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## Mexico: mangrove destruction by tourism and shrimp farming

The expansion of tourism has meant the increase of the possibility of enjoying leisure time for many people worldwide. Nevertheless, tourism usually brings negative social and environmental consequences with it and more so in the case of the fragile mangrove ecosystems.

The mangroves and beaches off the Caribbean Coast of Mexico, known as the Maya Riviera, are being destroyed by more and more infrastructure for tourism built at a quick pace. Some people consider that this may benefit --at least temporally-- the local economy as this creates jobs and stimulates cash flow, but the long range results are devastating. In one weekend, working night and day, an entire building site can take over a healthy thriving mangrove. This aquatic forest ecosystem, vital to the life of the coast, reef, and food chain to so many mammals, is being sacrificed for the benefit of investors in hotels, malls, golf courses, convention halls, and shopping centres that are being erected at the cost of one of the world's precious natural resources. Even if these developments were to be placed on the hard land, behind the mangrove wetlands, negative effects can be expected, due to the runoff downstream of chemical and pesticide effluents.

The NGO People of the Mayan Cancun Corridor, with the support of Mangrove Action Project, are leading a campaign to halt the project to build a big hotel that will affect the Quintana Roo's mangroves in the Caribbean Coast. They are asking all interested people to address the following Mexican authorities expressing their concern for the fate of this fragile area:

1. President Ernesto Zedillo, Residencia Oficial de los Pinos; Puerto Central, Primer Piso, Col. San Miguel; Chapultepec, CP11850, Mexico D.F. MEXICO  
Coordinadora de Atencion Ciudadana
2. Julia Carabias, President of Semernap
3. Sr. Oscar Espinosa, Secretaria de Turismo; Avenida Presidente Masarik, 178-8 Colonia Palanco; Mexico D.F. MEXICO
4. Gobernador Hendricks; Calle 22 de Enero: s/n Palacio de Gobierno; Chetumal, Quintana Roo - 07000 MEXICO

Mangroves at the Pacific coast are also menaced. The situation in San Blas Nayarit in the area of Marismas Nacionales (National Swamps) is continuing to be critical, partly as a consequence of the indifference shown by the authorities. The international agreements for the protection of this fragile area are not enforced. The Grupo Ecológico Manglar has denounced that in this case the direct responsible for destruction is the shrimp farming company Aqunova Farms. Only once -in October 1998- the authorities gave a response to the many complaints expressed by the environmentalists, and it consisted of a justification of the firm's activities, since it stated that the official investigation found insufficient proof that violations occurred, and for that reason the case was closed. Additionally the case was submitted to the Commission of Environmental Cooperation Canada-USA-Mexico, that committed itself to study it. Meanwhile a large area of mangroves is being lost every day because of the drying of waterways and lagoons caused by the expansion of Aqunova's shrimp cultivation ponds.

