



## EXCHANGE OF COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES ON NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE TO EXTRACTIVISM

### STATEMENT

San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico

24 May 2018

As indigenous peoples and rural communities with pre-Columbian histories and very old human occupation, Afro-descendants of several states and of six countries of Latin America that face the imposition of the extractive model in our lands and territories, we have been meeting for three years to exchange tools and methodologies of nonviolent action in order to resist extractivism, a model "that has accentuated poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources and environmental destruction, leaving a trail of waste and even death, throughout our region," according to the recently published pastoral letter of the Latin American Bishops Conference, CELAM.

We have witnessed that the damage of the extractive model is irreversible; it goes against the lives of the people because it attacks the heart of our culture and worldview. We analyse that it causes serious environmental damage to our Mother Earth and snatches away the water so necessary for our communal, familial, cultural and social life. This model condemns us to forced displacement, uprooting families and affecting the health of all of us – women, the elderly, young people, boys and girls – trying to erase our roots and ancestral knowledge for our new generations.

Our resistance and our struggle in defense of Mother Earth have resulted in repression, intimidation, threats, persecution, imprisonment and murders of human rights defenders and social leaders. We see that States create laws and reforms to allow large companies to strip us of our territories; they use the justice system to criminalize our movements; they seek to impose the extractive model by manipulating the right to free, prior consultation and informed consent, disrespecting our ancestral rights to our territory, thereby preventing us access by imposing projects such as the so-called "protected natural areas".

*Those of us who have decided to defend life and Mother Earth are at constant risk under the threat of businessmen, organized crime and the State, who favor the path of impunity, injustice, inequality, dispossession, exploitation, and contempt for our original peoples and communities, our culture and worldview.*

*Given this reality, we reaffirm our commitment to continue fighting for a comprehensive life for our peoples, peasants, indigenous and non-indigenous communities, for our coming generations and for the care of our Mother Earth. We will continue promoting nonviolent citizen actions expressed in the fabric of allied networks, organizational processes, exchanges of experiences, and models of community defense; and in the context of the death that the extractive model brings, we will strengthen our cultural and original identity, communal unity in defense of our territories, and establish agreements to declare ourselves free of mining and megaprojects by means of assemblies and*

councils, creation of vigilance committees, pilgrimages, information forums, training, the strengthening of our cultural and spiritual expressions and relationship with Mother Earth, among many other actions. We will also use legal instruments and political advocacy as citizens' tools of participation and influence to show the strength of our arguments and our struggle.

Aware that the clear words of Pope Francis through the encyclical *Laudato Si'* also strengthen our struggle and our hearts to continue working from our territories to reverse the damage to our Common House – which for us is Pachamama, Mother Earth – we are in favor of continuing to strengthen nonviolent actions that allow us to continue our struggle for life. Pope Francis has said that the extractive model has an ethical problem and he invites us to think as a single world and in a common project with shared responsibility and different contributions to which Latin American States should listen, as the original peoples, the peasant communities, and Afro-descendants affected by extractivism have put our lives in the care of Mother Earth.

We invite the peoples and communities of Latin America and the Caribbean to continue deepening the organization and defense of unity and life for our peoples, for the reconstitution of our territories, for solidarity with the struggles of those who continue resisting, for the defence of our inalienable right to autonomy and self-determination, and for a dignified life for our future generations.

*Pax Christi International*, as a Catholic peace movement, accompanies the organizations and their communities in Latin America gathered here today, and from our consultative status we call on the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of American States and the Vatican – who have placed on their agendas the problem of extractive industries and their impact on human rights – to put more pressure on our governments in Latin America and on transnational corporations to respect standards related to human rights, echoing the voices of these communities and the problems that afflict them.

In this is our commitment; we will continue building and strengthening networks of life, of nonviolent resistance, of active citizenship, because we believe in a full life based on human dignity.



También contamos con la participación de: Coordinadora de los Pueblos Unidos del Valle de Ocotlán (COPUVO); Pueblo Creyente Zoque en Defensa de la Vida y Territorio; Ejido Candelaria, San Cristóbal de las Casas; Unión de Campesinos y Pescadores de la Costa y Sierra; La Parroquia de San Pedro y San Pablo, Chicomuselo; Pueblo Creyente de Simojovel, Chiapas.