

Interactive Dialogue of the Secretary General on Harmony with Nature to Commemorate International Mother Earth Day

April 22, 2013

Statement by the Mining Working Group at the UN

Thank you, Mr. Secretary General and Mr. President, for this opportunity to make a brief written statement in response to the Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature to Commemorate International Mother Earth Day.

We are writing today on behalf of the Mining Working Group at the United Nations. The Mining Working Group represents constituencies in all continents whose human rights are increasingly violated and where vital ecosystems are being destroyed through unchecked, large-scale proliferation of concessions to extractive industries worldwide.

The 2012 Report of the Secretary A/67/317 on “Harmony with Nature” (para. 60), as well as today’s interactive dialogue, underscores the need to address the long-term and cumulative impact of human activity on the Earth system that is the foundation of our environmental life support structures. It is our consistent experience, bolstered by scientific evidence, that the current model of extractive industries intensifies this degradation of the Earth’s vital system and the impairment of peoples.

Yet, given this consistent experience and amidst the outcry of the Earth and its peoples, member states continue to assert that mining enables sustainable development and poverty eradication. We believe this assumption must be subjected to heightened scrutiny at the United Nations.

In light of this experience and today’s discussions which echo our concerns and reaffirm our position, we strongly urge the United Nations and members states to:

First: Create the global policy space to address the cross-cutting, negative and cumulative impact of natural resource extraction on vital ecosystems, water quality and availability, aquatic and terrestrial life, agriculture, and the health of communities. We frame this recommendation within the Post-2015 Development Agenda setting and the development of sustainable development goals.

Second: Marshal the political will to conduct an evidence-based study on the long-term and cumulative ecological impact of granting oil, gas and mining concessions worldwide. We maintain that global action is required in order to shift the policy agenda and the regulation of sustainable management of natural resources from national to worldwide.

In conclusion, we view these actions not only as essential but as gravely urgent in order to ensure, as the Secretary General’s Harmony with nature report recommends, “the protection of the planetary life support systems” and to enable the full and sustainable flourishing of the community of life. Our planet, Mother Earth, and the peoples of the world demand no less from this body of United Nations.

Thank you.

Zelia Cordiero and Aine O’Connor on behalf of the Mining Working Group