The Baku Ceyhan Campaign
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Dear Agip employee,

Agip risks its brand – the case of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline

You have probably heard about Agip / ENI's investment in the major Kashagan oilfield, in the Caspian Sea, off Kazakhstan. The consortium, Agip KCO, has submitted a development plan to the Kazakh government, and is now deciding how to export the oil. You might not have heard that last year, Agip / ENI bought a stake in the controversial Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Over 70 environmental and human rights groups have raised serious concerns about the impacts of the pipeline (www.baku.org.uk).

The legal agreements the BTC consortium has made with Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan exempt the consortium from any laws – present or future – which conflict with its project plans; and allow the consortium to demand compensation from the governments should any (environmental, social or human rights) law make the pipeline less profitable. This severely limits the governments' powers to protect their citizens from environmental damage and health and safety hazards. This would not be an acceptable way of operating in the UK or in Italy, where citizens are protected by national and European law. It should not be used---by ostensibly responsible companies like Agip and its partners--elsewhere.

The consortium has tried to push its way through existing protections for local people. Most recently, in Georgia the government was very worried about the pipeline's impact on the important Borjomi mineral water springs natural reserve, an area providing one of Georgia's largest exports. The government wanted more time to consider alternative routes and environmental mitigation measures. Agip claims to be an environmental leader in the industry. But in November the head of the consortium wrote a threatening letter to Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, warning him to approve the environmental impact assessment (EIA) by the end of the month, regardless. The Environment Minister complained that oil companies were "requesting the Georgian Government to violate our own environmental legislation". In the end, she was called in to government offices late on a Sunday, and had to stay until she'd signed the approval of the EIA.

Agip has adopted an internal code of conduct where it claims to be responsible on human rights issues, including respecting local communities (these include indigenous people), and their preferences over development. It has also subscribed to the Global Compact of the United Nations. But in Turkey the BTC consortium has hired the state Gendarmerie to guard the pipeline – an organisation which the Council of Europe has called to be disbanded, because of its record of committing terrible human rights abuses against the Kurds and others. The consortium has refused to write any human rights clauses into its agreement with the Gendarmerie, preferring instead to leave the Gendarmerie to use its own methods.

We would really like to know what you think about these issues. Our campaign is not against you, but against the decisions made by Agip's management. You can email us at baku@gn.apc.org or answer the anonymous questionnaire enclosed with this letter and mail it to us.

What else can you do? You can write to or email company managers (in London and in Italy), and ask them why Agip is considering such a socially and environmentally damaging export route for its Kashagan oil. Point out the conflict with the company's brand values, and the risk to its reputation. Most importantly, you can talk to colleagues in Agip. Tell them what you know about the pipeline, find out their opinions. Ask for a staff meeting on the pipeline issue, or even a debate. If you are a member of the union, you can also raise the pipeline issue in a union meeting. Already Agip's workers and trade unions have started to raise serious concerns before Agip management over its investments around the world. They are concerned about the role of the company in fuelling the war in Iraq, the creation of conflicts and environmental damages in Nigeria, and the participation of Agip to the consortium building the OCP pipeline in Ecuador.

Looking forward to hearing from you. Best wishes,

Greg Muttitt
Baku Ceyhan Campaign

Please fill in this questionnaire and send to: The Baku Ceyhan Campaign
Box 210, 266 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7DL

Or email us at baku@gn.apc.org

Do you believe a responsible company should actively seek to avoid complying with local laws?

Do you think a government should be able to delay approval of a project if it is concerned about the project's environmental impact?

Do you ever feel under pressure to tell company managers what you think they want to hear?

Do you think Agip's involvement in the BTC pipeline conflicts with the company's brand?

Do you have any other comments?

Your role in Agip (eg "engineer", "accounts" etc) (optional):

Would you like to be kept informed of the campaign's activities?

Name (optional):

Email (optional):