



MiningWatch Canada

Mines Alerte

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July 5, 2007

Sr. José Aviles
Av. 6 de Diciembre 159 y Hnos Pazmiño
Edificio Parlamento, Oficina 408
Quito, Ecuador

Dear Mr. Aviles,

We have received your letter of June 27th accusing MiningWatch Canada of “Keeping the Indigenous People of the Amazon in Poverty”. These accusations are baseless and untrue and they represent libel against our organisation. They maliciously attack not only MiningWatch Canada but also those people and organizations in Ecuador that have expressed legitimate concerns about mining.

You are clearly unfamiliar with our organization and have been apparently misled regarding our principles and our operations. It is unfortunate that you did not make any earlier attempt to clear up these misconceptions and misinformation. Certainly your own credibility would have been better served if you had done so; nonetheless you are welcome to communicate directly with us to eliminate future misunderstandings, or to read our published material in print or on our web site, www.miningwatch.ca.

MiningWatch Canada is a small organisation dedicated to research and advocacy. Our role, reflected on our web site and in all our published materials, is to ensure that the impacts occasioned by mining can be fully considered by the people who are being affected, and to ensure that policies and practices are adopted by governments and the mining industry to protect the environmental, indigenous rights, workers’ rights, human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights. To this end we commonly work with the mining industry and our Government in multi-stakeholder initiatives. We respond to requests from assistance from communities and organisations working with them who are affected by Canadian mining operations to provide independent information and to help them communicate with others in similar situations, find technical assistance, and assert their rights. We are not a funding agency; we do not undertake development projects or provide financial support to other organisations or communities, nor have we requested or been given any funding for any work in southern Ecuador.

In the case of southern Ecuador, we have provided independent information, otherwise not available in Canada, have given voice to local people who have expressed concerns about the impacts of mining on the forests and ecosystems, and have tried to make sure that the world knows about the conflicts that the proposed mining development has occasioned.

Mining has short-term benefits and very long-term impacts and risks that need to be carefully evaluated by the communities that will be affected by them. Because mining frequently entails serious environmental and social costs, we believe that affected communities and peoples have the right to Free Prior Informed Consent – the right to make their own decisions regarding development projects, free of coercion. We know how desperate indigenous communities are for capital and knowledge that will help them feed their people and develop strong economies. However, you should be aware that there is a world-wide debate about whether mining has the ability to facilitate this. In fact, most research – including findings from the World Bank Extractive Industries Review (2003) – leads to the conclusion that mining-dependent regions are poorer than regions without mining, and that mining creates poverty for local communities in the long term, rather than long-term prosperity. We have investigated this in some detail, and our research can be found in *“No Rock Unturned”*, unfortunately available only in English.

The Shuar people have clearly not profited to date from petroleum development, as they still live in desperate poverty. Why should they expect that mining will be different?

Our role as a critical mining industry analyst does not mean that we are opposed to all mining projects – only those that impose an unacceptable and unjustifiable cost to the environment, human rights, and the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the affected communities, including taking advantage of and/or exacerbating conflict of any kind. We will continue to conduct research, provide uncompromised and constructive criticism of the mining industry, and stand in solidarity with communities affected by mining, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Once again, I would welcome the opportunity to address your misapprehensions directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joan Kuyek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

Joan Kuyek, National Coordinator