

Development and responsible business practices - extractive industries in developing countries

Presentation on the situation in Colombia at DEVE Committee

On September 17 the **Development Committee** of the European Parliament hold a hearing entitled “*Promoting development through responsible business practices, including the role of extractive industries in developing countries*” to which **Sergio Coronado - Representative of the Colombian Platform for Democracy, Development and Human Rights*** was invited in order to present the situation in Colombia.



During his 10-minute intervention (which you can view [here](#)), Mr. Coronado commented on several aspects of the impacts of large-scale mining in Colombia, mainly in relation to human rights, poverty and environmental rights.

Extracts from Sergio Coronado’s intervention

In recent years, Colombia has experienced an intense debate about the role of mining in the national development process. The colonial history of Latin America demonstrates that it is extremely difficult to create a development process using mining, that promotes comprehensive guarantees for the human rights of the whole population. In Colombia, the current social resistance to increased mining activities adds to this story.

The country is experiencing a boom in mining activities:

- In a decade the coal mined in the country has almost doubled, from 38,242 million tons in the year 2000 to 74,350 million tons in 2010ⁱ;
- In addition, the area of land given titles for mining has soared in recent years. In 2002 there were mining concessions over 1.1 million hectares, while in 2009, concessions had been awarded over 8.4 million hectaresⁱⁱ.

This boom has led to the emergence and increase of social conflicts linked to the presence of mining companies conducting exploration and development activities in rural areas. Between January 2001 and December 2011 there were 274 social struggles associated with the extraction of oil, gold and coalⁱⁱⁱ. These social struggles take place in a context of repression and criminalization of protest.

Conclusion and recommendations:

- In the mining regions and municipalities, the economic, social and cultural rights of the population have not been guaranteed, nor has structural poverty been overcome.

- Open pit mining violates the right to land and territory for many rural communities and increases the risk of climate change.
- Large-scale mining is incompatible with guaranteeing the right to water for a large number of citizens.
- There are links between mining, conflict and human rights violations, in particular forced displacement, requiring the implementation of transparency and due diligence standards, for both the companies' activities in the field, and also in consumer countries.

In this regard, given that the EU is drafting and adopting measures on business and human rights, Mr Coronado made the following recommendations to the European Parliament:

Transparency initiatives (such as EITI) and for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are important, but not sufficient. **Progress is needed on the design and implementation of binding tools and mechanisms to enable access to justice for people and communities who have suffered violations of their rights** related to the activities of mining companies. Access to justice should not be restricted to national courts. Instead access should also be facilitated to justice systems in the countries where businesses have their headquarters.

Furthermore, the EU must **demand that companies publish reports on the impacts of their activities** (known as non- financial reports). These reports must be accompanied by social audits involving communities who have been directly affected and civil society organisations that accompany them.

Because Colombia is a country where armed conflict persists, it must be understood that the minerals extracted from this country come from a high-risk conflict zone. We ask the European Union to **implement transparency and due diligence principles in extractive industries' supply chains**. This obligation should be implemented for all Colombian natural resources consumed in Europe.

It is fundamental to understand the long-term social and ecological consequences of mining, before establishing the income and market value gained from mineral and metal extraction^{iv}. The large-scale accelerated extraction of minerals and metals cannot be reconciled with a sustainable social project. This is a lesson we have learned from history.

* The **Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development** is a network of more than 100 social, communitarian and nongovernmental organisations from all the country. The Platform promotes strategic agreements among the different social and institutional actors which work for a development based on democracy and the respect of all human rights.

ⁱ Colombian Mining Information System, "Producción y exportaciones de carbón en Colombia". Bogotá, 2011. Available at: www.simco.gov.co

ⁱⁱ Guillermo Rudas, "Minería, medio ambiente y cambio climático: una señal de alarma". En: Razón Pública, 16 January 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ CINEP/PPP. *Minería, conflictos sociales y violación de los derechos humanos en Colombia*. Bogotá, October 2012.

^{iv} Moody, Roger. *Rocks and hard places. The globalization of mining*. Zed Books, New York, 2007.