

# International Recognition: 35th Anniversary of Ecocenter for Environmental Protection



Meeting in New York with Mr. Kakha Imanadze, Ambassador of Georgia to UN. The meeting was attended by Ms. Nino Shekrladze, Advisor to the Ambassador. New York, US

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In order to raise environmental education in society and community-based organizations throughout the South Caucasus, the Hydraulic Engineering and Amelioration Scientific-Research Institute established a cooperative 'Hydro Technician' in January 1985, which was later transformed into public organization 'Ecocenter for Flood Prevention,' whose founders were academician Tsotne Mirtskhulava, the UN expert on natural disasters in the Caucasus, and professors Pridon Shatherashvili and Otar Sichinava.

Given the new legislative framework in Georgia, the aforementioned organization was re-registered on January 10, 2010, as a non-profit legal entity, the Ecocenter, with Academician of the Engineering Academy, Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor Givi Gavardashvili, elected as its director.

Under the leadership of Professor Givi

Gavardashvili, the Ecocenter for Environmental Protection has achieved great success both in Georgia and internationally. The Ecocenter currently has more than 70 employees, including specialists and experts from countries such as the US, England, Austria, Poland, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Poland, Belarus, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Japan, the Netherlands and representatives of other countries.

Three administrative departments operate in the organization: Scientific-Research; the Design, Research, International Relations Department and the Scientific-Technical Council. Its main directions of research are raising public awareness of natural disasters and risks; restoration of damaged ecosystems and their biodiversity; combating natural disasters; environmental protection and small energy; protection and preservation of natural resources; rehabilitation of water collecting buildings, irrigation and drainage systems; drinking water supply for the population; researching the ecological problems of the Black Sea and reservoirs; development of new, energy-efficient

modern ecological directions; informing the public about renewable energy sources; conducting educational seminars and international conferences to train young specialists; and publishing relevant environmental brochures, holding actions, etc.

In its 35 years of operating, Ecocenter specialists have prepared priority direction projects for Georgia such as: 'Forecasting erosion-mudflow and landslide processes in Georgia's transport and energy corridors and developing new innovative measures for their control' (funded by the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure); 'Project for the Regulation of the Kharkheti Gorge in Dusheti District' (funded by the State Land Planning Project of Georgia, 1987); 'Shiomghvime Monastery Mudslide Protection Project' (funded by the Georgian Institute of Restoration, 1987); 'Protecting the Tengiz (Kazakhstan) Oil Fields from Floods During Caspian Sea Storms' (funded by the Ministry of Oil and Gas of Kazakhstan, 2000); Development of a sustainable development model for the territory in the watershed of the Aragvi River (funded by 'Horizon Foundation' 2003); 'Assessment of the Current Condition of the Protective breakwater Situated South of the Poti Sea Port' (funded by the Poti Sea Port, 2009); Design of stone gabions to protect the middle school in the village of Rtskmelura in Lentekhi Municipality against floods of the Tskhenistskali River (funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Assistance SDS, 2009); Design of engineering-rehabilitation activities from the top of the River Kumi to the Second Dam (financed by Cartu Bank and Tskaltubo Municipality, 2011); Geological and Chemical Laboratory Examination of Soil Samples Taken at the Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa Pipeline (funded by BP and the Environmental Geological Agency EGA, 2012); Conducting multiple hydrological studies and laboratory studies in the Khudoni Dam Project section at the River Enguri (funded by Ltd Trans Electrical Limited, 2012); Design of Flood - Landslide Treatment Measures on Erekle II Street in the city of Signaghi (funded by Signaghi Municipality, 2013); Preparation of documents related to project and expenses for rehabilitation of drinking water infrastructure in villages in auxiliary zones of Javakheti National Park - Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki District (funded by the German Branch of WWF in Georgia, 2014); 'Project on Rehabilitation of Water Supply Buildings in the Village of Bodbiskhevi, Signaghi Municipality' (financed by Signaghi Municipality, 2014); 'Implementation of monitoring and scientific-research activities in the watershed areas of the Nakra River right tributaries Lakanashera and Lekverari' (funded by Nakhakes Ltd, 2016); scientific research of the River Telavis Khevi watershed for elaboration of a Telavi land use plan and risk assessment of flooded areas of the city



Working meeting with Professor Jerzy Erznakh. Warsaw, Poland, May 26, 2019

by expected floods (financed by Atelier Architect Ltd, 2018), etc. In addition, numerous expert works throughout the country have been carried out at the Ecocenter, including works for the assessment of small HPPs and the environmental impact of the first highway in Georgia.

The grant projects developed by young scientists and funded by the Shota Rustaveli Georgian Science Foundation include, among others: 'Socio-geographical survey of the quality of life among the populations of Georgia's regions through developing new and alternative methods' (Presidential Young Scientists Grant # 52/31, Head - Academic Doctor Natia Gavardashvili); 'Increase of agricultural land areas for development of Kindzmarauli grape business by using colloidal fractions of the Duruji mudflats' (Young Scientists Grant YS15\_2.4.1\_72, 2017, Supervisor - Academic Doctor Tamriko Supatashvili); 'Reporting parameters of the high-dispersed clay of the Kolkheti lowland clay soils in the soil-ground setting for the prospective development of regional tourism' (Young Scientists Grant # YS15\_2.4.1\_52, 2017, Supervisor - Academic Doctor Paata Sichinava); 'Study of erosion-mudflow processes in the watershed area of the Vere River to ensure the safety of the Tbilisi population and their consideration when developing new alternative environmental schemes' (Young Scientists Grant # S15\_2.1.5\_8, 2017, Supervisor - Academic Doctor Natia Gavardashvili).

The following projects have been implemented in the Ecocenter with the support of the European Union and NATO: the Black Sea Scientific Network, FP-7 project (funded by EU-EU, 2009-2011); Water Resources Management in Trans-boundary Agroecosystems of South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan (NATO-funded, 2008-2010).

The Ecocenter, together with the Tsotne Mirtskhulava Institute of Water Economy

of the Georgian Technical University and the Environmental Geological Agency Ltd (Executive Director Lasha Topuria), has created a scientific consortium and is working on a grant project called Elastic Borehole Regulation (Donor - Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, Innovation Research and Technological Development Grant # AR-18-1244, 2019-2021).

An international project titled Development of Sustainable Cultural Tourism of the Black Sea Basin (EU funded (EU, CULTOUR-BSB), 2018-2020) is also being developed in cooperation with specialists from Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Turkey.

In 2019, Ecocenter Scientists developed and submitted new projects to the EU Horizon 2020, NATO, Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia and UN Office in Georgia. Ecocenter's slogan is 'Ensuring Ecological Safety in the Caucasus Region Guaranteeing the Reduction of Eco-Migrants.' By the UN Resolution of 18 June 2019, the Ecocenter was granted 'Consultative Status of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)', an exclusive event for such a non-governmental organization in Georgia. Simultaneously with this, Professor Givi Gavardashvili, Director of the Ecocenter from New York to the UN Headquarters, received an official invitation to participate in the 74th UN Assembly on September 24-25.

On June 21, 2019, the Ecocenter Directorate signed a contract with UNESCO's International Consortium 'RURITAGE' to conduct joint international scientific research for the protection of cultural heritage.

In 2011, with the aim of educating young people in Georgia, the Ecocenter Directorate, together with the Tsotne Mirtskhulava Institute of Water Economy of the Georgian Technical University, established an international conference on 'Contemporary Problems of Water Management, Environment, Construction and Architecture,' in which more than 10 scientists from around the world are already involved. In 2019, a 9th conference was held.

On October 1-5, 2018, the 5th International Conference on 'Mudslides, Disasters, Risk, Forecasting, Protection' was held in the Assembly Hall of the Georgian Technical University. The conference was attended by 250 professors and specialists from 25 countries around the world. Together with the International Association of Mudslides, the conference was also supported by the Director of the Ecocenter for Environmental Protection.

We congratulate Dr. Givi Gavardashvili, Director of Ecocenter, Doctor of Technical Sciences, along with all of his scholars and international experts, on the 35th anniversary of the Organization and the granting of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) advisory status, which marks yet another international recognition of Georgia's NGO.



During the meeting the Chief of Section of Groundwater Systems and Settlements of UNESCO, Prof., Aliche Aureli and Associate Project Officer of Section on Earth Sciences and Geo - Hazards Risk Reduction of UNESCO PhD, Irina Pavlova. Paris, France, 15, May, 2019.

