

CONGRÉGATION DE NOTRE-DAME CALLS ON CANADA TO ENSURE
CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY IN OVERSEAS MINING OPERATIONS: CASE
OF GUATEMALA CITED

12 March 2007

MONTREAL / 12 March 2007 – The Leadership Team of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame has written to Canada’s Foreign Minister to request the establishment of clearly-defined standards of corporate accountability for Canadian firms operating overseas. “Internationally-accepted human rights, environmental and social standards should be observed by all companies registered in Canada, especially those which receive financial and political assistance from Ottawa,” said Sister Jo Badali, Congregation Leader.

The sisters’ letter asks Foreign Minister Peter MacKay to publicly release the final report and recommendations of the Roundtables on extractive industries and corporate responsibility which the government hosted over the past months. The sisters also call for federal leadership in passing legislation to regulate the overseas operations of companies, thus making Canada a model of best international practices for extractive industries.

The Congrégation de Notre-Dame has over 1200 members, and is active in 9 countries around the world. In Guatemala, the sisters work in a region where a controversial Canadian gold mining project has proceeded in spite of the opposition of many indigenous people resident there.

For more information, please contact:

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**LES SŒURS DE
LA CONGRÉGATION DE NOTRE-DAME**

ADMINISTRATION GÉNÉRALE
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

No. 30/2007

Honourable Mr. Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building
Tower A, 10th Floor
125 Sussex Drive,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

March 12, 2007

Dear Mr. MacKay,

The Sisters and Associates of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame appreciate the work that your government has continued to develop through the multi-stakeholder roundtables on extractive industries and corporate social responsibility. Thank you for providing this opportunity for debate and discernment among representatives of Canadian industry, government and human rights and environmental NGOs. Together we must strive to respect social and environmental justice while enhancing Canada's good name through best practices in overseas mining operations.

At the most recent Chapter of our Congregation, our Sisters from Guatemala impressed us all by passionately recounting how this issue affects everyone, and is the responsibility of everyone. Our Sisters work in an area where Glamis Gold Ltd. (subsequently bought by Goldcorp) began to mine gold and silver in spite of the opposition of the local indigenous community. One person even lost his/her life in the unfortunate series of events leading up to the production phase, when the Guatemalan Army confronted community members. Canadian Sisters have worked for decades in this country and have been well-accepted, but it has become difficult to feel proud of the way this project by a firm linked to our country, and supported by our Embassy, has proceeded.

Our Congregation notes with appreciation the recent letter directed to you by the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which stated, "...the fundamental question before us is whether Canadian resource extraction corporations should be governed by Canadian values and Canadian laws when operating overseas." Ideally, host governments should be responsible for regulation of foreign mining companies which operate in their territory, yet in practice, many governments have weak legislation and lack capacity or political will to adequately regulate. This reality should not exempt any company from the responsibility to operate with the highest standards of environmental and social justice.

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For our part, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame requests that our government require Canadian companies operating internationally to meet clearly defined corporate accountability standards, including existing international human rights and environmental standards, as a condition for receipt of both financial and political assistance; that effective monitoring, verification and compliance mechanisms be enacted to ensure that Canadian companies are meeting these standards; and that legislation be passed to hold Canadian companies and their directors accountable in Canada when found complicit in human rights abuses and environmental destruction abroad, so as to offer victims grievance mechanisms for any such violations. We also propose that Canada further promote the inclusion of human rights and environmental standards in World Bank policies.

Mr. MacKay, we would appreciate hearing your commitment to the public release of the Report and Recommendations from the Roundtables on extractive industries and corporate responsibility as soon as these are completed. This would of course ensure a further step of accountability in the process undertaken to date, in which so many Canadians were involved. We look forward to government adoption of those recommendations which were able to be reached by consensus. In this way, Canada could lead the world in the promotion of just and environmentally sensitive extractive industry processes throughout the globe.

Thank you sincerely for your attention to our concerns.

Members of the Congregation Leadership Team - Congrégation de Notre-Dame

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cc Archbishop Roger Ébacher, Chairman, Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs,
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Mr. Michael Casey, Director, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development
and Peace

Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International
Development