

Dra. María Fernanda Suárez Londoño  
Minister of Mines and Energy  
Bogotá

Monday, 17 de septiembre de 2018

Dear Minister Suarez,

We were recently in Colombia on a delegation organised by ABColombia, which is the joint advocacy platform for 5 leading British and Irish International Organisations (CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, SCIAF and Trócaire). We would like to thank you for organising for us to meet with three of your officials on 27 August 2018. We were disappointed not have had the opportunity to meet with you personally, or your vice-minister. However, the meeting with your officials was very informative.

During the delegation we visited Cajamarca (Tolima) and spoke with the *Comités Ambientales de Ibagué y Cajamarca*, as well as the organisations of COSAJUCA and the *Centro de Estudios para la Justicia Social Tierra Digna*. The campesino farmers showed us their farms and explained their vision for taking forward their local agricultural production. We were very impressed by the agricultural production in Cajamarca and the export of organic fruit, as well as, the successful commercial enterprise they are engaged in with Crepes and Waffles. This is a business model that is not only successful but is a good example of business practice that it is worth sharing with other parts of the world.

One of the things that the community organisations explained to us was the Constitutional mechanism afforded them of the Consulta Popular. We were impressed that the vote taken in 2017, had demonstrated, that of those voting, 97.2 percent voted were against mining in the region.

As members of the British parliament, we have a particular interest in the activities of AngloGold Ashanti, given that it is registered on the London Stock Exchange. Having seen the area that AngloGold Ashanti propose to mine, we can understand the grave concern of the local population. Creating an open-pit mine by removing the top of a mountain in important wetlands and incredibly biodiverse cloud forest would not only destroy a part of Colombia's unique natural beauty, but also directly affect precious water sources on which people as far away as Magdalena Medio depend.

As parliamentarians we are aware of the importance of citizens being able to participate in decision-making. The use in Cajamarca of the democratic and legal mechanisms awarded to them in the Colombian Constitution illustrates that this is a community – despite suffering years of armed conflict – is determined to promote the use of peaceful methods to achieve their objectives. Sustainable peace in Colombia relies on communities engaging in decision making through legally and democratically afforded mechanisms.

Having passed through all the stages required to reach a Consulta Popular, we consider that the Ministry of Mines should respect this decision. We are worried that not to do so would generate a lack of confidence in the rule of law.

We would appreciate if you could keep us informed of key decisions taken in this case. We assure you of our interest to continue to follow the activities of the British registered company AngloGold Ashanti in Cajamarca.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,