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## Ecuador: Greenpeace action to protect remaining mangroves

31 July 1998. Ecuador's Minister of Environment has promised Greenpeace that she will take steps to secure a permanent ban on mangrove clearcuts by the country's shrimp farming industry and investigate evidence of illegal mangrove destruction in a protected national reserve.

In a meeting with Greenpeace, Minister Flor Maria Valverde also agreed to confront the Ecuadorian Forestry Institute of Natural Areas and Wildlife (INEFAN) over evidence of 745 cases of mangrove destruction by shrimp farm operators that were lodged with it by local environmental organization Fundecol since 1989. Only four cases were investigated.

However, Greenpeace is calling on the incoming government of Ecuador to honour the agreements made prior to its recent coming into office by Minister Valverde.

"The international community is now waiting to see how the present and future governments of Ecuador will stop the many shrimp farming operators from destroying what's left of Ecuador's mangrove forests," said Greenpeace spokesperson Gina Sanchez.

Greenpeace and its ship Rainbow Warrior were invited to Ecuador by Fundecol to highlight the widespread and illegal destruction of mangrove forests by the shrimp aquaculture industry. The destruction of mangrove forests by shrimp farming interests has been illegal in Ecuador since 1994 under Decree #1907.94.b.

The meeting with the minister followed an earlier protest by Greenpeace activists and Fundecol at an illegal shrimp farm recently built in one of the last remaining mangrove forests in the Muisne region near Esmeraldas. In this area, 20,800 hectares of mangrove forests have been reduced to 650 hectares after clearcutting by the shrimp aquaculture industry in the last 10 years.

During the protest, the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior was ordered to remain in port. Ecuadorian authorities released the Rainbow Warrior after the Judge who ruled against Greenpeace was dismissed by the President of the Supreme Court. Similarly, the court order issuing arrest warrants for Fundecol directors and Rainbow Warrior crew members is now invalid.

Source: Greenpeace's web page