

## **Letter of the Second Forum on the Impact of Hydroelectric Dams in the Uruguay River Basin**

The Second Forum on the Impact of Hydroelectric Dams in the Uruguay River basin took place from September 8-10, 2005, at the auditorium of the Law School of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. The Forum, organized by Friends of the Earth Brazil, the Gaucho Institute for Environmental Studies, and the SOS Uruguay River Movement was held to discuss the environmental and social impacts of hydroelectric dams in the basin, as well as to place them within the context of energy and development policies, and to discuss the possibilities of and perspectives regarding a sustainable energy policy. The meeting also had as a goal identifying economic and social paradigms related to these issues.

**We**, the organizations, social movements, institutions, and citizens which have signed this letter, approved in plenary,

### **Consider that:**

Policies and economics should have the WELL-BEING and the HAPPINESS of everyone as their objective. The model which prioritizes economic growth which does not benefit the population is not beneficial to us and IT SHOULD BE DISCARDED.

The economy should be considered as PART OF THE ECOSYSTEM, rather than the contrary. Economic growth should be considered in relation to ecological limits. Therefore, environmental policy should be proactive, and not reactive as it is currently, and it should be considered as the CORE OF THE CONCEPT OF ALL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

### **We trust that:**

The organs involved with planning, licensing, and regulating hydroelectric dams in the Uruguay river valley, among them the President, his Chief-of-Staff, the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME), the Energy Research Company (EPE), the National Electrical Energy Agency (ANEEL), the organs of the National Environment System (SISNAMA) and related organs in Argentina and Uruguay are attentive to the following questions:

1. The energy model and the planning process for hydroelectric dams continue to be based upon obsolete paradigms of unlimited growth, and are full of defects and irregularities. These processes are being carried out with the complete exclusion of affected populations, the academic community, and civil society.
2. The premise of the public interest, used by governmental organs to justify the growing need for energy production fails to consider the environment and affected populations.
3. Organized dam-affected people, part of the Movement of the Dam-Affected (MAB), are suffering serious repression and aggression by the government against their political and social rights.

4. The remaining natural areas and water resources are being handed over for the exploitation by private mega-capital which controls the production, distribution, and consumption of energy.
5. The Barra Grande case demonstrated that Environmental Impact Studies (EIAs) in Brazil have been grossly fraudulent and are highly suspect. The licenses granted as the result of these studies are a result of political pressure by large economic interests, and they represent a *pro forma* stage in the implantation of projects.

## **We demand:**

### **A moratorium on the building of hydroelectric projects in construction or in planning in the Uruguay river basin, until:**

1. the repression of the political and social rights of dam-affected populations is halted;
2. already existing social and environmental problems caused by hydroelectric dams in the basin are resolved, including investigations regarding the responsibilities of politicians and professionals involved by their respective ethics councils;
3. dam builders consider populations involved in the context of projects as actors, and not merely as passive victims, respecting their constitutional rights to human dignity. The populations involved **cannot be considered as a simple entity to be managed** in the interest of obtaining energy.
4. the impacts on indigenous populations and traditional populations are widely considered, taking into account their symbolic and cultural dimensions, which guarantee indigenous peoples their right to informed prior consent, or veto, according to guarantees in the Brazilian constitution and international law;
5. society is informed regarding projects to be carried out **from the beginning of their planning, and has access to the project feasibility studies**, not only later at the time of public hearings, so that they may also participate in the phase of preparing terms of reference for the EIA;
6. CONAMA (National Environment Council) resolution 9/87 is changed, so that Public Hearings are **deliberative**, held during the process of analyzing the feasibility of projects, and that they are carried out, in addition to the affected region, in state capitals, and **are fully documented**, including being videotaped, with their results broadly disseminated;
7. an Integrated Environmental Evaluation is carried out in the Uruguay basin **with an adequate timeframe and with the effective participation** of the possibly affected people, the academic community, and organized civil society, with the objective of understanding and indicating the cumulative and interactive impacts of hydroelectric projects already built or being planned in the Uruguay basin;
8. the Public Ministry stops using the Barra Grande Settlement terms (TAC) to attempt to legitimize dam projects which are environmentally unfeasible and whose construction would constitute a crime against the environment;
9. land in the region where Pai-Querê dam is being planned be purchased with resources available through the TAC for environmental compensation for Barra Grande dam - these resources must be used **within the Uruguay river basin, and not outside it**;
10. the scientific community and organized civil society are heard regarding the means for establishing measures in compensation for environmental crimes;

11. effective measures for monitoring the impacts of hydroelectric projects in the basin on nature are promoted, including both upstream and downstream of dams, and that there is rigor in the control of compliance with conditions and compensation in small or large projects;
12. a training course is carried out for environmental assessment professionals promoted by the public ministry and the Environment Ministry, and that qualified professionals are registered, and companies with a record of irregularities and frauds are excluded from consideration for contracts;
13. the contracting of environmental and basin-wide studies by the EPE, prior to construction of hydroelectric dams, be transparent and subject to public monitoring;
14. the National Water Agency – ANA implements Interstate River Basin Committees, specifically in the Uruguay basin, and that these prepare Water Resources Plans in order to be able to issue permits, respecting the National Water Resources Policy Act.
15. a national policy for Energy Efficiency and Demand-side Management is enacted, and made a priority of the government, in collaboration with diverse sectors of the economic, and especially with national industrial policy;
16. ANEEL established different policies for Electrification and Concessionary Cooperatives, providing distinct characteristics, objectives, and feasibility;
17. community, cooperative, and citizen associations are considered to be actors capable of generating decentralized and sustainable renewable energy, and are provided with incentives to provide energy to people who today have no electricity through a program PROINFA for ALL (linking objectives of current renewable energy programs and efforts to provide electricity to homes that today have none).

### **We commit ourselves to:**

1. create an Information Network among social movements to support mobilizations and arguments for confronting the current energy model, and in defense of human and environmental rights;
2. strengthen the relationship between MAB and environmental organizations;
3. increase the involvement of researchers and academics in this relationship and in the commitment to train new ethical professionals;
4. seek financing for the creation of a multidisciplinary technical team for independent analysis of proposed projects in the Uruguay basin;
5. strengthen the links between this network and research and technical advisory groups involved in independent analyses of Environmental Impact Studies on the national level;
6. work together with cooperatives to guarantee rules which offer their sustainability and provide incentives for generation and distribution of energy from renewable and sustainable sources;
7. collaborate with organizations in southern Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay in the search for information and transparency regarding hydroelectric and navigation projects planned for the bi-national stretches of the Uruguay river, with emphasis on the monitoring of the Garabi Hydroelectric Complex.
8. mobilize society at the international level for the designation, as a world heritage site, of the Turvo and Moconã parks and the Yucumã Falls region;

9. reject the use of renewable energy in the reproduction of a model which concentrates power and the production of electrical energy by electro-intensive industries for their own use;
10. draw up a list of politicians who have been made decisions which damage the environment through their defense of mega-hydroelectric dams.
11. draw up a list of professionals involved in the preparation of fraudulent environmental studies;
12. create a data base of companies involved in the construction of hydroelectric dams;
13. create a library of vídeos dealing with energy and making them available to schools and NGOs;
14. mobilize NGOs to create effective Basin Committees, where civil society organizations are defined as representatives of organized civil society, rather than specific interest groups, and which can accompany water resources permit processes for hydroelectric generation;
15. organize a public meeting on sustainable architecture and construction to seek urban policies which promote energy efficiency, distributed renewable energy, and rational use of water;
16. create a timetable for common actions, and a commission to promote proposals, and disseminate information on efforts underway by our organizations;
17. strengthen and expand the Tri-national Network in Defense of the Uruguay river basin and its Peoples.

### **Signers:**

Instituto Gaúcho de Estudos Ambientais

Núcleo Amigos da Terra/ Brasil

Movimento SOS Uruguai

Movimentos dos Atingidos por Barragens - MAB

Associação de Proteção Ambiental Amigos do Rio Piratini

Fundação Gaia

Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural - AGAPAN

Centro Acadêmico da Biologia/ ULBRA

Centro Acadêmico da Engenharia Ambiental/ ULBRA

Diretório Acadêmico do Instituto de Biociências

Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente do Alto Vale do Itajaí – APREMAVI

Associação Ecológica Vida e Meio Ambiente, Guaporé - VIME

Foro Ecologista de Paraná

Cuñã Piru

Red en Defensa del río Uruguay y sus Pueblos

Movimiento Ambientalista M'bororé - MAMBO Argentina

Red Socioambiental de Entre Ríos y la Provincia Oriental de Uruguay