

Considering the PDAC 2017 mining fair, the below-signed organizations state that

1. The pressures exerted by mining companies, national governments in the majority of Latin American countries and governments from the companies' country of origin, have given rise to powerful community opposition as a result of the negative impacts of the territorial expansion of mining on their ways of life, and the ecological threat that it poses.

For every new mining project there is more community opposition and more mining conflicts throughout the region. This is an indicator of how communities have learned about the problems that arise when they accept that an extractive model of development be imposed in their territories.

2. Despite the drop in mineral prices in international markets, Latin America continues to be the principal destination for mining investment. This is taking place despite less than ever economic benefits for host countries, or that countries are even subsidizing foreign mining activities.

In boom periods, windfall profits enable mining companies to obtain favours from national political actors, despite their meager contributions in royalties and taxes. When mineral prices go bust, they pressure for weakened social and environmental standards and for state subsidies through exemptions from taxes and other obligations that every economic activity should meet.

3. We are deeply concerned about the increasing trend of criminalization of social protest in the context of extractive mining activities that is leading to serious human rights violations of people who are leading efforts to protect territories and the rights of mining-affected communities.

The number of people being persecuted, charged, jailed or killed for opposing mining destruction in Latin America is rising in a worrisome way, while there is a tremendous lack of punishment for those responsible, especially those who ordered these abuses, who enjoy complete impunity.

4. Countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Peru in South America, as well as Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua in Central America, along with Mexico, currently top the list of the most dangerous countries in which to defend human rights and the environment.

Throughout the region, however, through the criminalization of social protest, we see efforts to silence the demands of mining-affected communities who are clamouring for justice, respect, equality, peace and democracy.

5. Despite the permanent petitions and complaints that communities have brought to the home countries of transnational mining companies to enact legislation and regulations that would ensure corporate accountability for human rights violations

and environmental destruction beyond their borders, we do not see adequate political will for this to happen. This is contributing to the state of impunity for serious crimes taking place in connection with company operations.

In particular, we denounce the lack of political will on the part of the Canadian government, in whose country the majority of mining companies incorporate or raise financing. The Canadian government continues to protect and promote this destructive model of development as a central focus of its foreign policy. A year ago, 180 Latin American organizations wrote to the Canadian Prime Minister demanding fundamental changes in this policy. A response has yet to be received.

As a result of the lack of justice, international bodies such as the Inter American Commission on Human Rights have had to intervene, demanding respect for community rights, protection measures for victims, still without the needed results to effectively protect those fighting for their rights.

6. We denounce international events, like the PDAC mining fair, which promote an extractive activity that has devastating results for local communities, destroys territories and ecosystems, especially for the lack of responsibility being taken for the above-mentioned issues.
7. We believe that it is vitally important for a profound examination of extractivist policies and their consequences in order to make it possible for the concept of “living well” to be given centre place among the livelihood options that Latin American communities have available to them.
8. We reaffirm our commitment to continue working with affected communities to bring an end to the impunity for human rights violations and environmental abuses of mining companies. As long as these destructive practices persist to enable mineral extraction, they will continue to provoke powerful resistance from affected territories in Latin America.

Signed:

Acción Ecológica, Ecuador

Asamblea de los Pueblos del Sur, Ecuador

CEIBA Guatemala

Centro de Investigación sobre Inversión y Comercio (CEICOM), El Salvador

Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia (CEDIB), Bolivia

Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario (CEHPRODEC), Honduras

Colectivo CASA, Bolivia

Colectivo Voces Ecológicas (COVEC), Panama

Cooperación, Perú

Fundación Ecuménica para el Desarrollo y la Paz (FEDEPAZ), Perú

Observatorio de Conflictos Ambientales de América Latina (OLCA), Chile

Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina (OCMAL), Regional

Oficina de Justicia Paz e Integridad de la Creación, Sociedad Misionera de San Columbano, Chile

Pastoral Social del Vicariato Apostólico San Francisco Javier – Jaén, Perú

Red Muqui, Perú

Uruguay Libre de Minería