

Lago Agrio, August 22nd, 2023

THE PEOPLE OF ECUADOR PROTECTS YASUNÍ

Ecuador marks a milestone in humanity's struggle to protect the planet. This Sunday, 20 August 2023, the majority of the population voted in favour of keeping the oil in the subsoil in block 43 known as ITT, which includes the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini fields. The Yes vote was 59%, while the No vote was 41%.

In the Amazonian provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana, where oil has been extracted for more than 50 years, and despite the influence of the extractive industry in the generation of employment, mostly precarious, unskilled labour for the local population and the role of local governments, which receive oil revenues and whose silence turned them into accomplices of the No campaign, more than 45% of the population voted Yes.

Pablo Fajardo, legal advisor to UDAPT, points out that the victory in the Yasuní consultation forces the new government to think about a post-oil Ecuador, to reduce energy from fossil fuel combustion. He notes that the country sent a clear message to its leaders, who must listen to and obey the people.

UDAPT expresses its gratitude to the organisations, collectives and people of Sucumbíos and Orellana who joined the campaign to protect Yasuní, and ratifies its permanent struggle for the defence of a healthy life, free of contamination, even more so now that the population of Ecuador is ordering a halt to the exploitation of Block 43, as well as any type of mining exploitation in the Andean Chocó.

This position of the Ecuadorian people demands that the United Nations (UN) and the industrialised world, and above all the government of Ecuador, generate concrete public policies that allow the populations of these territories to achieve sustainable development, in harmony with nature. A development that must be conceived from a post-oil Ecuador, and an Ecuador that goes from the extractive exploitation and export of raw materials, to an Ecuador that builds added value to its production, to a society of knowledge.

It is time for the Ecuadorian state to recognise the ineptitude, indolence and environmental irresponsibility in oil exploitation that results in:

- A shameful average of one spill per week, which pollutes the soil, air, watersheds, damages the health and livelihoods of the rural communities of Sucumbíos and Orellana.
- The impact on the health of the population: in both provinces there is a high percentage of people with cancer in relation to the national average, a disease which, in Sucumbíos and Orellana, affects more women: 70%.

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- The practice of policies of division and manipulation of the communities where the oil wells and camps are located: division of the communities, buying of leaders, gifts, violence and even violent deaths, as in the case of the Cofán Dureno Commune.

With the result of the referendum, the government is obliged to make environmental reparations to nature and the communities directly affected by the contamination caused by oil exploitation.

The government must also generate the resources that will no longer be generated by Block 43, by making appropriate and immediate use of the gas that is currently being burned in the lighters. We believe that the state would have an additional income of at least 600 million dollars a year there.

Moreover, implement the interconnection of the country's electricity system to the oil system at the Shushufindi substation: this interconnection would considerably reduce the cost of production in the old fields, thus saving the state at least 200 million dollars per year.

Ecuador has taken a giant step forward in the care of its territory, of the common home for the forest, for all biodiversity.

Our children's children, their children, their grandchildren will celebrate this day.

Pachamama breathes again.

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