

**Symposium “Keep Hasankeyf Alive”
Concluding Declaration: Observations and Recommendations**

Diyarbakır, 18-19 February 2006

Construction of the Ilisu Dam, which had been stopped once, will be given an official start again in March 2006. This has become publicly known through a series of information meetings held by the State Waterworks Administration (DSI)’s 10th Regional Directorate and the Ilisu Consortium’s Turkey representative Nurol Construction and Trading Co. Inc. in Diyarbakır and Batman in December 2005, and confirmed by a series of official statements to the media afterwards.

The objectives of the symposium organised by the Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive in Diyarbakır on 18-19 February 2006 were:

- To present a scientific and social position against a developmental planning approach that does not give due consideration to the cultural and historical heritage of thousands of years in Hasankeyf Basin;
- To demonstrate that it is not only necessary but also possible to save not only Hasankeyf but also other ancient settlements in Turkey facing similar threats on the basis of alternative projects which are elaborated from a developmental perspective that is centred on the human, natural, historical and cultural heritage; and
- To contribute to the emergence of a future oriented and sustainable strategy for a final solution that will keep Hasankeyf ancient city from drowning under the water.

The symposium was organised in five sessions on four main subjects: The Heritage of Hasankeyf from National and International Perspectives (two sessions); Hasankeyf and Ilisu Dam in the Context of Environment, Men and Energy; Ilisu Dam and Affected Communities; and Open Forum: Hasankeyf, Ilisu Project and Ideas for a Solution. The following observations and recommendations were formulated on the basis of the presentations and comments by the participants:

Observations:

1. Within the current legislative framework in Turkey, Hasankeyf is a first degree Archeological Conservation Site. With its rock cliffs shaped by the floods of Tigris over hundreds of thousands of years, Hasankeyf is a natural monument as well as a site of historical and cultural heritage. Under the legislation, any intervention here can be imposed only upon approval by Diyarbakır Board for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets, which is the relevant official entity. The authorities have never sought approval by this board in relation to interventions in Hasankeyf that are planned within the framework of Ilisu Dam Project.

2. According to Article 20 of the Law No 2863 for the Protection of Cultural and natural Assets, “the principle shall be the preservation of unmovable cultural assets and their pieces in situ”. The Turkish government has ratified the 1992 European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valetta Convention) in the context of harmonisation with EU law in connection with the EU accession process. According to the Convention, archeological assests are non-renewable resources, sources of information for humanity and they should be preserved in dealing with developmental projects. The State Parties to the Convention have undertaken to take necessary measures “to implement measures for the physical protection of the archaeological heritage, making provision, as circumstances demand” (Article 4), including “for the conservation and maintenance of the archaeological heritage, preferably *in situ*” (Article 4, para. ii). The authorities also undertake “to ensure that archaeological excavations and prospecting are undertaken in a scientific manner and provided that non-destructive methods of investigation are applied wherever possible” (Article 3, para. b).
3. Although previously unknown 19 unmovable cultural assets have been excavated and some positive steps have been taken in the course of the last two years, statements made by Prof. Dr. Abdüsselam Uluçam, the leader of Hasankeyf Excavation, demonstrate that almost no basic need of Hasankeyf Excavation and Prospection have been met in line with international standards. A large part of the Ministry budget for the Excavation have not been appropriated due to bureaucratic impediments, the site has not been safeguarded, the sub-contracting agreements have not been concluded and there has not been significant progress in the excavation and prospection. According to the observations by Prof. Uluçam:
 - a. The castle and the excavation sites have not been taken under control and human destruction has not been prevented.
 - b. There has been no adequate access to scientific data obtained in the course of earlier excavations and most of the previous documentation remained not accessed; thus, documentation activities have not started yet.
 - c. It has not been possible to make the Scientific Advisory Board and the Local Committee operative yet.
 - d. There has been no intervention for the cultural assets that need urgent conservation and rescue.
 - e. The procedures for nationalising the private property over which excavation activities are carried out or to be carried out have not been completed yet.
4. During the course of the activities of the international consortium that undertook the Ilisu Dam Project in the period of 1999-2001, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Turkey expressed their concerns regarding the destruction in the site due to the construction and inundation associated with the Project to the European committees of ICOMOS . The spokespersons of the national committees of ICOMOS in the UK, Germany and Switzerland

- communicated their concerns in this connection to their own governments. International initiatives for declaring Hasankeyf as a world heritage were inconclusive since then, although the initiatives took action in line with the international standards. This is because the international standards require that the national government submit the request to UNESCO. However, the Turkish Cultural Ministry refuses to submit the file to UNESCO.
5. The Ilisu Dam Project is financed exclusively by international donors, and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) was prepared in order to secure approval by the concerned governments in line with international regulations. However, the report does not meet the specifications under the World Bank standards OP 4.01 and OP 4.04:
 - a. The mitigation measures proposed under the project are not adequate to compensate for the destruction of the biological diversity in the basin that will be caused by the project.
 - b. EIAR does not sufficiently assess the alternatives to the project.
 - c. The Environmental Action Plan does not provide adequate measures regarding (i) commitments and capacities of responsible stake-holders; and (ii) practical institutional arrangements.
 - d. The impact assessment process was not conducted in a manner as inclusive as required by OP 4.01 in terms of soliciting the opinions of the affected communities and their participation in the initial and subsequent phases of the process.
 6. The geological unit on which Hasankeyf is located is a silty, sandy limestone rock structure. It is easy to cut from this structure, while it is not easily segmented under atmospheric conditions. Monumental structures over it are built by using stones from the limestone of this rock mass and these structures carry the same properties with it. When the rock mass is flooded and inundated, the carbonate segments and cements are dissolved in water. Therefore, the natural structures and monuments over it will be dissolved into sand in time. This means that, once Hasankeyf is flooded by the rising water of Ilisu Dam, the destruction will be irreversible. When the dam will complete its economic life, it will only leave sand under the water and mud.
 7. Ilisu Dam's rising waters will flood 6.000 hectares of arable land. When Cizre Dam is also constructed, an agricultural area larger than what will be irrigated will be flooded under the rising waters. In addition, since the segments carried by Tigris to the lower plains will be kept by the dams, the agricultural land will lose its richness in middle and longer terms. The land which will be irrigated by the water from these two dams will risk salination after the irrigation. In Harran Plain, 8% of the irrigated land is extremely salinated and one-third of irrigated land is salinated from mild to severe degrees over an irrigation period of 13 years. While the agricultural productivity in Harran and Akçakale Plains increased initially by 2.5 times and the value added increased by two times, this increase slowed and stopped over time. This stemmed from lowered levels of nutrition of the land as

well as increasing salination. The same process will be observed in the area to be irrigated by Ilisu and Cizre dams.

8. When filled with water, the Ilisu reservoir will cover an area over 300 square kilometers. Given the instability of rain precipitation in the area, this area will be reduced up to 100 square kilometers in the dry seasons. This area will be a hot bed for microbiological activities that will be dangerous for public health. The same applies to the old river bed which will dry due to lower water flow after the construction of Cizre Dam, which will become a hot bed for contagious diseases and threaten public health in the region. The fact that a large portion of the water-based disease occurrence emerges in the region affected by the South Anatolia Project (GAP) demonstrates this negative impact. In fact, malaria occurrence is exclusively confined to the region affected by the GAP in Turkey. Ilisu and Cizre dams will help these diseases permeate the region to the east of the GAP area.
9. The Relocation Action Plan connected to the Ilisu Dam Project is far from addressing the needs of the people who will be displaced by the project implementation:
 - a. The preliminary findings of a survey being conducted in Bismil indicate that the villagers in the area are not adequately informed about the project and that the surveys conducted there aim at estimating compensation levels.
 - b. The property and usufructary rights structure in the region are complicated (settlements and agricultural land which belong to the Treasury of the State and the landlord system) and this will lead to vulnerabilities and harms that cannot be overcome by planned nationalisation and compensation.
 - c. The fact that the local people will be deprived of economic and cultural rights due to displacement would not reconcile with any protection measures. The presentations in the symposium demonstrate that the families already displaced by the conflict in the region live in the shanty towns of the cities in the region as well as metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and that they have not been reintegrated in economic and social terms. In particular, it is emphasised that the displaced women and children are extremely victimised by domestic violence and the difficulties of psychological accommodation.
 - d. The issue is not compensating the pecuniary damages of the local people. Since Hasankeyf site is an heritage of the humanity and all people on the earth are entitled to enjoy the values it represent, individuals from other countries are also entitled to resist to such development projects as Ilisu Dam Project and this is a fundamental right of all the people living in the world.
 - e. It has been demonstrated that the statements quoted in the section of the Relocation Action Plan, "Notes from In-deep Interviews with the Stake Holders", do not reflect the reality. Some of the individuals and

organisations quoted in the text were present in the symposium (such as the Mayor of Hasankeyf, DİKA-SUM and GÖÇ-DER) submitted in the symposium that the report distorted, misquoted and/or neutralised their opinions.

10. According to the statements by the relevant international organisations and agencies, the efforts of the guarantor agencies in relation to international financing of the Ilisu Consortium have not reached a final settlement and they are not expected to reach such a settlement by 1 March 2006. In their letters in response to the Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive in February, the German, Austrian and Swiss Export Credit Agencies stated that the negotiations are not expected to finalise before two months. In addition, the deadline for the local people to express their opinions on Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Relocation Action Plan was originally 20 February 2006. However, as the Relocation Action Plan was published in Turkish on 20 January 2006, the Swiss Export Credit Agency extended the deadline for it to 20 March 2006. The Agency stated that the deadline for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report will be announced after it is published in Turkish, which is yet pending.

Recommendations:

1. There is no absolutely necessary conflict between development investment and projects for the conservation of historical and cultural heritage. It is possible to take steps for the conservation of historical and cultural heritage, and optimum solutions can be found by including the stake holders to the project in the process.
2. The solutions that achieve highest benefits are those elaborated on the basis of compromises by relevant interest groups and stake holders. Whatever their substance and importance are, decisions pertaining to energy investment should not be taken from above in societies with a claim to democratisation.
3. Assessment of the location of the dam should be open to the public and the authorities should explain how they excluded the nine other options and decided Hasankeyf as the site of the dam. Apparently, the nine alternative dam sites were excluded due to considerations that the measures to prevent water leakage in carstic holes in Midyat limestone structures, which would have negative cost implications for the project. However, the decided site is a larger terrain with an obtuse valley cut. This will mean that the body of the dam will have a longitude of 1.810 km, a height of 135 m and a reservoir capacity of 44 million m³. The cost implication is that almost all the project budget will be spent for constructing this huge body of the dam. This is a very high cost for such a project. It is obvious that the sub-items of construction in such a huge project, such as the transportation of stones, have the highest profit rate, and this presents for the sub-contracting consortium a very attractive financial picture, whatever the negative implications for the feasibility of the project are. On the other hand, the other site options include lower costs for the body of the dam but the costs of the containment of

water leakage will be higher. Therefore, we recommend that all the ten options for the site of the dam should be publicly discussed, taking into consideration all aspects of the construction costs, and that the public should be convinced that the principal factor in deciding the site is not the interests of the consortium but the public interest.

4. It is estimated that, if the height of the body of the dam is lowered with a view to avoid Hasankeyf to be drowned under waters, the dam will have a hydropower generation capacity of 600 MW instead of the projected hydropower generation capacity of 1200 MW. However, a decrease of this magnitude will also reduce the construction costs relative to the power generation loss in the sense that the amount of investment per the energy unit to be generated will also decrease. The Ilisu Dam is the most expensive one compared to all other GAP dams. The Ilisu Dam will be the power plant with the lowest load factor, and, thus, it will be the one with the highest rate of investment per a unit of energy generated by it. Therefore, it should be open to public debate how its economic feasibility is affected by its magnitude to an extent that it will destroy the historical site of Hasankeyf. We understand that a modification in its size will both save Hasankeyf and improve the feasibility of the project.
5. The idea of relocating the historical monuments of Hasankeyf is impossible in view of both the properties of these structures and the fact that the completion of the excavation here will take another 40-50 years. The projects to relocate these structures will be illusory. The relocation strategy should be entirely abandoned.
6. We reject the attitude of authorities in watching the destruction of Hasankeyf while avoiding their responsibilities and complaining about various difficulties here. We expect urgent intervention in Hasankeyf excavation activities and better resource allocation for these activities.
7. We need to respond through systematic and long-term activities to the misinformative and unfounded propaganda campaign launched by national and international corporations, who expect large profits from this project and are determined to achieve it despite any local resistance. While emotional responses may be a natural reflection of the regional communities, we need to go beyond such responses by promoting alternatives to destruction and relocation models nationally and internationally and by organising a counter-propaganda strategy. The present symposium demonstrates that there is a good potential by gathering young experts who rely on social responsibilities.
8. We will immediately submit an application to Diyarbakir Board for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets for an evaluation of the project, and initiate discussions with the authorities in Ankara and request the regional

members of the parliament to bring the issue to the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

9. As Hasankeyf is not only a regional or national value but part of the universal heritage of humanity, which falls under Turkey's international law obligations in connection with the ratified agreements, the struggle to save Hasankeyf will be carried to the agenda of UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage (EUROPA-NOSTRA).
10. Hasankeyf has become a symbol for the conservation of the cultural heritage of Southeast Anatolia beyond its of historical significance. A mutual understanding in this regards will contribute as a symbolic value to the improvement of the climate of peace and reciprocal thrust between different ethnic, religious and cultural communities.
11. A rational debate on how to open Hasankeyf and the region in general to cultural tourism, on how to produce more knowledge from the sites in the region and make room for retuning that knowledge to the region will be possible only after a final and negative decision is made on the Ilisu Dam Project, which is insistently kept pending, with negative implications for the cultural life in the region.

Diyarbakır, 21 February 2006, Hasankeyf Declaration