Barrick's rhetoric belies the lived reality of communities at its mines around the world

Ottawa – May 3, 2022 - As Barrick prepares to speak at its Annual General Meeting about the soaring gold price in an unstable world, returns on investment for shareholders, and the value of the company's global assets, affected communities from Alaska to the Dominican Republic, and from Tanzania to Papua New Guinea speak out about the ongoing harm they suffer as Barrick explores and mines their traditional lands.

Last year Barrick put out a Human Rights report on December 10, United Nations' Human Rights Day, but the experiences of people at Barrick mines show the company's glossy text does not reflect long-standing, ongoing, and un-remedied harms endured, or opposition expressed by indigenous people at new mine sites.

Porgera, Papua New Guinea – Un-remedied violence against indigenous peoples by mine security

The Porgera Joint Venture mine in the highlands of Papua New Guinea has a long history of violence and sexual assault by private and public mine security against local men, boys, women and girls. Very few of hundreds of cases brought to the mine's grievance mechanism have been addressed to date. Barrick has failed to implement key recommendations made by its own consultants BSR, to improve the grievance mechanism *in collaboration with grassroots organizations who have filed most of the claims*.

In a letter exchange initiated by Porgeran community organizations with Barrick CEO Mark Bristow, Bristow commits to "implementing a robust coherent strategy and action plan to deal with Human Rights and legacy grievances or violations, and to reset and rebuild relationships with the Porgera community." With regard to the grievance mechanism Bristow notes that "Barrick had begun developing an action plan and implementing changes" and that "[o]n January 1 2019, when the merger with Randgold resources was completed, there were 447 open grievances at Porgera. By the end of 2020 there were 265." However, there has been no outreach to any of the local grassroots groups who have filed claims and who wrote letters to Bristow, nor any indication that any of the hundreds of cases they have filed have been resolved.

"Barrick backed our government into a corner by starting legal action against it in an international tribunal, just as Barrick did in Pakistan" says **Stanley Peter, of Akali Tangi Association.** "We were told that, after receiving a permit extension to keep mining, Barrick would deal with "legacy issues," but we are still not seeing any movement to deal with decades of human rights abuses in Porgera caused by mine security – there has been no outreach to us on creating a credible grievance mechanism together with those of us who have been helping victims to file claims."

After years of ignoring public concerns raised by MiningWatch Canada and others about high levels of sexual violence by mine security, Barrick put a short term mechanism in place between 2012-2014 to process victims of sexual assault by private mine security. 119 women received remedy payments in return for signing legal waivers. These women are not satisfied with the remedy they received and have requested that the legal waivers be lifted. In its 2021 Human Rights report (p.32) Barrick says of its grievance mechanisms: "These programs are developed in accordance with the UNGPs and do not obstruct access to other remedies available to rightsholders such as state-based remedies or other internationally recognized mechanisms." But Barrick has refused to rescind the legal waivers the sexual assault victims were asked to sign.

"Barrick has only ever shown interest in the gold under our feet, not the lives of our people" says **Lely Kesa, of Akali Tange Association**, "so many women and girls who have suffered rape and gang rape by Porgera mine security have never received remedy and Barrick refuses to lift the legal waivers for the 119 women who did receive inequitable remedy."

North Mara, Tanzania – Ongoing violence by mine security and contamination of local water sources

In its Human Rights Report (p.3), CEO Mark Bristow speaks of progress made by Barrick in community relations that is nowhere "more evident than at North Mara, where community relations have been radically repaired." While unable to conduct human rights field assessments during the last two years of the pandemic, MiningWatch has continued to receive reports of violence against local indigenous Kuria community members by police operating under a Memorandum of Understanding at the North Mara Gold Mine.

In spite of more than a decade of complaints of excess use of force by mine security and police at this mine, including cases of women who have endured rape, and in spite of already settling one lawsuit by victims of violence by mine security out of court in 2015, Barrick has refused to stop using police as part of its security arrangements at the mine. Barrick has also refused to settle with new victims of violence by police and mine security in a new and ongoing court case in the U.K. that resulted in part from MiningWatch Canada's documentation of 70 cases of violent acts by mine security and police against local Kuria people.*

"As reports of violence against indigenous community members by police at the North Mara Gold Mine continue to come in, it is time for Barrick to sever relations with Tanzanian police at the mine" says **Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada**. "Barrick also needs to stop

**This number was adjusted in September 2025 to reflect only the interviews MiningWatch Canada had conducted up to the time of this publication with alleged victims of assault by private mine security or police contracted by the mine, or with family members of victims who died as a result of their assault*

delaying justice and remedy for the North Mara victims of violence before the court in the U.K. and come to the table to settle that case."

This year we have also received new reports of contamination of the North Mara River, which runs close to the mine. Problems with leaks of toxic mine waste effluent into ground and surface water around the tailings facility and other discharge sites around the mine are longstanding. In this case a review conducted by an eleven person national committee, formed by Vice President and Minister for Union and Environment, Dr Selemani Jafo, has been rejected by Members of Parliament amidst calls for an independent team to conduct a scientific examination of the polluted river.

Donlin, Alaska – Lack of Indigenous Consent

In Alaska indigenous Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Athabascan peoples are opposing Barrick's proposed Donlin Gold Mine over concerns the mine will contaminate the Kuskokwim River, which supports one of the largest traditional and customary fisheries in the world, with salmon making up more than 50% of the annual diet of the local indigenous peoples.

In its 2021 Human Rights report (p.59) Barrick says it has established "friendship agreements with six native communities and key stakeholder organizations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) region in Alaska" but fails to disclose indigenous opposition to the mine by the majority of communities in the region indicating failure to achieve not only a social license to operate but also Free Prior and Informed Consent of impacted peoples, required under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In advance of the AGM, nine Tribes in the Kuskokwim region sent a letter calling on Barrick to withdraw financial support for the project. Opposition to the controversial open pit, cyanide-leach gold mine has dramatically increased in recent years, including formal opposition by the Association of Village Council Presidents, which represents 56 Tribal Governments in the Kuskokwim region, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, and the National Congress of American Indians.

"The Donlin Project poses too much risk to our lands and our food security, which we have an obligation to protect for future generations," **said Beverly Hoffman, Orutsararmiut Tribal Citizen.** "We are asking Barrick Gold: What will it take to walk away from Donlin?"

Pueblo Viejo, Dominican Republic

Barrick Gold continues with its proposed expansion of the Pueblo Viejo gold mine, which would include the construction of a new tailings dam to store the mine's waste, while communities continue to urge the company to withdraw its plans and call on the government to stop the project from moving forward.

Barrick currently operates Pueblo Viejo, an open-pit mine located on 4,800 hectares of land in Sánchez Ramírez, approx. 100km outside of the Dominican Republic's capital city of Santo

Domingo. Dominican social movements and affected communities have expressed grave concern about environmental and social impacts of the proposed tailings dam and organized demonstrations in opposition to it. Government officials (including the president of the Alianza País political party and an official representing Monte Plata), civil society (including Centro Montalvo and the Archbishop of Santo Domingo), and others have expressed solidarity with community members in opposing this project.

Facing strong opposition to the project, the Ministry of Energy and Mining announced in March 2022 that Barrick would not be allowed to build a dam in their preferred location in Monte Plata. Barrick and the Dominican Government have doubled down on efforts to find an alternative site in Sánchez Ramirez and promote the project to communities and Dominican authorities. Communities continue to protest the project.

According to **Dario Solano from AfrosRD**, "The company's efforts are creating divisions in communities, repression, and human rights violations against environmental defenders. The negative social and environmental impacts of Barrick Gold are unacceptable."

According to **Heriberta Fernandez Liriano of Centro Montalvo**, "Instead of pushing ahead with this expansion, Barrick Gold should be asking for forgiveness from the people of the Dominican Republic given the company's history of environmental contamination and their efforts to force a tailings dam on communities strongly opposed to their project."

While Barrick claims to have a strategy to address legacy contamination, the Pueblo Viejo operations have faced credible allegations of environmental harm. A 2012 report by the Dominican Academy of Sciences concluded that Barrick operations were contaminating water sources and locals allege that Barrick's work at the mine also exacerbated pollution of the local Maguaca and Margajita rivers. Local families have persistently sought relocation from the area, raising concerns about environmental contamination.

Leoncia Ramos, from the Comité Nuevo Renacer, in Sánchez Ramirez said, "The greatest curse for our communities is to have been born with gold in our territories, because Barrick has an insatiable avarice."

For more information contact:

- Catherine Coumans, MiningWatch Canada – catherine@miningwatch.ca, tel. 613-256-8331
- Stanley Peter, Akali Tange Association – spangoro@gmail.com
- Lely Kesa, Akali Tange Association – lelykesa12@gmail.com
- Beverly Hoffman, Orutsararmiut Tribal Citizen – bev@kuskofish.com, nodonlingold.org, tel. 907-545-4499
- Diario Solano, AfrosRD – dasolano@gmail.com
- Heriberta Fernández Liriano, Centro Montalvo – proyectorsm@gmail.com