

NGO Climate Justice, Germany



Who you are:

Lale Ergün

President of Climate Justice e.V., Germany

Konrad Grünberg

Deputy President of Climate Justice e.V., Germany

Sonja Nowak

Press officer, Climate Justice e.V., Germany

Source: <http://www.robinwood.de/wordpress/tag/cop15/page/2/>

You are the German representatives of the international independent organisation Climate Justice, committed to protecting the environment worldwide. You have been campaigning for the preservation of Yasuní National Park for years.

Your position regarding Yasuni national park:

Your position is that oil and mining companies, Western banks and corrupt politicians will reap short-term benefits from the destruction of the rainforest, while nomadic tribes, rubber tappers, indigenous peoples and forest farmers will be robbed of their livelihood.

Yasuní National Park is a part of the Amazon rainforest around four times the size of Luxembourg. It is one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots. Researchers have recorded more tree species in a single hectare of Yasuní park than are found in all of North America. Nowhere else in the world is home to so many different kinds of parrots, bats, beetles, amphibians, etc. The countless rivers which meander through the wilderness are even home to pink dolphins.

As a result of sustained oil production, Ecuador loses around 150,000 hectares of rainforest every year – an area twice the size of Hamburg. Alongside the rivers run pipelines, which leave deep tracks in the soil. The largest of these pipes, which carries oil from the Andes to the ports on the Pacific Ocean, leaked almost twice as much oil over the last three years as the stricken tanker Exxon Valdez. This oil pollutes rivers, kills animals and seeps into the drinking water. Every third person living in the oil production areas either falls ill or dies of cancer. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced. Scientists estimate that clean-up in the wake of oil production in Yasuní would cost four billion dollars. The world would have to help pay for this clean-up work too.

A key argument in your campaign to preserve the national park is climate change: The world is concerned about global warming, melting glaciers and rising sea levels. Rainforests play a crucial role in fixing carbon dioxide, thereby reducing emission levels. What is more, preserving Yasuní would save the world 407 million tonnes of CO₂ which would otherwise be emitted by burning the extracted oil. This is more than the total carbon emissions caused by France in a year. The actual amount of emissions prevented is even higher if the effects of deforestation, the emissions associated with the construction and use of the necessary infrastructure, the methane resulting from cattle raising in the newly settled areas and other new sources of emissions are taken into account. The current emissions trading system rewards countries for reforesting a degraded forest – why not also reward a country for leaving its forest alone in the first place? Based on the latest value of emissions reduction certificates of 17.66 US dollars per tonne on the European market, the financial value of the emissions prevented by the initiative would be 7,188 billion US dollars.

It is the first time in history that a poor country has proposed a plan of this nature, of its own initiative, to reconcile climate protection and sustainable development. Yasuní should be an example of how poor and rich countries can work together to protect the environment – a precedent for how global restraint can be turned into gain. This would be the first step in a new, forward-thinking approach, a trailblazing contribution to climate protection and therefore to humanity as a whole. This example could be followed by other states such the Congo, where oil worth many billions of dollars lies hidden in the soil of the country's national park, or Peru, where natural gas has been found under the rainforest.

Your demands:

You want politicians to explicitly reject the plans of oil companies which would be quite happy to destroy Yasuní to get at the oil. You are also calling on wealthy countries to contribute to the UN trust fund to support the initiative to protect the national park and other Ecuadorian environmental projects. This could make Yasuní an example of how poor and rich countries can work together to save the environment and leave behind a planet worth living on for future generations.

Your task for the first unofficial round of negotiations:

Seek out potential coalition partners who you think might have interests similar to yours. Discuss in your group who will negotiate with whom. Approach the other groups and find out whether you can form an interest group to further your position.