



6 September 2013

Rafael Correa

President

Republic of Ecuador

Dear Mr. President

**Protect the Planet, Keep oil companies out of Yasuni-ITT**

We are shocked by the announcement you made on 15 August 2013 that you would permit crude oil extraction in the Yasuni-ITT. We strongly believe that the original decision to leave the oil in this pristine territory in the ground was the right decision and that the decision should not be revised or changed for any reason. We hereby declare our support for the original initiative to refrain from exploitation of the heavy crude oil of Yasuni-ITT.

Ecuador has shown leadership in many ways, including by recognizing the rights of nature (in your 2008 constitution), the Yasuni-ITT initiative and in generally broadening the space for freedom and democracy in the world today. This is the way the most of the world sees Ecuador.

The single step of opening up Yasuni-ITT to national or international oil companies erases the positive image that your dear country has built with a single stroke. By allowing oil extraction in Yasuni-ITT you would be negating the rights of the indigenous people in the territory who have elected to live in voluntary isolation. Secondly you would be closing the democratic space and declining to listen to the voice of millions of Ecuadorians who have bravely voiced their dissent to your unpopular move. Thirdly, opening up Yasuni-ITT will counter your constitutionally declared rights of nature. Crude oil extraction is by no means a benign activity and the deep scars left by Texaco (Chevron) in the oil fields of Ecuador are a stark reminder that steps must be taken to heal the earth and not to inflict more harm on her.

Finally, we call on you, Mr President to ignore the fact that the world did not rush in with the cash you demanded in exchange for keeping the oil untapped. Accept from us that your move had inspired many peoples around the world to demand an end to expansion of fossil fuels extraction, especially into fragile eco-systems. Today, *Yasunisation* has come to mean the preservation of the integrity of Mother Earth from the ravages of insatiable oil companies and

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governments by leaving fossils underground.

Money cannot pay for the gains that the Yasuni-ITT position has given Ecuador and the world. We affirm that the rights of the people of Yasuni and the rights of nature deserve to be respected and defended and that the oil in Yasuni-ITT should be left untapped. And we urge you and the Assembly of Ecuador to do likewise.

Moreover, Mr. President, we urge you to order a halt to the repression of young people who are standing in support of life and Yasuni!

Signed:

**Oilwatch International**

Noble Wadzah – Ghana (Oilwatch Africa)

Siziwe Khanyile – South Africa (Oilwatch Africa)

Ivonne Yanez – Oilwatch America Latina

Clemente Bautista– Philippines (Oilwatch South East Asia)

Faikham Harnnarong – Thailand (Oilwatch South East Asia)

Tom Goldtooth – USA (Indigenous Environmental Network)

Winnie Overbeek – Uruguay (World Rainforest Movement)

Nnimmo Bassey – Nigeria (Health of Mother Earth Foundation/Oilwatch International)

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