49th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

Mr. President,

Right Livelihood and Survival thank the Special Rapporteur for his report and share his concerns over the dramatic impact of the exposure to hazardous substances on vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples.

We express deep concern at the situation of the Yanomami, Munduruku, Xikrin, Parakanã, and Kayapo peoples in Brazil, who are suffering a socio-environmental crisis due to alarming mercury levels in their territory connected to illegal wildcat mining.

Almost 20% of mercury used in gold extraction processes is directly dumped into rivers. The remaining 80% evaporates into the atmosphere and enters the food chain through precipitation in crops. Indigenous communities’ exposure to methylmercury causes severe, permanent health damage.

Mr. President,

The massive invasion of wildcat miners in indigenous territories is causing irreversible damage to the environment and threatening the lives, health, and security of indigenous peoples.

Last June, the Special Rapporteur expressed his concern at the alarming mercury contamination in indigenous territories in the Amazon and called on the Brazilian government to guarantee the safety of indigenous peoples. Yet, the authorities continue to vigorously encourage violent invasions.

In view of the alarming situation, we reiterate the calls made by the Special Rapporteur and urge the Brazilian authorities to immediately remove all illegal miners and effectively protect indigenous lands in Brazil, in line with their national and international obligations.

Lastly, we call on the Council to guarantee that indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil, including their right to life, health, and a healthy environment, are upheld in all circumstances.

Thank you.