



Coalition of environmental NGOs “For the Forests of Moscow Region”

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To:

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Dear Mr. Huillard,

Presently, Russian State Company Avtodor is about to re-start construction works for the Moscow – St. Petersburg toll motorway project in the segment cutting through Khimki Forest. According to the official statement of Avtodor company, signing of an “additional agreement” with the concessioner of the project NWCC LLC (which is fully owned by Vinci Concessions Russie) will be considered as a signal to start the construction worksⁱ:

You are, perhaps, aware that an attempt to start construction works according to this project has already triggered acute social and environmental conflict in summer, 2010. According to independent public opinion polls, 76% of residents of Khimki, 67% of residents of Moscow, and 66% of all the Russians are strongly against the cutting of the motorway through Khimki Forest. A wide range of repressions has been used to suppress civic protests, including forced dispersion of peaceful meetings, unlawful detentions and arrests of activists, beatings, torture, and the use of unknown masked thugs

wearing Nazi insignia on their clothes. Moreover, there are good reasons to link the attacks of unknown criminals against journalists Mikhail Beketov and Oleg Kashin, as well as against activist Konstantin Fetisov, to the Khimki Forest conflict. The attacks resulted in severe life-threatening injuries, and Mr. Beketov and Mr. Fetisov will probably be bed-ridden and unable to speak or move by themselves for the rest of their livesⁱⁱ.

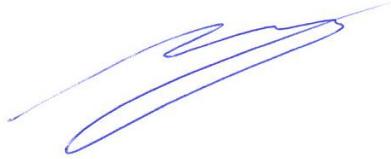
We, representatives of the Coalition of leading Russian environmental organizations “Za lesa Podmoskovia” (For the Moscow Region Forests) feel obliged to warn you about the following:

- the Khimki Forest conflict remains completely unresolved. The known decision of Russian Government to keep the initial routing unchanged is based on total ignorance of public opinion as well as of the position of independent experts.
- The “compensation measures” proposed by Russian authorities are unable to compensate for severe damage to the eco-system due to the fragmentation of the forest territory which is unavoidable if the existing routing of the motorway is preserved. This statement is backed by an independent expert examination on the projectⁱⁱⁱ.
- Moreover, an analysis of official documents of Russian Forestry Agency Roslezkhoz shows that it is not planned even to enact any working compensation by enlargement of the remaining forest lands, since the planned “compensation” includes already existing green zones in Khimki town (yards, parks, green strips along roads), as well as existing forests damaged by fires^{iv}
- Resuming the project would inevitable mean large-scale cutting down of trees. At least 60% of the forest to be destroyed for the motorway is still intact. Moreover, additional destruction of habitats is inevitable in the process of construction of technological roads as well as of re-loading of communications. For example, about 20,000 trees are to be cut down due to the communications (i.e., pipelines, cables) re-load; more than 100 years old oaks are among them.
- The choice of the motorway routing through the very heart of the Khimki Forest has no excuse in terms of engineering. Indeed, 11 different options for the placement of the motorway were found and analyzed during the independent expert examination. The currently chosen placement is the worst one. There exist options allowing construction of the motorway without any damage to natural areas or demolition of residential buildings.
- A situation similar to that with Khimki Forest is generic for almost all the considered segment of the motorway, i.e., from 15 to 58 km. The choice of the motorway routing through the forests of Solnechnogorsky District was made with harsh violations of legislation, principles of sustainable development and public involvement. No alternative routings allowing the minimization of damage to nature were considered.
- Pressure on the activists was resumed from the beginning of 2011, including attempts to start procedures allowing the State Guardianship to take children away from their parents using wrongful anonymous complaints about “cruelty towards children”, attempts to fabricate various criminal cases, and police pressure on the businesses of the activists.

Therefore, your decision to continue work on the project and sign the additional agreement with “Avtodor” would be a signal for unjustified large-scale destruction of natural habitats, and would inevitably result in more repression against the activists, including direct violence. Vinci would bear responsibility for these consequences in this case.

Thus, we ask your company to refrain from any participation in the Moscow-St. Petersburg motorway project, segments 15 – 58 km, and announce it clearly and publicly before mid-April 2011 in order not to allow the Russian side to use your company's interests as a pretext for possible illegal actions.

Sincerely,



Mikhail Matveev,

on behalf of

WWF Russia
Greenpeace Russia
Social-Ecological Union
Biodiversity Conservation Center
Russian Birds Conservation Union
The Movement to Defend Khimki Forest

ⁱ <http://center.rian.ru/economy/20110318/82343641.html>

ⁱⁱ http://www.ecmo.ru/main/abuse_en/

ⁱⁱⁱ http://bankwatch.org/documents/Khimki_independentexamination_summary.pdf -Summary in English,
http://www.greenpeace.org/russia/Global/russia/report/forest/Khimki/Khim_Concl-v2.pdf - full text (in Russian)

^{iv} <http://www.ecmo.ru/news/p113/n-1617/>