kind of ‘free rider’ behaviour that the industrialised countries usually criticise non-OECD countries for, and it contradicts efforts to encourage emerging countries like China and India to act environmentally and socially responsible in their activities in foreign countries e.g. in Africa. It sets a bad precedent for large dam projects all over the world and is a hard blow for civil society movements worldwide, who have campaigned to ensure high international standards. Turkey’s violations of human rights and the repression of its Kurdish minority have been an issue in its membership negotiations with the EU. Germany and other European states must therefore refrain from backing a project, which will exacerbate poverty and human rights violations in the region, destroy unique cultural heritage and cause grave tensions with neighbouring states. As a champion of “European values”, we call upon you personally to ensure that no final guarantee is given to the Ilisu Project and to ensure that the discussion process around ECA support for this project is no longer clothed in secrecy and governed by vested business interests.

We hope to hear back from you soon. Please reply to Heike Drillisch, WEED, Torstr. 154, 10115 Berlin, heike.drillisch@weed-online.org.

Sincerely,

Argentina

David Barnden, Center for Human Rights and Environment (CEDHA)

Australia

Jennifer Grant, Ground Zero Events

Austria

Gertrude Klaffenböck, FIAN Österreich
Daniel Hausknost, GLOBAL 2000
Elfriede Schachner, AGEZ (ArbeitsGemeinschaft Entwicklungszusammenarbeit)
Didar Can, Verein kurdischer StudentInnen in Wien
Mary Kreutzer, Eca-Watch Austria
Thomas Schmidinger, WADI Österreich
Ali Al-Zahid, Österreichisch-Irakischer Freundschaftsverein IRAQUNA
Fatima Khanakah, Österreichisch-Kurdische Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsaustausch
Zandi Shuan, Verein für Fortschritt und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit im Irak
Johann Bogenreiter und Mustafa Akgün, Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker (Österreich)
Dr. Riyadh Al-Amir, AIAD (Austrian Iraqi Association for Development)

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Eva Klippenstein, Flüchtlingsrat Düsseldorf e.V.
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Kristina Roepstorff, FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Deutschland
Jürgen Maier, Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung
Dr. Kamal Sido, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (GfbV)
Stefan Richter, Grüne Liga
Ann Kathrin Schneider, International Rivers Network
Wolfgang Struwe, Informationsstelle Kurdistan (ISKU)
Dr. Gisela Penteker, Internationale Ärzte für die Verhütung des Atomkriegs (IPPNW) Deutschland
Muharram Hassan, Kurdish PEN Club
Fatma Kara, Maxmur Organisation für Menschenrechte und soziale Fragen
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Pater Wolfgang Jungheim, Pax Christi Nassau-Lahnstein
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Tina Dannheim, Robin Wood
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Leyla Özden, Zanin

Greece

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India

S.Q.Masood, PUCAAR (Peoples Union for Civic Action And Rights)
Smitu Kothari, Intercultural Resources
Himanshu Thakkar, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People
Leo Saldanha, Environment Support Group, Bangalore
Shripad Dharmadhikary, Manthan Adhayayan Kendra

Indonesia

Titi Soentoro, NADI

Ireland

Laura Heneghan, Castlebar Fairtrade town Committee

Italy

Antonio Tricarico, Campagna per la riforma della Banca Mondiale

Japan

Noriko Shimizo, Friends of the Earth Japan
Mitsubayashi Yasuji, Japanese committee supporting the victims of Koto Panjang Dam in Indonesia

Pakistan

Mohsin Babbar, Sungi Development Foundation

Portugal

Renato Roldao, Euronatura

South Africa

Pete Swanepoel, The Pavilion Kwa-Zulu Natal

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Tom Kucharz, Ecologistas in Accion

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Christine Carey, International Conservation
Christine Eberlein, Erklärung von Bern

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Steve Green, The Images Asia Environment Desk

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Nicholas Hildyard, The Cornerhouse
Lucy Baker, Bretton Woods Project

United States

Doug Norlen, Pacific Environment
Bruce Rich, Environmental Defense

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Alisa Loveman, EarthRights International Southeast Asia
Bob Thompson, ECA Watch
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