

In Georgia Renewable Energy Development Will Be Implemented At Expense of Hydropower

ecolur.org/en/news/energy/--/12199

EcoLur

After 2007, the hydropower sector began to develop rapidly in Georgia, when Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili announced the need to use the great



potential of the rivers.

Dato Chipashvili, a representative of Georgian “Green Alternative” organization, told EcoLur that despite the calls for a hydroelectric power plant to be built, no hydropower development strategy has been developed in the country so far.

“We don't know why they build so many. The state says energy demand is rising and many HPPs are needed. But there is no official document outlining what share HPPs should have in the power system. There should be a strategic development plan. We have repeatedly raised the issue, but one answer is that there is no time to write a strategy because the demand is today. We've been hearing this for over 10 years. We are currently trying to resolve the issue at the level of the EU Energy Community, which Georgia joined in 2016. Membership has given us an official tool to influence the state because we are not otherwise heard,” Dato Chipashvili said.

65 large and medium-sized hydroelectric power plants were built in Georgia during the Soviet era, the majority had large dams. After 2007, it was planned to build about 200 HPPs. According to Chipashvili, many Soviet-era projects that were not adopted because of technical problems were translated into English during Saakashvili's presidency, and the government has helped to bring them to life. About 40 small HPPs have already been constructed and are in operation, but most have technical issues. For example, the tunnels collapsed two months after the construction completion of Shuakhevi HPP with a capacity of 187 MW, it is not functioning today. In the area of another 6 MW hydroelectric

power plant that was built in a landslide zone, a collapse occurred, and the HPP was demolished twice. As a solution to the problem, the mountain was leveled to the ground. There were also human casualties as a result of technical failure.

Dato Chipashvili also highlighted the problem of surplus electricity generated during the summer months as a result of hydroelectric power plants and the shortage of electricity generated by low water in rivers in the winter. In the case of surplus, during the summer months the export of electricity increases and in winter the import increases. According to Chipashvili, if Georgia pays 5 cents for electricity tariffs in winter, it buys at much expensive prices from the newly-built HPPs all year around but export potential is limited as export price not exceed 3 cents.

“When we ask how to diversify the energy sector, they point out the need to build new HPPs. But that doesn't solve the problem,” he said.

Referring to other types of renewable energy, such as wind or solar energy use, Dato Chipashvili noted that the development of solar and wind energy in Georgia is rejected for one reason - it is expensive. Whereas, according to the speaker, the only wind power plant in Georgia with a 20 MW capacity in winter, in a time of shortage, generates as much electricity as the 14 newly constructed hydropower plants combined, whereas the solar energy sector in Georgia is at an independent development stage.

Photo Credit: Dato Chipashvili







12:30 March 20, 2020