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CONTACT: press@earth-insight.org

New Report Finds Colombia's Oil & Gas Blocks in Amazon Pose Financial, Environmental, and Human Rights Risks

In Advance of Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) Summit, Groups Urge Colombian Government to Permanently End New Oil and Gas Exploration in Region and Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

August 19, 2025 (Bogota, Colombia / Sacramento, CA) — In the lead up to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization Summit happening this Friday in Bogotá, Colombia, a [new report](#) from Earth Insight, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC) exposes the financial, environmental, and human rights risks of oil and gas expansion in the Colombian Amazon.

The new report, [Oil and Gas Expansion in the Colombian Amazon: Navigating Risks, Economics, and Pathways to a Sustainable Future](#), calls on the Colombian government to permanently shelve all unassigned blocks (areas to be auctioned for exploration activities) in order to safeguard its Indigenous Peoples and local communities, promote sustainable development, contribute to global climate safety, and consolidate Colombia's international environmental leadership. Images and maps of the report findings can be found [here](#), and a short visual summary can be found [here](#).

The fifth ACTO Summit will take place in Bogotá on the 22nd of August. Leaders from eight Amazon countries will meet for the first time since 2023, when they adopted the landmark [Belém Declaration](#), which committed them to initiate a regional dialogue on the sustainability of fossil fuel extraction in the Amazon. It is an opportunity for the Colombian government to showcase its climate and environmental leadership by permanently ending fossil fuel expansion in the region as a reference point for other countries. The report's co-authors will share its results in a public hearing in the Colombian Congress hosted by the [Parliamentarians for a Fossil Free Future](#) on the morning of the 21st of August.

Some of the report's key findings include:

- Approximately 14 Mha of the Colombian Amazon, nearly a third of the region, is overlapped by oil and gas blocks, including 20% of the intact Amazon forest.
- Almost 70% of the IPs, LCs, and ADs communities in the Colombian Amazon are threatened by oil and gas blocks, which directly overlap with 15% of their recognized and documented territories in the Colombian Amazon.
- If all announced climate pledges are implemented, almost two-thirds of blocks could be economically unviable, creating significant economic risk. Under a 1.5°C scenario, 97% of new blocks in the Colombian Amazon could be unprofitable.
- Nearly 43% of unprotected Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA's) recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in the Colombian Amazon are still threatened by oil and gas activity or expansion.
- Further oil and gas expansion puts in danger a critical carbon sink: The Colombian Amazon contains approximately 9.6 billion metric tons of sequestered CO₂ equivalent. Approximately 19% –roughly 10.7 times greater than Colombia's 2030 climate target– could be disturbed by oil and gas expansion and subsequent industrial activities, which would threaten the sinks' stability and endanger the Paris Agreement goals.

*“Expanding fossil fuel activities in the Amazon is clearly a threat to people, nature, and climate,” said **Ignacio Arróniz, Senior Associate at Earth Insight and co-author of the report.** “This is a region of immense ecological and cultural significance. Colombia can advance its climate and environmental leadership and continue to drive international support for its green transition by permanently removing the unassigned oil and gas blocks in the Amazon, managing the region’s declining oil production, and investing in its rich natural and human capital.”*

In late 2022, the Colombian government [committed to ending new oil and gas exploration and called for a transition away from fossil fuels](#). In 2025, the country presided over the 16th global biodiversity conference in Cali. Despite this, the report reveals that millions of hectares of unassigned oil blocks in the Colombian Amazon are still designated as such and threaten to undermine these commitments and the region's Indigenous Peoples and local communities, biodiversity, and carbon sinks.

*“Oil expansion in the Colombian Amazon is causing a serious crisis for the 64 Indigenous peoples groups that suffer from the contamination of their water sources and air pollution,” said **Pablo Hernan Jamioy, Advisor at OPIAC.** This activity is happening without free, prior, and informed consent, and has led to the dispossession of ancestral territories that are being granted as concessions to foreign companies. In addition, the presence of security forces to ensure the safety of oil wells in these remote areas has exacerbated violence and forced displacement, putting at risk the survival and territorial harmony of the peoples fighting to preserve their homes and livelihoods.”*

Permanently shelving all unassigned blocks would minimize future financial losses and diversify the region's economy while consolidating Colombia's leadership, helping attract international support to its transition.

*“Developing new oil fields in the Colombian Amazon is a high-cost gamble in a shrinking market,” said **Olivier Bois von Kursk, Policy Advisor at IISD and co-author of the report.** “Almost two-thirds of new oil projects in the Colombian Amazon are economically unviable under current climate pledges—and nearly all become stranded assets under*

the IEA Paris-aligned climate scenario. High operational costs in the region and an accelerating domestic energy transition make new projects unlikely to break even and risk becoming a financial burden to the state.”

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About Earth Insight

Earth Insight builds critical transparency tools and momentum for restricting fossil fuel, mining, and other industrial expansion threats to key ecosystems and Indigenous and local communities. Our research, communications, and engagement work is central to supporting policy interventions that key political and financial actors can make to protect critical ecosystems as a vital step towards addressing both the biodiversity and climate crises.

About IISD

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an award-winning independent think tank working to accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resource management, and fair economies. Our work inspires better decisions and sparks meaningful action to help people and the planet thrive. We shine a light on what can be achieved when governments, businesses, non-profits, and communities come together. IISD's staff of more than 300 experts come from across the globe and from many disciplines. With offices in Winnipeg, Geneva, Ottawa, and Toronto, our work affects lives in nearly 100 countries.

About OPIAC

The National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC) is a non-profit institution under public law with a special Indigenous status. It provides political representation of 64 Indigenous peoples groups of the Colombian Amazon in national and international arenas. Founded in 1995 during a congress in Mitú (Vaupés), OPIAC was established through the participation of traditional authorities and delegates from across the Amazon, emerging as a unifying platform for collective Indigenous representation. OPIAC's mission is to defend the individual and collective rights of its member communities, promote the protection of ancestral knowledge, strengthen territorial and organizational autonomy, and support the cultural revitalization of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon.