

The environmentalist group said many locals and other people from the territory of the capital city of North Macedonia reacted to the devastation of nature and urged the government to protect the Balkan country's water resources.

Locals are complaining about damage to the landscape amid works on the first of the three planned small hydroelectric units in Skopje territory. Eko-svest demands the construction on the Markova reka to be halted and all such projects to be suspended until a review of concessions is conducted.

Eko-svest condemned the destruction of the upper stream of Markova reka in Skopje during the works to build a small hydropower plant.

"In a situation where climate change impact is becoming more and more evident and is intensifying, we as a developing country without financial resources to tackle the consequences simply cannot afford to lose the water resources that we depend on for drinking water, water for agriculture and water that maintains precious ecosystems," said Ana Colovic Lesoska from the nongovernmental organization.

Heavy machinery

The landscape is completely changed and the old road was widened for the machines, Andrej Avramov from Markova Sushica village told Meta.mk.

"For that purpose, a whole hill has been dug out, from where rocks and other materials have been displaced. The nature around the building site has been completely destroyed. The locals and the people who come to holiday homes were once able to walk to the river, and now everything has been buried," he asserted and added the heavy machinery is being used. He said he hopes the vibrations wouldn't cause damage to the nearby monastery's structure.

The latest United Nations report on the effect of climate change on water resources points to more frequent and longer droughts causing the lack of water in many parts of the world, Eko-svest stressed. It underscored 2.2 billion people have no access to drinking water and that the number is expected to grow fast.

UN estimates longer droughts would lead to disease outbreaks, hunger and displacement so it recommends to governments to make water resources a priority in planning, the statement reads.

Government must protect domestic water resources

Eko-svest noted the Prespa lake is shrinking this summer and that many rivers in North Macedonia are drying up. It said agricultural producers are suffering from damage to their

crops.

Markova reka in Skopje, where three small hydropower plants of 1.75 MW in total are planned to be installed, is just one of the latest cases, the environmentalists said. Such projects are being developed in pristine areas without supervision and it leads to the destruction of geomorphology, biodiversity and ecosystem services such as clean air and potable water, according to Eko-svest.

Building hydropower plants is unreasonable and unjustified and the government must place a high priority on health and the protection of water resources, so it needs to halt all construction until the existing concessions are reviewed, it claimed.

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