
Sevan To Turn Into A « Golden » Lake?

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Lake Sevan is in danger again. The gold-extracting "GeoProMining" company-owner of the Ararat Gold Extraction Company and the Sotk gold mine exploitation concession- plans on moving the gold production unit from Ararat to Sotk.

According to ecologists, the cyanide technologies of gold extraction and joining of chemical substances will increase the risks for the lake. Besides that, the wastes such as poisonous metals and elements that gather in the granary will remain that way for millions of years.

Ecologists consider that as a violation of the law and predict that in a couple of years it will be impossible to prevent the outflow of dust that spreads to Lake Sevan through scraps and winds.

"Sevan is in danger because the interests of gold extractors are high," said ecologists today during a round-table discussion on "Risks for Sevan from gold mining" in the UN Office of Armenia.

In the beginning of the discussion, participants watched a film entitled "Golden mine for Sevan" about the consequences of a transaction of gold mines in Ararat and Vardenis.

Head of the National Committee of the UN Environmental Protection Program, president of the "For Stable Development" Association Karine Danielyan said that the issue must be perceived in the context of development of the country.

"It is time to think about what course we are going to take," said Danielyan. Professor of the Armenian-Russian University Gagik Sukhudyun said that the pollution of Sevan's basin is a violation of the law and the issue must be raised in the European Court.

"I have come to the conclusion that we must allocate peacekeeping forces between our administration and Mother Nature," said Sukhudyun.

Let us recall that former owner of the Indian gold-extracting factory "Vedanta Resources" had the desire to move the production unit from Ararat to Sotk back in 2005. The Armenian administration denied the proposal, but temporarily. Only in May this year did it become clear that the new owner of the factory-"GeoProMining"-has restarted the work of the factory and is getting ready to draft a complete plan with an evaluation of the influence on the environment.

Ecologists have expressed concerns to the RA Ministry of Environmental Protection, but it wasn't until recently that the Minister heard the government's decision to not back the project during an outgoing session in Sevan.

"We know that the owners of that company are lobbying the project at high levels and according to our data, there are people who are trying to green light that project. Head of the government's natural resources management agency Artashes Zeroyan was supposed to speak at the discussion, but he didn't show up. This raises worries that perhaps there is some pressure," said head of the "Ecolur" information NGO Inga Zarafyan.
