

programmes as holders of rights to which they may be entitled.

Civil society organizations from **Ecuador** have brought to the attention of human rights bodies cases of conflict between extractive industries and indigenous communities. In August 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was urged to investigate the situation of several families from the Shuar community displaced unlawfully by the copper mining project San Carlos Panantza in the

Amazon region. Four Amazonian provinces (Cachaera, Orellana, Pastaza and Morona Santiago) are affected by oil explorations over a total surface of four million hectares. The Center on Economic and Social Rights (CESR) is concerned that the consultation process with hundreds of indigenous communities in that huge area has not been conducted properly. (see also Box 0.2 on the need to include indigenous peoples in all areas of SDG implementation).

Box 0.2

Claim of ‘leave no one behind’ must include indigenous peoples

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a path to protect the remaining natural resources for future generations and forge a future for those furthest behind. The 2030 Agenda is unequivocally grounded in globally recognized human rights. This includes the rights of indigenous peoples. There are six direct references to indigenous peoples in the 2030 Agenda.

Indigenous peoples spiritual and cultural practices since time immemorial offer valuable insight to humanity if it is to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom is what the world is seeking with sustainability.

However, the review process to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the High-Level Political Forum

(HLPF) of the UN is absolutely insufficient. The presentations of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by Member States have forgotten indigenous peoples or intentionally forced them into exclusion. Some governments have even returned to earlier positions, prior to the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ignore the right of self-identification.

One vital addition of the SDGs to the Millennium Development Goals is that every Member State will measure how they achieve the 2030 Development Agenda. No longer are Indigenous Peoples in developed countries excluded from a global initiative.

During the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues that took place in April 2018, only three months ahead of the HLPF, indigenous peoples explored

engagement around the VNRs at every step in four countries – Australia, Canada, Laos and Vietnam.

While the political systems in those countries are different, the end result is quite similar – in all of them, Indigenous Peoples are invisible and haven’t been included so far in the reports. Indeed, there was little if no communication directly with indigenous peoples to seek their input in their countries’ VNRs.

For the more developed countries, there were promotional materials printed and decorating buildings in capital. However, indigenous peoples never heard from national agencies responsible for drafting the SDG VNRs or were they contacted to participate at the HLPF, let alone to engage in consultations in country.

At the Permanent Forum interactive dialogues, indigenous peoples asked pointedly about SDGs. One of the responses regarding VNRs was: “This is still a relatively new review process. It is the starting point to establish benchmark and priorities.” But we only have a bit over a decade to achieve the SDGs.

During every opportunity to organize, there were no signs from States that showed indigenous peoples were being recognized as partners. In fact,

indigenous peoples wondered if they had missed the development bus and not even been told where the bus stop is.

During the HLPF in 2019, we must indigenize the SDG process for a genuine measurement of the global sustainable development movement. Reforms must mainstream indigenous peoples and other vulnerable voices so as to provide a valuable vision through transformative initiatives.

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Weakening environmental protection in Colombia

In neighbouring **Colombia**, a report by Angélica Beltrán, Karla Díaz and David Cruz, researchers from Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad argues that “extractive industries and atmospheric pollution in the cities are a major source of socio-environmental conflicts”. The report states: “Environmental protection shows a progressive weakening.... Due to the lack of updated environmental information and the simplification of procedures in the granting of permits and licenses, the affected communities find it increasingly difficult to monitor the threats over their land and livelihoods.” Further, environmental control institutions do not have the capacity to oversee extractive activities adequately, which has allowed serious ecocides such as the outcropping of crude oil in the Lizama Block and the violation of environmental rules by Emerald Energy in the Ombu Block, located in the Amazon region.

In fact, the regulatory framework favours extractive activities through measures such as the creation of areas of rapid mining concessions, the opening of oil blocks around national Natural Parks, and territorial gerrymandering in order to allow activities that violate international agreements for the protection

and conservation of the Amazon. The increase in the rate of deforestation, the rise in the number of oil exploration and extraction permits and delays in the implementation of deforestation control strategies have led the Colombian government to postpone the goal of zero net deforestation in the Amazon, initially set for 2020 and now extended until 2030.

Guatemala fails to tax

Meanwhile, in **Guatemala** the main complaint about the State is its absence. “We have the sensation that there is no government,” reports Helmer Velazquez, director of the cooperatives and NGOs association Congcoop, “because taxes are so low and the ‘state captors’ don’t even pay them, thanks to tax exemptions or plain avoidance, which leaves the mortgage of natural resources as the only funding source.”

“This wouldn’t be a problem if we didn’t have seven million people living in poverty: Half of the population! And poverty is extreme for three million of them. Very calm, the government reported in 2017 ‘institutional progress’ by linking the SDGs with the national development plan K’atun 2032. In substantive terms, nothing.”