

Statement by the Amazon Defense Coalition In Response To Chevron Press Release on August 24, 2006

August 25, 2006

Given that the scientific results in the Ecuador environmental trial against Chevron strongly indicate contamination at 100% of the inspected sites in the company's former concession, Chevron's primary defense strategy is to use its superior economic resources to drag out the trial for several more years. This strategy is illegal but sadly consistent with the policies of a company that for decades ignored Ecuadorian law and industry standards by dumping 18 billion gallons of toxic waste into the rainforest, where it put thousands of lives at grave risk. We remind people that Chevron is now a defendant in a fraud lawsuit brought by Ecuador's government over its operations and it has a criminal investigation pending by Ecuador's top law enforcement agency. The company has little moral authority to comment on what is correct or incorrect as a matter of law.

The decision by the Ecuador court to cancel the 64 inspections is based solidly in Ecuadorian statutory and Constitutional law and is consistent with legal principles worldwide that allow plaintiffs the right to decide how much proof is necessary to meet its burden. These 64 inspections were originally requested by the plaintiffs, not Chevron. The plaintiffs therefore have a right to withdraw them. In other legal forums throughout the U.S. and the world, Chevron has availed itself of the same laws to decide how to present its evidence just like the plaintiffs are doing in this instance. This decision in no way detracts from Chevron's right to conduct all the inspections it has requested or put on its defense case in any way it sees fit. It is notable that Chevron still has ten additional inspections to conduct, but consistent with its strategy of delay, it has not asked the court to schedule them. It also bears noting that ten prominent and independent Ecuadorian attorneys who are legal authorities signed a petition in support of the right of the plaintiffs to withdraw their inspections.

Chevron's charge that the court decision resulted from improper influence is just another desperate tactic by a company that has a demonstrated pattern in Ecuador of ignoring the law and disrespecting the legal rights of rainforest residents, including indigenous peoples. It is Chevron's lawyers, knowing the law does not support its position, who have consistently tried to lobby the judge improperly in an attempt to prolong the trial. Once again, we call on the top-level management of Chevron to start controlling its Ecuador legal team so it does not continue violating the law, Chevron's corporate governance policies, its social responsibility obligations, and its human rights principles. A multi-billion dollar liability is at stake in Ecuador, and it is clearly an open question whether Chevron's management is properly safeguarding the reputation of the company and the long-term interests of shareholders in Ecuador.