

<b>Mstra. Ana Patricia Orantes Thomas</b> Minister of Environment and National Resources (MARN)	<b>Jaime Luis Carrera</b> , Vice-Minister for Water Ministry of Environment and National Resources (MARN)
<b>Ing. Víctor Hugo Ventura Ruiz</b> Minister of Energy and Mines (MEM) of Guatemala	<b>Lic. Oscar Rafael Pérez Ramírez</b> Vice-Minister for Sustainable Development (MEM)

May 11, 2024

Dear Ministers and Vice-Ministers:

We respectfully request that you review the permitting process for the Cerro Blanco mine, owned by Bluestone Resources, based in British Columbia, Canada, and operated by its subsidiary Elevar Resources in Guatemala.

In the final days of his administration, former president Alejandro Giammattei authorized a change of operations from an underground mine to an open pit mine. Peter Hemstead, President, CEO, and Chair of the Board of Bluestone Resources, welcomed the news on January 18: "...we are pleased with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources' decision to approve the permit for the Cerro Blanco project as a surface mining operation."

Surface mining means open-pit mining, which is one of the most environmentally contaminating industries in the world, causing great harms to biodiversity, water, air, and human health. In the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala-Honduras-El Salvador) 23 international water basins connect 40% of the territory; currently there are 50 areas of mining interests in these shared basins. With respect to the Cerro Blanco mine, of particular concern is the potential impact on the El Tempisque stream, a tributary to Lake Güija, which drains into the Río Lempa, traversing the border with El Salvador. Millions of people depend on the Río Lempa and its tributaries for their drinking water.

The Cerro Blanco mine is located just 15 kilometers from the border with El Salvador, near the town of Asunción Mita, Jutiapa Department. The mining company has been trying for the past 24 years to start gold extraction, but it has been met with strong opposition. On September 18, 2022, the mayor's office of Asunción Mita carried out a municipal consultation; a total of 7,481 people voted no to mining, while 904 voted in favor. Based on Municipal Code, the result of the consultation is legally binding.

We urge that you

- review whether any environmental laws were circumvented or violated in issuing permits and licenses to Bluestone Resources and Elevar Resources, or to the previous owners of the project
- order a new environmental impact study (because many environmental experts have issued opinions that the 2007 study presented by Elevar Resources is flawed and must be rejected)
- ensure the right of free, prior, and informed consent among local residents who will be impacted by the mine
- ensure the right to transparent information that is made available to the public

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martinez

copies: Bluestone Resources: Peter Hemstead, President, Chief Executive Officer, and Board Chair ~ via email  
Lic. José Alejandro Córdova Herrera, Ombudsman for Human Rights of Guatemala (PDH) ~ via email  
Hugo Beteta, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ email, US mail  
IACHR: Andrea Pochak, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (UN) ~ via email  
US State Department: Guatemala Desk Officers in Washington, DC ~ via email  
US State Department: William Popp, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of Angela Melton ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Vance ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**