

Russia has warned Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to respect the Montreux Treaty, which gives control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to Turkey and regulates sea traffic, following his unveiling of plans for a new canal.

Russian Ambassador to Turkey Vladimir Ivanovsky told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review that they are still trying to understand the Istanbul Canal project themselves, and that no information had been given to him on the validity of the rumor that the project would be financed by Russian companies.

If the Montreux Treaty is enforced, then the right of free passage will remain and no income will be made from the canal, the Russian ambassador said, highlighting not only the international legal aspects of the project, but also the economic impact.

“To provide a better comment, we would have to know more about the project. But even the Turkish Foreign Ministry does not have a lot of information on it. We are at the information-gathering stage at this point,” said Ivanovsky.

“The only information we have is what the prime minister said,” the ambassador added. Erdoğan announced his plans Wednesday for his “crazy project” — a second strait in Istanbul meant in part to ease shipping congestion on the overcrowded Bosphorus.

“We normally handle the issues of passage through the Bosphorus and the topic of energy with the Foreign Ministry. And from what we understand, they do not have any additional information on the matter,” Ivanovsky said.

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