

Third Meso-American Forum Against Dams

Carolina, San Miguel, El Salvador 2004

THE CAROLINA DECLARATION

In the municipality of Carolina, department of San Miguel, El Salvador,, 536 people affected by and at risk of displacement due to the construction of dams and projects to privatize water as promoted by governments, transnational companies and financial institutions, from the Meso-American region and other international communities, we have come together at the Third Meso-American Forum Against Dams to share our struggles and problems and to build strategies to defend our lives. For three days, we, women and men from Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize and Mexico, have explained the reasons for which our countries, the indigenous peoples, campesinos and civilians are alarmed by the uncontrolled growth of dams which convert us into victims of the famous neoliberal development.

Considering that:

The hydro-electric and water privatization projects continue to grow and the governments of our countries fail to take into account the cry for help of the people directly and indirectly affected who have demonstrated opposition to the neoliberal policies that work against nature, our peoples' sovereignty and the existence of life itself.

The miserable methods and strategies used to trick, divide and threaten people who refuse to die end up being the same indicating that we have a common enemy that as always tries to hide itself under the dark cover of supposed development, false job creation policies, the common good and the generation of clean energy as an alternative to environmental contamination.

The lack of attention to our accusations, protests and the label of "ignorants" that they attribute to us simply because we do not agree with the criminal ideas of the transnational empires and those who would sell nations, are trying the patience of our Meso-American people, who insist on resisting moving from their lands, their sacred sites, their rivers and who resist the irrational changing of their social, cultural and natural living systems.

Neither the hydro-electric generating companies nor the governments are interested in spreading an education campaign to reduce the consumption of electricity; on the contrary, they encourage the people to consume energy, constantly and without consideration, like one more bit of merchandise circulating in the world's capital market.

Given this: Having followed legal paths and peaceful methods to defend our fundamental rights to life, without having obtained positive responses to our petitions,

We demand:

- The cancellation of all hydro-electric and water privatization projects in all of Meso-America, the reasons for which are many but most importantly is the defence of our

lands, our rivers and the right of future generations to have free access to the same. Water is a vital necessity not a commodity.

- We demand that governments develop programs and policies that create a more humane and real development, one that corresponds to people's needs and not to international interests and policies. Hydro-electric projects cause too many negative impacts and their creation is not justified. New renewable sources exist and we demand their implementation taking into account as a priority the opinion of the people.

- The immediate freeing of our Honduran peers, Marcelino Miranda and Leonardo Miranda, both from the community of Montaña Verde, department of Gracias, who have been unjustly condemned for defending their rights and demanding respect for their territories, a situation which led to us losing our beloved friend Carlos Reyes in 2003. We will not tolerate another inhumane repression at the hands of the Honduran government, which we condemn and hold responsible in its entirety.

- We also enthusiastically denounce the aggression suffered by our friend, Marcelino Tiul Caal, who was wounded by gunfire on March 14th during the protests carried out in celebration of the International Day Against Dams in the department of El Peten in Guatemala.

We conclude:

1. That given the global investment that is coming down upon us with these projects, the response of the Meso-American people will be equal or greater resistance and struggle.
2. We are not struggling for money nor ideals nor passing things but rather for the life and love of our rivers. We live on water, land and the coexistence of our cultures. Without our natural resources and our lands, we are converted into history, we are made extinct.
3. We want development without imposition. A development that is humane and sustainable, constructive in which the life and the caring of Meso-America and the entire world are respected. Development should be of the people, by the people and for the people.
4. We call on the governments of our countries to reflect and to consider the true pact that they have before their people because deterioration, exploitation and the implementation of these projects act against the lives of these very people.
5. A cry of resistance and for organization against all types of dams, privatizations, trade agreements and things that mean the kidnapping and displacement of the only thing that still belongs to our beloved Meso-America, is made by our indigenous, campesino and civilian people. They stole our gold during colonial times but they will not take our water or anything else.
6. The people should not pay the debt of these projects; they should not pay for their own death.

7. The Meso-American Movement Against Dams is committed to being a decisive entity in the fight against all attempts to rob the natural, cultural and territorial riches from Mexico to Panama.

Dated the 17th of July, 2004, Carolina, department of San Miguel, El Salvador.
Rivers for life. No more dams.