



European Nature Heritage Fund, Bahnhofstr.35 D-71638 Ludwigsburg

Ministry of Mercantile Marine
Minister Manolis Kefalogiannis
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European Nature Heritage Fund
Stiftung Europäisches Naturerbe
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Claus-Peter Hutter
President

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Dear Minister Kefalogiannis,

the southern coast of Crete offers great potential for ecologically friendly tourism development as well as habitat for rare plant and animal species such as the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) which finds one of the last remaining nesting beaches in the Mediterranean in the Bay of Messara.

As international environmental foundation with a strong interest to preserve the natural heritage of Europe, we have with great concern taken note of your possible efforts concerning the construction of a commercial transit port at Tympaki on the Island of Crete.

Albeit the fact that – as far as the public is informed - up to now, no final decision has been taken, still, we would like to express our demurs concerning the realisation of the project which will have great impacts (1) on the environment and (2) on the economy resulting in serious effects on Messara's social structures.

In doing so, we are also supporting local initiatives and NGOs arguing against the project.

- (1) The construction of the container terminal will have very serious and irreversible side effects on the broader marine and terrestrial environment of South Crete, including sand dunes which are being protected as nesting beach for the sea turtle *Caretta caretta*. The region also belongs to the Network "NATURA 2000" (SPA: GR 4310007/pSCI: GR 4310004).

Caretta caretta is – according to EU Legislation (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna – FFH Directive; App. II) a species of community interest and in need of strict protection – as well as its habitats. The construction of the container terminal will oppose these efforts to protect one of the most threatened sea turtle species in the Mediterranean.

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You might be informed that Euronatur together with other NGOs has been working on Zakynthos for the protection of the last nesting beaches of *Caretta caretta*, collecting more than 16,000 Greek and international signatures for the preservation of these important habitats which were handed over to the Office of the Prime Minister in February 2005.

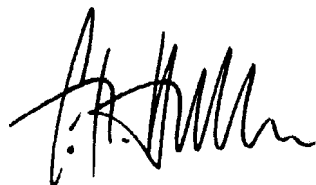
(2) The construction of the container terminal will significantly degrade the historical, archaeological and cultural character of the area and, consequently, interfere with any other kind of activity and the perspective of ecologically friendly or conventional touristic development in the whole area of the bay and even further. At the same time, it will reduce the quality and the quantity of local agricultural products which comprise the basis of the region's economy.

As a consequence, the farmers and employees of touristic enterprises will become unemployed.

The above sketched environmental deterioration and changes in economy will have serious effects on the region's social structures resulting in social degradation.

We therefore call on you to consider the above raised objections and to abstain from the project in order to protect the pristine nature of the southern coast of Crete. At the same time, we call on you to forbear from your recent policy to keep any decisions and plans concerning the construction of the commercial transit port under secret. The local population who in an open meeting in November 2005 has expressed their worries about this project and clearly stated that such kind of development does not fit in the profile of the area will directly be affected by the impacts of the project and therefore has the right to be thoroughly informed to be able to express their demurs.

Yours sincerely,



Claus-Peter Hutter

CC:

Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Min. G. Souflias
Ministry of Tourism, Min. F. Palli-Petralia