

Letter in Defense of the Guaraní Aquifer for the Embassy of Australia in Argentina

We are a group of ARGENTINE, URUGUAYAN, PARAGUAYAN and BRAZILIAN citizens concerned about the state of the so-called Guaraní Aquifer, one of the most important sources of fresh water in the world. The Guaraní Aquifer System is one of the largest underground water reservoirs in South America, located below parts of the ARGENTINE, BRAZILIAN, PARAGUAYAN AND URUGUAYAN territories. Although an agreement for its care and administration was signed by the four countries in 2010, recent drilling for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons has increased the risks of water contamination by mud / drilling fluid; Since to drill wells companies have to go through various aquifers, located at different depths (some more shallow and others deeper). Most of these aquifers form the Guaraní Aquifer System or are related to it. The oil companies, including one of Australian origin (Petrel Energy Limited), together with the Uruguayan company ANCAP and the North American Schuepbach Energy, have already made several wells in the Guaraní Aquifer System without any positive results regarding the discovery of oil or gas . Uruguayan geologists have recently suggested in media interviews that there is no gas or oil on the coast, so we ask ourselves what is the reason why we continue to drill in a highly sensitive area. It is also drilling in structurally defective areas, increasing the risk of leakage of gas or oil deposits - eventually found - into underground drinking water. Another form of potential contamination is the integrity of the wells, either by the cementing that isolates them from the rocks or by the water that surrounds them or by the carcass when they are poorly constructed (Eg: cheap wells, as specialists qualify the Uruguayan wells). Experts add that they are also looking for objectives that are aquifers in themselves! And taking into account that rocks (which are also targets) are shales (sedimentary rocks / mud rocks) or shale, the only way to exploit hydrocarbons is through hydraulic fracturing, a highly dangerous technique for pollution of the underground water. A few days after one of the wells began to be drilled, several explosions and earthquakes were recorded by people from nearby towns generating fear and concern.

In addition, the area selected for the construction of wells is an important tourist area, since old wells drilled, also made to look for oil only produced underground thermal water. The recreation centers, both in Uruguay and in Argentina, receive many tourists throughout the year that generate the most important source of work for the people who live in the area. If the aquifer is contaminated, these tourist places, like others where their use is essential for life, could disappear forever.

The citizens of the region understand that the presence of oil or gas could temporarily make a small country like Uruguay rich, but we know that it will be rich for eternity if it is

able to preserve its water. The Uruguayan population (around 3 million inhabitants) was always proud of its riches: clean water and fertile land, plus the wonderful beaches and oceanic coasts.

We are aware that the Uruguayan government has allowed and supported the exploration and eventual exploitation of the resources (if any) but we, both Argentines and Uruguayans, the people who live here, we work here and we also make possible both countries, we are firm in the conviction that we need to defend our way of life for future generations, which includes the preservation of our COMMON NATURAL ASSETS, such as groundwater.

Consequently, we decided to send letters to the governments of the countries from which these companies come because we are convinced that they will understand our concern as if the same were happening in their own land and support our position before the oil companies that intend to continue intervening our most precious asset, drinking water.

Argentine citizens reaffirm the same concern and identical responsibility when it comes to preserving these "natural resources" named after an economic conception that we question. We consider essential and urgent social intervention for defense in relation to the use, management and / or appropriation of what should be "natural commons", what we know has anchorage in different types of rationalities, in different ways of valuing nature; but what can not enter into discussion is that essential goods for life, such as drinking water, may be appropriate, and an object of accumulation and profit and denied or haggaged to the human beings who need them to live.

Without intending to overstep and only to take into account some legal issues, we reiterate that there is an Agreement signed in 2010 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, on whose grounds reference is made to resolution 63/124 of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers and the principles on protection of natural resources. The Agreement has been ratified in the Year 2012 by Argentina and Uruguay and according to the latest news - although not official - is on track to be ratified by Brazil.

We must emphasize that this Agreement refers to international commitments:

- The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972.

- Declaration of Rio de Janeiro on the Environment and Development, 1992;

- the Summit on Sustainable Development in the Americas, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 1996, and the conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in

Johannesburg, 2002.

The document adds that progress is being made regarding the harmonious development of water resources and physical integration in accordance with the objectives of the Treaty of the La Plata Basin, done in Brasilia, 1969. And it follows:

- Supported in the integration process strengthened by the Framework Agreement on Environment of MERCOSUR, made in Asunción, 2001;
- Motivated by the desire to expand the levels of cooperation regarding greater scientific knowledge about the Guaraní Aquifer System and the responsible management of its water resources;
- Bearing in mind the valuable results of the Project for the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Guaraní Aquifer System.

Immediately the Agreement on the Guaraní Aquifer states in its Art. 1 "The Guaraní Aquifer System is a transboundary water resource that integrates the sovereign territorial domain of the Argentine Republic, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Republic of Paraguay and the Republic Oriental of Uruguay, which are the sole holders of that resource and will henceforth be called "Parties".

To conclude, there are numerous ordinances of Municipalities and / or Government Boards in Entre Ríos prohibiting the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons and other polluting practices, which has been the previous path for the Provincial State to prohibit Fracking, becoming the first Argentine province that has banned this practice. The social movements and groupings of the 4 countries of the region, we continue working. Several Departments of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, including those affected by the Schuepbach project, have departmental decrees prohibiting Fracking, which shows that the actions that have already started in Uruguay, have no Social License and are violating the citizenship rights.

By the way that corresponds, and with the assurance that we will be listened to and accompanied by the Authorities, in the defense of our rights, which are also those of future generations and of all humanity, we are bringing to your attention, some of the edges of this unequal struggle and we are waiting for actions and / or decisions that prioritize the defense of life.

Sincerely:

350.org. América Latina.

Asamblea Ciudadana de Concordia (Provincia de Entre Ríos).

COESUS - Coalición Latinoamericana contra el Fracking por el Clima, Agua y la Vida.

CLEPSA - Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios Políticos, Sociales y Ambientales.

Movimiento Argentina Sin Fracking

Asamblea de Integración por Territorios Libres de Fracking

Asamblea Ambientalista Santotomeña - Santo Tomé – (Corrientes)
Asamblea Ciudadana Ambiental de Gualeguaychú – (Entre Ríos)
Guerta y Energía – Concepción del Uruguay – E. R.
Qopiwini – Israel Alegre – (Formosa)
Asamblea Ciudadana Ambiental de Colón (Entre Ríos)
Guardianes del Iberá (Corrientes)
Movimiento Pedagógico de Liberación – MPL (Misiones)
Movimiento Campesino de Liberación - MCL (Misiones)
Organización de Tareferos (Monte Carlo, Misiones)
Coordinadora Indígena (Misiones)
Movimiento de Mujeres, (Misiones)
Centro de Estudiantes Emancipación y Progreso (Tres Isletas, Provincia de Chaco)
Asociación Civil Ambientalistas de Salto - ACAS (Uruguay)
Asamblea Pachamama – Montevideo – (Uruguay)
Agrupación “Diente de León” Montevideo – (Uruguay)
Mesa de Articulación Indígena del Paraguay (MAIPy)
Movimiento Pueblos Originarios MPO (Paraguay)
Coordinación Interregional de Pueblos Originarios (CIRPO – Paraguay)
Asociación de Comunidades Indígenas de San Pedro (ACISPE – Paraguay)
Mainomby (Paraguay)
La Organización de Mujeres Campesinas e Indígenas (CONAMURI – Paraguay)
Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas “Kuña Guaraní Aty” (Paraguay)
RE Juvenil (Paraguay)
Movimiento 19 de Abril (Chaco – Paraguay)