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MiningWatch Canada
Mines Alertes

December 15, 2005

The Honourable Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON

fax: (613) 996-3443

Dear Minister Pettigrew:

We are writing to bring to your attention a conflict between Ecuadorian communities and a Canadian mining company, and to ask for your support in ensuring a peaceful resolution that is responsive to community concerns.

Tension has grown in the Ecuadorian cloud forest since Ascendant Copper Corporation, a Canadian mining junior, obtained a concession there in late 2004. Local communities in the Intag region of Ecuador, where the project is located, have explicitly rejected mineral exploitation, favouring more sustainable forms of development. Undeterred by local opposition, including that of the municipal government of Cotacachi where the project is located, Ascendant has pushed forward with the development of its project. Local residents, who report having been threatened and intimidated, have grown increasingly frustrated.

Friends of the Earth Canada and MiningWatch Canada have learned that on Saturday, December 10, tensions came to a head in the Intag. According to the Ecuadorian daily *El Comercio*, over 300 residents, representing approximately twenty local communities, burned a company building.

While we do not condone the use of violence, we do believe that it is essential to understand the frustration that has led to this act of desperation on the part of local communities. Tension has been mounting around this project since it was first proposed by a Japanese company in the 1990s.

Community representatives have communicated the following demands: that Ascendant abandon its Junín mining project and leave the area, and that it stop funding the Corporation for the Development of the Communities of Garcia Moreno (CODEGAM), a local organization that has been the source of significant controversy and that has received substantial funding from Ascendant.

Community representatives also identify the need for an independent third party in Junín, such as a representative from a human rights organization, in order to defuse tension in the area and to establish the conditions necessary for a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

We urge you to call on Ascendant Copper Corporation to comply with local community demands and to help ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Earlier this year, the Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade released a report entitled *Mining in Developing Countries and Corporate Social Responsibility*, which contains a series of recommendations for the Government of Canada aimed at avoiding the type of crisis that has developed in Ecuador. In its response to the SCFAIT report, the Government pledged to establish a series of multistakeholder roundtables to examine the issues raised in the SCFAIT report.

In the spirit of this commitment and in the interest of avoiding further conflict, we urge you to intervene in the Ascendant Copper dispute.

We also encourage you to ensure that the promised roundtable process is urgently undertaken following the upcoming federal election. It is clear that in cases such as Junín, Canadian mining companies require unequivocal direction in order to comply with international human rights standards and to minimize the environmental impacts of their operations. The adoption of regulatory mechanisms is necessary to provide explicit guarantees to communities around the world that Canadian mining companies can and will be required to respect Canadian values for both human rights and the environment.

We would be happy to discuss this with you in greater detail.

Yours truly,



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