

People's Position Statement

Results of Participant's Discussions at the SATIIM's Oil Summit- Punta Gorda, Toledo
8th & 9th March 2011

We held an oil summit yesterday 8th March, in Punta Gorda, Toledo, which was well attended by community leaders, members and Non-governmental organizations. Many views were shared – of particular importance, we learned firsthand about the hidden consequences of oil development, including challenges to negotiating fair and equitable compensation, dealing with inevitable environmental pollution and possible human rights violations

We also heard from leaders and members of the communities of Toledo. They share with us their hope for a better and brighter future, their scepticism about the promises of oil development and the fear for their lands, as well as uncertainty about the real environmental and social consequences that oil development will bring to their communities. They were, however, passionate about overcoming individual differences and together, working towards a better future. SATIIM is committed to supporting their wishes, and fighting for a better future for all Belizeans.

These are some of the critical points that the communities and NGO's laid out as their main concerns:

I. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

1. We call for integrity and transparency in the consultation process and reject any attempt to misinform, mislead and divide our communities.
2. We demand that the communities' voices be heard and their traditional decision-making structures and processes be honoured.
3. We demand that factual information be provided up front and that the rights of the communities to their free, prior and informed consent be respected.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

1. Land and water resources are the foundation of our livelihoods and the guarantee for our cultural, spiritual and social continuity, so we must treat them with the greatest care.
2. We recognize that irregular weather patterns such as droughts and floods are already having negative impacts on our watersheds and we fear pollution and contamination that are associated with oil development will make it worse.
3. Environmental stewardship is an essential principle of Maya and Garinagu cultures, which guarantees our continuity as Peoples and the well-being of future generations.
4. The people of Toledo highly value and depend on our lands and natural resources as the basis of our livelihoods. Thus, all communities in Toledo call for the protection of our right to a clean and healthy environment.

III. ECONOMIC EQUALITY

In the event that communities decide in favour of oil development, we demand that the oil company and Government of Belize:

1. All communities should have the full and effective participation in ALL the negotiations of ALL oil development contracts.
2. Establish a petroleum community trust fund to which the contractors are to contribute at the start of any contract period, to be increased at the start of the first commercial year. This fund must be managed by the communities of Toledo and directly benefit the health, education and environment of all the Peoples of Toledo.
3. Guarantee a quota of local employment for communities in Toledo from the exploration period to commercial period and throughout production.
4. We call on the Government of Belize to guarantee in the commencement of every contract, training and education, for the Peoples in areas where exploration extraction occurs, so that the communities can actively participate and be engaged in the industry.
5. Ensure that communities are promptly compensated for any damage that affects their traditional livelihoods and way of life.
6. Provide a meter on wells to determine how much oil is extracted, and ensure that all communities receive their adequate share of compensation for all oil activities.
7. Develop and implement, with the full and effective participation of communities, an Environmental remediation plan to rehabilitate areas where exploration or prospecting has occurred.

IV. RULE OF LAW

8. Amend the production-sharing agreements to provide a greater percentage of the revenues directly to communities and the Government of Belize.
9. Build stronger penalties in the Petroleum Act for non-compliance. Oil companies must be held accountable for inevitable mistakes.
10. We call for the Belizean Constitution to be amended to include provisions for the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Closing Statement:

These points are the beginning of a conversation, which will ensure that throughout the oil development process, our communities are treated with fairness; dignity and their legal and human rights are honoured. We speak to all Belizeans, and offer solutions that will make future oil development more beneficial for everyone. SATIIM also remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting our most precious natural resources, including Sarstoon-Temash National Park, Protected Areas and Offshore Waters from resource exploitation.