



**UNDER EMBARGO - NOT FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION**

Mr. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General  
Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Mr. Ian Fry, UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change  
Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission  
Mr. Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany  
Mr. Iván Duque Marquez, President of the Republic of Colombia

25 April 2022

***Call for an end to the proliferation of extractivist activities and systematic human rights violations against indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Colombian territory - we call on member states and the UN to support and act immediately.***

Yours sincerely,

as civil society networks, collectives, and non-governmental organizations committed to the defense of human rights and the environment, we strongly reject the threat to the fulfillment of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment of the Wayuu indigenous territory in La Guajira, Colombia, as well as condemn coal mining as a latent threat to limit global warming below 1.5°C.

On April 6, 2022, it was agreed to increase imports of Colombian coal to Germany in response to the sanctions imposed on Russia in the current context of the war in Ukraine. This allows Germany to partially replace its demand for Russian coal by increasing exploration and exploitation in the Wayuu indigenous territory. The growing demand for Colombian coal gives a new boost to El Cerrejón, Latin America's largest coal mine, which announced last year its closure due to low demand for the material. However, it now plans to increase its production to meet, among other things, German demand for the material. One day after the agreement between the two heads of state, El Cerrejón received permission from the Colombian government to divert the Bruno stream and mine the ore lying in its riverbed.



Historically, the Bruno stream has not only been a source of water and cultural and spiritual well-being for the indigenous and Afrodescendant communities living in the area but is also considered a biological corridor between Perijá and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. These communities have already experienced permanent and irreversible loss and damages to their livelihoods, homes and territory, as well as loss of culture, identity and biodiversity, which cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

The most recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have been clear in corroborating that current development challenges that cause high vulnerability are influenced by historical and persistent patterns of inequity, especially for many indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and local communities. These latest reports recognize the value of diverse forms of knowledge, such as scientific knowledge, as well as indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in understanding and assessing climate adaptation processes and actions to reduce the risks of human-induced climate change.

We stand in solidarity with the leaders and their families, victims of violence and human rights violations, and demand that the necessary and urgent measures be adopted for the protection of their lives and physical integrity. Solidarity with Colombia's indigenous and Afrodescendant communities requires international attention and pressure so that their concerns, essential to ensure the desired peace and sustainability, are heard and thus, an agreement is reached to end the current social and environmental conflict.

Therefore, several organizations are calling on the German and Colombian governments and the international community to:

### **Rapid and fair phase-out of fossil fuels to limit global warming to below 1.5°C**

The IPCC's central message is very clear: human influence on climate is unequivocal, unprecedented and irreversible. It states that we have 30 months to make the required changes in production and consumption patterns before we enter into major chaos. Continuing with the indiscriminate exploitation of indigenous and Afrodescendant territories to promote a fossil fuel-based economy is not the path that preserves the possibility of limiting warming to 1.5°C. If we want to avoid catastrophic damage to the climate system, nature and society, we need to immediately stop the exploration, investment and extraction of fossil fuels and replace these sources with distributed and sustainably generated renewable energies. It is imperative that the German government meets its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets not only domestically but also in the international context.



**Take on historical polluting responsibilities compounded by decades of deliberate tactics by the fossil fuel industry.**

This is a call to the German government to face up to the historical and current responsibilities to the indigenous and Afrodescendant communities in Colombian territory who have experienced the consequences of coal extraction in their homeland to sustain livelihoods in Germany. The resulting climate, social and economic crisis is affecting first and hardest those people who have not contributed to the deterioration of the ecosystems they inhabit. Civil society calls for adequate reparation of the social and ecological damage caused, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities under the framework of climate justice.

**Guaranteeing the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

The decisions taken on the proliferation of extractive activities in La Guajira and the deviation of the Bruno stream were not taken in common agreement with the Wayuu indigenous and Afrodescendant communities of the territory. This, coupled with the increasing patterns of threats, harassment, persecution, and discrediting campaigns against community leaders, puts the integrity of the people and ecosystems in the area at high risk. A just transition must begin with the protection of social and environmental defenders and activists.

Solidarity with the people in Ukraine should not come at the expense of the Wayuu indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendant communities in Colombia. It is time for countries to show leadership with concrete actions for peace and a sustainable future for all people - within the European Union, in Colombia, in all regions.

It is now or never!

The following organizations endorse: