

13th December, 2018

To the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
Mrs. Maia Tskitishvili

Appeal of Georgian Tourism Sector on a Road Project through Khada Valley

Dear Mrs. Maia,

The letter deals with new road projects that are unreasonable for tourism sector representatives due to many reasons.

According to the tourism sector, it would be better to change Georgia's transport-transit strategy, which would greatly alleviate congestion. If roads will pass through Khada Gorge, at the village of Seturebi or Roshka, difficulties will still arise at the Georgian-Russian border. The Kobi-Kvesheti Road will only shorten the route to the capital by 20-25 minutes, which cannot be a supportive condition of tourism development.

Here we would like to emphasize the uniqueness of Khada Gorge:

- ❖ The comparison of the Khada valley (historical Tskhavati) with any other parts is almost inconceivable, as there is no such valley with its cultural and ethnological values not only in Georgia, but also in the world.
- ❖ St. Nino preached Christianity at the dawn of Christianity, which was the result of the uniqueness of this place. Since ancient times, many religious and secular buildings have been built in the Khada valley, many of which are still unexplored. According to the surface studies of Khada Gorge about 80 cultural and archaeological sites are present.
- ❖ The archeology of the Khada valley is not fully studied. The archaeological study of this valley will take many years, bringing many unanswered questions to light and presenting Georgia with an interesting view of the world.
- ❖ An 18th-century historian, Vakhushti Batonishvili, called the Khada Gorge "a tower of 60 towers." Most of the towers still exist, though they require registration, fortification, conservation and restoration.
- ❖ In Khada valley there are Ghudi Monastery, Milliona Temple, Korogho Temple and more. The valley itself is very beautiful, with villages scattered on mountains, fields, alpine flowers, pastures, rivers, waterfalls, mineral waters.

The construction of roads and tunnels will destroy underground rocks, contaminate and remove mineral waters which analogy does not exist in the world.

Examples of the destruction of the natural heritage: the ecological disaster of the Truso Valley, the destruction of travertine, the destruction of rocks, the disappearance of oxygen from the lake, and more.

The nature of the Khada valley is still preserved in its original form and is a breeding spot for rare birds in the Caucasus region.

If anything beautiful and perfect can be imagined, this is the valley of Khada!

Many representatives of the tourism sector, Kobi-Khada-Kvesheti and Mtiuleti population, as well as the wider community of environmentalists and cultural heritage researchers, pose a major threat to the project's roads and tunnels.

Damage to the environment and culture will be irreparable in the future.

Instead of roads, tunnels and large infrastructure projects, the Khada Gorge should be declared a protected area, be included in the UNESCO List of Cultural Heritage, receive the status of a geo-park and become a unique eco-tourist destination! Twenty thousand tourists are enough for the economic growth of the valley and sustainable tourism development. It should also be noted that the Khada Gorge represents a strategic summer route for Gudauri. If the charm of Khada valley is lost, the prospect of Gudauri summer tourism development will also disappear.

It is necessary to review the transit transport policy, to determine how much it costs for Georgia to build unjustified roads in the country in exchange for destroying cultural and natural heritage. It should be considered that this heritage of the Khada Valley is an inexhaustible sustainable resource that is conducive to the sustainable development of profitable eco-tourism, cultural tourism and other specific sectors.

We hope that the tourism sector's demand will be taken into account and that unique natural and cultural heritage will be preserved in the Khada Gorge as protected areas.

The tourism sector and the hospitality industry are opposed to tunnel and large-scale road projects in the Khada Gorge.

1. Georgian Eco-Tourism Association
2. Georgian Adventure Tourism Association
3. Georgian Incoming Tour Operators Association
4. Independent Guides of Georgia
5. Green Alternative
6. Investors in Gudauri
7. Environmentalists

8. Researchers and defenders of cultural heritage

On behalf of tourism associations,

Ia Tabagari - Chairperson of Georgian Incoming Tour Operators Association