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Canadian Organizations Condemn Signing of High-Risk Ecuador Free Trade Agreement

Source: Americas Policy Group, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability, Climate Action Network Canada, Common Frontiers, MiningWatch Canada

OTTAWA, July 24, 2026 – Civil society organizations across Canada condemn the deeply dangerous bilateral free trade agreement between Canada and Ecuador, signed in Ottawa this morning by Canadian Minister of International Trade Maninder Sidhu and Ecuadorian Minister of Production, International Trade and Investment Luis Alberto Jaramillo. The deal grants sweeping and undemocratic protections to Canadian investors while deepening Ecuador's human rights crisis.

Minister Sidhu [said the agreement](#) will “open new opportunities for Canadian companies in a growing market, strengthen supply chains, and provide more predictable access to goods, services, and investment.” But Canada's [own assessment](#) of the agreement projected insignificant growth in trade. Its main purpose is to attract and protect Canadian investment in Ecuador's mining sector. The agreement is massively opposed by a large share of Ecuadorian civil society and Indigenous groups.

Paramount among the concerns:

- **A worsening human rights crisis in Ecuador.** Ecuadorian and international human rights organizations have documented widespread, systematic human rights violations, including increasing militarization, repression of dissent, the criminalization of environmental defenders, and the imposition of executive decrees that undermine the rule of law. Much of this is exacerbated by – or in support of – existing Canadian mining investment in the country.
- **No consultation, consent, or transparency.** The agreement was negotiated and signed without the free, prior, and informed consent of affected Indigenous Peoples, violating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Ecuador's obligations under the [Escazú Agreement](#).
- **Investor protections that violate Ecuador's constitution.** The agreement contains an Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism that is prohibited by Ecuador's constitution and was rejected in two recent plebiscites. According to former [UN](#)

[Rapporteur David Boyd](#), ISDS poses “catastrophic” consequences for climate action, environmental protection, and the realization of human rights.

- **No corporate accountability mechanism in Canada.** The recent [closure](#) of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) and the lack of due diligence legislation underscore a major accountability gap in Canada. Communities harmed by the operations of Canadian companies in Ecuador will have no standing in investor-state disputes and nowhere to turn for justice and remedy.

The agreement now heads to Parliament to be ratified. In response to repeated concerns raised by Ecuadorian civil society and Indigenous communities, and [echoed by prominent civil society voices in Canada](#), the organizations are urging Members of Parliament to reject the agreement.

Media contact:

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Val Croft, Communications Coordinator, MiningWatch Canada, +1-416-707-5986, val@miningwatch.ca

Supporting quotes:

- “This free trade deal overrides the voices of Indigenous women in Ecuador and denies them any avenue for accountability for human rights abuses they may experience. Yet again, the government is prioritizing the profits of Canadian resource-extraction companies over the lives and rights of Indigenous women and girls, both in Canada and abroad.” – **Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada’s English-speaking section**
- “It is a slap in the face to democracy to put an investor-state dispute process in this free trade deal when the Ecuadorian constitution and the people of Ecuador are clearly opposed. This trade deal will give Canadian mining companies a coercive tool to steamroll over local opposition to their projects and avoid accountability for rights violations.” – **Stuart Trew, director of the Trade and Investment Research Project at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**
- “This agreement is the extension abroad of the government’s reckless climate deregulation agenda at home. Whether it’s dismantling accountability bodies like the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise and fast-tracking projects at home or bypassing Indigenous consent and democratic accountability abroad, the pattern is clear: this government is sacrificing essential safeguards for the sake of corporate interests. This isn’t the trade policy of a climate leader, but the erosion of the protections we need to keep communities safe.” – **Sasha Lleshaj, International Trade and Energy Coordinator, Climate Action Network Canada**
- “The harms linked to Canadian mining in Ecuador are already well documented and the Canada-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement will only make them worse. President Noboa

wants to accelerate mining expansion, and Canada is helping him do it – all while continuing to shield Canadian companies from meaningful accountability. It's the same playbook: protect mining investors, not the communities living with the consequences.”

– **Arturo Ezquerro-Cañete, Latin America Program Coordinator, MiningWatch Canada**

- “Across the Americas, we are witnessing a dramatic and deeply concerning swing to the right, with governments increasingly embracing authoritarian policies. Ecuador is no exception. President Daniel Noboa has closely aligned himself with US President Donald Trump and, since taking office, Ecuadorian communities and human rights organizations report increased militarization and excessive use of state security forces in ways that jeopardize civil liberties. With this deal, Canada shows its willingness to build trade policy despite the risk of increased human rights violations.” – **Caren Weisbart, National Coalition Coordinator, Common Frontiers**
- “Ecuadorian and international human rights organizations have documented widespread, systematic human rights violations in Ecuador. Ecuadorians are facing increasing militarization and brutal repression of dissent, unjust jailing of human rights defenders, and routine violations of the rule of law by the current regime. Governments that truly value human rights and democracy do not cement trade agreements with egregious violators of constitutional guarantees and international obligations.” – **Lisa Kowalchuk, Americas Policy Group**