



Public statement of the Local Governments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, members of the Lempa River Trinational Border Association, regarding the “Cerro Blanco” mining project, developed by the Canadian company Bluestone Resources.

The Governments and Local Authorities of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, represented hereby are members of the **Lempa River Trinational Border Association**, and also the **"Trinational Network for the Rescue of the Lempa River"**, are gathered today in response to the threat represented by metal mining exploitation and especially the "Cerro Blanco" mining project, located in the municipality of Asunción Mita, Department of Jutiapa, Republic of Guatemala, to issue the following public statement before the national and international public opinion:

CONSIDERING

1. That the Lempa River Trinational Border Association is a Legal entity, located in the Trifinio (Tri-national) Region that is comprised by 26 municipalities from countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and it is committed to rescuing the Lempa River, and supporting all the local, national and international efforts in favor of the protection and sustainable management of such an important shared resource.
2. That the Trifinio region is a water producing zone that benefits the populations of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and that it produces 2 million cubic meters of water annually constituting a key environmental service for the governance, peace and integration of the peoples of the three countries.
3. That the human right to water is a right enshrined in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution number 64 - 292, which recognizes that clean potable water and sanitation are essential for the implementation of all human rights, has been recognized by the States of Guatemala and El Salvador, specifically.
4. That the tri national basin of the Lempa River is a resource shared as a unitary set of superficial and underground water bodies that flow to a common river mouth, as such it is an important resource that guarantees peace and coexistence among the three countries.
5. That the shared use of the Lempa river basin must be done in a responsible manner, ensuring that its use, exploitation, conservation, management and protection is the responsibility of each of the three states.
6. That within international law and particularly of the Treaty between the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for the execution of the Trifinio Plan, it is established in article three, that "The Parties recognize the Trifinio Region as an area of special interest of the three countries, which represents an indivisible unit, in which only a joint and



coordinated action of the three countries will provide a satisfactory solution to the problems of the populations and the sustainable management of their natural resources”.

7. That in 2007 the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala approved an Environmental Impact Study for the company ENTREMARES S.A., (subsidiary of the Canadian based Goldcorp) which had been rejected in two occasions by the Environmental Management team of said ministry, as it contained inconsistencies and lack of information. With the approval of the Environmental Impact Study, the company obtained an exploitation license for the "Cerro Blanco" mining project, located in Asunción Mita, Jutiapa, Guatemala.
8. That Goldcorp, sold its mining rights to the BLUESTONE RESOURCES mining company, which intends to continue with the "Cerro Blanco" project by changing the methodology of underground tunnel mining for open pit mining which is a method much more destructive and causes permanent and irreversible damages to the environment, water and ecosystems.
9. That the company BLUESTONE RESOURCES still does not have the approval of the environmental license for open pit mining as its Environmental Impact Study has not been approved by the Ministry of the Environment of Guatemala.
10. That, open pit mining means the removal of the surface layer of the earth to make mineral deposits accessible and therefore can be described as one of the most aggressive industrial activities, environmentally, socially and culturally, because it generates great impacts on the natural and cultural landscape, pollutes the air, affects surface and underground or phreatic bodies of water, considerably impacts the flora and fauna, the microclimate and the populations, thus violating various rights, including the right to water, to a healthy environment and to the health of populations and the ecosystems, among others.
11. That open pit mining uses large amounts of cyanide, a highly toxic substance that allows gold to be recovered from the rest of the removed material, as such its use in mining has been prohibited in many countries such as the United States, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Argentina, among others.
12. That although mining can bring economic benefits to some inhabitants of the region, these benefits do not compensate the environmental damage nor the health of the inhabitants as it deprives people of their lands and access to clean water, increases poverty and food insecurity of the populations surrounding the mine and especially of the populations living downstream.
13. That in 14 years, the “Cerro Blanco” Mine has caused the contamination of the Ostúa – Guija –Lempa basin, affecting and risking lives of populations of Guatemala and El Salvador, and has also contributed to the desiccation of water sources in the villages of Trapiche Vargas and El Tule, both in the municipality of Asunción Mita, Guatemala, by lowering the underground water levels and forcing the population to dig deeper water wells in order to access water.



THEREFORE, WE CONSIDER IMPERATIVE TO MANIFEST

- i. Our position against mining in any of its forms which takes place in Guatemala, and in particular the "Cerro Blanco" mine, located in the municipality of Asunción Mita, Jutiapa, initially operated by the Canadian Goldcorp company and now by BLUESTONE RESOURCES.
- ii. Our rejection of the current mining policies promoted by the governments of the Region, which recognize pre-constituted rights to private and foreign companies. We demand that before guaranteeing rights to foreign corporations, the governments first guarantee the inalienable rights of the population of the region.
- iii. Our support for the population of the municipality of Asunción Mita who have organized to reject this mining project by gathering more than 4 thousand signatures of its citizens to petition a transparent and widely participatory public consultation.

WE DEMAND AND MAKE A CALL:

To the **Government of Guatemala** to live up to its role of acting for the benefit of the population, in compliance with:

- i. Human rights, and international agreements and treaties; by not authorizing the mining exploitation of the "Cerro Blanco" project, owned by BLUESTONE RESOURCES mining Company in the municipality of Asunción Mita.
- ii. The obligation as a State to protect the Tri-national basin of the Lempa River as it is an internationally shared hydrographic basin.
- iii. The duty to prevent, reduce and control pollution in the Trinational Basin of the Lempa River and, above all, in compliance with the Trinational Treaty of the Trifinio Plan, which obliges the state of Guatemala to act "jointly and in coordination with the countries of El Salvador and Honduras, to provide satisfactory solutions to population problems and the sustainable management of their natural resources", in the region.
- iv. The principle of the equitable and reasonable use of the water resource; in prevention of sustained damage to the other two States that are part of the basin.
- v. The duty to protect the ecosystems of the Lempa River Basin, and to manage them in a sustainable manner.

To the **Government of El Salvador**, to demand that the Government of Guatemala



- i. Safeguard the Lempa river basin, for the benefit of the populations and ecosystems downstream, as a mechanism for maintaining good relations and peace in the region;
- ii. Comply with international treaties and agreements on human rights, environmental care, and good relations between states, especially the Trinational Treaty of the Trifinio Plan and other International Treaties signed by Guatemala related to international waters.
- iii. Likewise, we exhort the government of El Salvador not to backtrack on the prohibition of metal mining in Salvadoran territory.

To the Regional Authorities and other national and local entities:

- i. That they implement an honest vigilance of mining activities that bring many environmental, social, cultural, and even economic disadvantages as the health of the population of the region is invaluable.
- ii. Support the local populations, in their constant demands, related to the possible violation of their environmental rights and above all to guarantee the protection of their human and universal rights, such as the right to water and basic sanitation.

We call on the citizens of Guatemala and El Salvador, through their civil society organizations, to assume a vigilant, critical, and participatory position in the face of this economic activity that, far from bringing true development, brings confrontations, instability in the health of populations, corruption, and poverty.

We subscribe to this pronouncement on behalf of the municipal governments, members of the Lempa River Trinational Border Association, in full compliance of the rights that assists us.

1.- Carlos Lapola Rodríguez, Mayor of Esquipulas, Guatemala	2.- William Duarte, Mayor of Santa Catarina Mita, Guatemala
3.- Noe Guerra, Mayor of Camotan, Guatemala	4.- Cesas Roldán Agustín Franco Mayor of Sinuapa, Honduras
5.- Israel Aguilar Mayor of Ocotepeque, Honduras	6.- Beddy Alejandro Botto Mayor of Candelaria de la Frontera, El Salvador
7.- Hugo Clavel Mayor of Dulce Nombre de María, El Salvador	8.- Carlos Josue Álvarez, Mayor of San Fernando, El Salvador
9.- Marvin Cardoza Mayor of San Francisco Morazán, El Salvador.	10.- Luis Ochoa Mayor of Citala, El Salvador.
11.-Nilda Recinos Mayor of La Labor, Honduras	12.- Miguel Angel LOpez Mayor of San Juan Hermita, Guatemala