



Justice Institute Guyana

Press Release

Guyana's oil activities denounced at the United Nations

Guyana's proposed oil production has been denounced at the United Nations as contrary to the fundamental human rights of the Guyanese people. Member states have been asked to request Guyana to halt all oil activities until human rights are protected.

In a statement to diplomatic missions and civil society on Thursday 12th December 2019, at the UN's headquarters in Geneva, Melinda Janki, attorney-at-law, international lawyer, and director of the Justice Institute Guyana, said that Guyana's proposed oil production would violate constitutional rights to a healthy environment, life and property as well as the constitutional rights of future generations. She said that,

“Guyana is at the crossroads. One path leads to sustainable development from a green economy, rich biodiversity and Guyana's role as a carbon sink. The other path lead to dangerous oil production which will make Guyana poorer, destroy the environment and violate fundamental rights.”

The emission of greenhouse gas (GHG) from fossil fuels is already causing global warming leading to catastrophic climate change and rising sea levels. Ms Janki linked the Minister of Finance's prediction of 1 million barrels of oil a day by 2025¹ to the climate emergency and rising sea-levels stating that such proposed production,

“...would cause over 156 million metric tonnes of new GHG emissions every year. That would make climate change worse, would contribute to making the earth more hostile to life and violate the right to life and the right to a healthy environment. Global warming burdens future generations disproportionately. Oil production violates inter-generational equity. About 75% of Guyana's people live below sea-level. We could lose our homes and even our lives from rising sea-levels and extreme weather.”

Ms Janki also cited the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women which recommended that Guyana review its climate change and energy policies because of the disproportionate impact on women and girls.²

She added that,

“Guyana's proposed oil production is contrary to the UN's sustainable development goals such as goal 3 good health and wellbeing, goal 5 gender equality, goal 7 affordable and clean energy, goal 13 on climate action, goal 14 life below water, etc.”

In her statement, Ms Janki pointed out to the diplomatic missions that Guyana is a carbon sink with estimated net removals of 58 million metric tons of GHG every year and stated that

“If other countries follow Guyana's lead and become carbon sinks human beings will reverse the catastrophic manmade global warming that threatens to destroy life on earth.”

¹<https://www.kaieteurnews.com/2019/03/05/guyana-to-produce-1m-barrels-of-oil-per-day-by-2025-finance-minister/>

² <https://www.ciel.org/news/un-institution-warns-guyanas-oil-and-gas-development-threatens-rights-of-women-and-girls/>

Ms Janki also pointed out that the oil deal with ExxonMobil, Hess, and China's National Offshore Oil Corporation has many illegalities, undermines the rule of law and has been challenged in court.

She asked states to recommend that the Government of Guyana:

- (1) takes all steps to respect constitutional rights to life, property, a healthy environment, inter-generational equity and the rule of law;
- (2) halts all oil exploration and production until it has assessed the impact of oil production on these rights; and
- (3) invites the UN special rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment to make a country visit to Guyana.

Ms Janki was taking part in the Pre-sessions for Guyana's Universal Periodic Review at the UN's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland and had meetings with a number of diplomatic missions from Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe. In addition to Guyana, rising sea levels pose an existential threat to various countries including the Netherlands, Bangladesh and Pacific Islands.

Ms Janki thanked Ambassador Ford for his opening statement the Pre-sessions and acknowledged former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms Carolyn Rodrigues- Birkett who was also present at the pre-sessions.

Guyana's periodic review will take place in January 2020.

Evidence for figures:

CO2 emissions:

The average CO2 emissions from production and eventual combustion of crude oil (including its refined products) is estimated at 0.43 metric tons CO2/barrel. See Greenhouse Gases Equivalencies Calculator - Calculations and References

<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gases-equivalencies-calculator-calculations-and-references>

1 million barrels a day = 365,000,000.

$365,000,000 \times 0.43 = 156,950,000$ metric tons of CO₂e.

Guyana's removal of CO₂:

Guyana's Second National Communication on Climate Change

<https://climatechange.gov.gy/en/index.php/resources/documents/18-second-national-communication-to-the-unfccc>

See 2.1.3 on page 94 which states:

“Based on the inventory of GHG for Guyana for the period 1990-2004, it is evident that in so far as CO₂ Emissions and Removals are concerned, Guyana can be considered as a Net Sink Country. CO₂ removals (~ -61,000.000 Gg) significantly exceed emissions (~1,500 Gg). The bulk of CO₂ emissions derive from the Energy sector, while all of the CO₂ removals are attributable to the Land-Use Change and Forestry sector.”

For further information please contact:

info@justiceinstitute.org