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## Ecuador: Indigenous women defend the forest of Pastaza

Indigenous women, some of them accompanied by their men and children, initiated a march on September 28 in Pastaza province -northern Ecuador- with the aim of joining the National Constitutional Assembly to be held in Quito on October 12.

The Coordination of Indigenous Women "Pacha Mama" ("Mother Earth" in Quechua language) rejects the presence of oil companies in the territory of Pastaza because it is threatening the living conditions of the indigenous communities and peasants. They will ask the Ecuatorian government to establish a moratorium of 15 years for the activities of oil companies in Pastaza. "We, the indigenous women in defence of the Pacha Mama, demand the government of Ecuador, that the indigenous territories of Pastaza be recognized as Patrimony and Legacy for Preservation of the Biodiversity and for the Indigenous Cultural Nations" states Cristina Gualinga, Indigenous Women Coordinator.

According to the Coordination, Ecuador's new pro-business government is quickly selling out the last remaining old growth rainforests to national and transnational corporations. Oil wells, logging and petroleum pipelines are posing the most eminent threat. The women also denounce that the oil companies are willing to bribe anyone who wishes to declare at the National Assembly his/her support to their activities.

Source: Accion Ecologica. September 1997.