

From: Scientists and academics concerned for Yasuní
To: President Moreno
Cc: Ministerio de Hidrocarburos
Ministerio del Ambiente
Presidencia del Congreso
Secretaría Nacional de Educación Ciencia y Tecnología / SENESCYT
Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social
Defensoría del Pueblo
Alto Comisionado de Derechos Humanos de la ONU
Relator Especial de los Pueblos Indígenas de la ONU
UNESCO
CONAIE
COICA

RE: Expansion of oil exploration in the Ishpingo Camp, Yasuní National Park

**Open Letter from the international scientific and academic community
to the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Lenin Moreno Garcés**

Your Excellency Mr. President,

We respectfully write to express our opposition to the proposed Executive Decree that seeks to redefine the limits of the Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane Zone (ITTZ) within Ecuador's Yasuní National Park (YNP). We are alarmed because Ecuador's government recently presented to Congress a new budget plan that proposes expanding oil exploitation in 2019 by the state-owned company, Petroecuador, in the Ishpingo camp located within the Yasuní's protected area. The Ishpingo camp would have ten platforms (each containing 40 wells) located inside ITTZ's protected zone, which is in an area explicitly safeguarded by Executive Decree 2187 (2017).

As scientists and scholars invested in the protection of the Yasuní, it is our responsibility to express our educated perspectives regarding the irreversible impacts that would result from this new Decree. There is sufficient scientific evidence to affirm that expanding the zone of extraction within the Ishpingo camp would: (1) constitute a risk of ethnocide to the indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation; (2) increase threats to Yasuní's biodiversity; and (3) increase threats the climate change.

Yasuní is described as a heritage site of incomparable biodiversity, which UNESCO declared a Biosphere Reserve and Cultural Heritage site in 1989 due to its significance to the planet. Abundant scientific data attests to the uniqueness of Yasuní's flora and fauna, with the highest number of tree species in the world. In just one hectare of primary untouched forest there are as many species of trees as there are in the USA and Canada combined. Therefore, Yasuní is identified as one of the planet's 24 wilderness priority areas. Indigenous peoples, especially the Tagaeri and Taromenane, have long been guardians of this biodiversity. According to the United Nations Development Program 80% of the remaining biodiversity on the planet thrives in territories home to indigenous peoples. Yasuní's biodiversity and cultural heritage are interconnected, thus equally at risk.

We know that Yasuní's fragile ecosystems are prone to irreversible collapse in the face of direct and indirect disturbances caused by oil exploration. We therefore consider it fundamental to limit any impact in the Ishpingo camp that will be irreparable to Yasuní at large. It is particularly urgent to protect this area for the knowledge we have yet to learn, both from the Yasuní peoples and ecosystems we know so little about. Indeed, to expand its zone of resource exploitation may well jeopardize the future of humanity. The lasting immaterial value of the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve surpasses any short-term financial value generated by oil extraction.

For these reasons, we recognize the opposition of Ecuadorian civil society as legitimate and join them in a non-partisan manner. We believe it is necessary to engage in a truly democratic, informed, and intergenerational debate to fully grasp the benefits of protecting this area both in the short and long run. Our community will pay close attention to the decisions of the executive in this matter and remains available to provide the best criteria for understanding how to manage intangible resources for future generations.

Sincerely,

Scientists and academics concerned for the future of Yasuní