

Indigenous Amazonian Communities in Peru End Negotiations With Maple Energy Over Six Oil Spills

AUGUST 16, 2011, CONTAMANA, LORETO, PERU - Two indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon ended mediated negotiations with Maple Gas Corporation del Peru SRL over the harmful effects of six oil spills in their territories. Maple Gas Corporation is a majority owned subsidiary of Maple Energy plc (MPLE), a company registered in Ireland. Community leaders cite Maple's lack of good faith and willingness to accept responsibility for the devastating oil spills that Maple Energy caused in their territory as the reason for ending dialogue with the company.

The Shipibo communities of Canaán de Cachiyacu and Nuevo Sucre requested dialogue with Maple Energy in April 2010 when they submitted a complaint alleging human rights and environmental violations to the International Finance Corporation ("IFC"), part of World Bank Group and one of Maple Energy's investors. The IFC's Ombudsman provided a mediator to facilitate negotiations between Maple and the communities. The communities had hoped to amicably resolve human rights, environmental and health issues related to the six known spills that have taken place in their territories since 2009.

Negotiations began in April 2011 and ended on August 11, 2011. "Maple has denied the problems with contamination and sickness resulting from their operations on our land and refused our requests for environmental remediation and medical treatment," said Raul Tuesta, leader of Nuevo Sucre. Maple Energy refused to cover even the costs of studies to evaluate the level of contamination in the streams and the health problems affecting those with chronic oil exposure. They also refused to pay for health care and for potable water and food until the safety of water resources could be determined.

The termination of negotiations comes just a month after the unexplained death of Luis Saldaña, a resident of Nuevo Sucre who had been forced by Maple employees to assist in the cleanup of a Maple oil spill in April 2009 without any protective equipment. Days after his death on July 10, 2011, as Mr. Saldaña was being buried, another Maple oil spill occurred in Nuevo Sucre. Maple again hired men from the community to clean up the spill without protective equipment, training or any warnings of the health impacts of hydrocarbon exposure. Local residents also bathed in and ingested crude oil due to Maple's failure to warn community members about the dangers and failure to provide alternative water sources.

The effected communities ended negotiations but continue to demand that Maple Energy take responsibility for the harm they have caused. Humberto Sanchez, resident of Canaán de Cachiyacu, says, "the two communities will not give up on our struggle for justice, a clean environment, and healthy lives." Community members are looking to the recently elected government of Ollanta Humala to defend their rights and protect their environment. Meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Health, Environment, and Energy and Mines are planned for early this week.

Accountability Counsel, a San Francisco, California-based non-profit organization, is representing both communities in their complaint to the World Bank Group's independent grievance mechanism, and continues to advise the communities, along with a coalition of local and international partner organizations. #

For more information, visit www.accountabilitycounsel.org or contact:

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