



Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente
Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 11, 2008

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National and International Organizations File Suit against Colombian Mining Law to Protect Fragile Ecosystems Like the Páramos

Bogota, Colombia – On September 8th, the Colombian Constitutional Court admitted a lawsuit filed against the Colombian Mining Law by the Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA) and the Corporación Gestión por los Intereses Ambientales y Públicos (GESAP Initiative). The law permits mining exploration and exploitation in ecosystems of special ecological interest, such as the Andean *páramo*, which infringes upon national and international legislation, in particular the Colombian Constitution.

The Andean *páramos* are unique, high-mountain ecosystems that serve as indispensable water reservoirs and regulators. Numerous rivers and lakes in Colombia originate in the *páramos*, the majority of which are used for drinking water. *Páramo* soils also capture and store atmospheric carbon. The law at issue in this suit (Article 34 of the Mining Law) opens these and other critical natural areas to mining unless they have been previously defined and declared protected by environmental authorities.

“Mining in fragile ecosystems destroys them and violates our Constitutional right to a healthy environment. For this reason, we are asking the Court to apply our Constitution and international principles on sustainable development to effectively limit mining activities and protect these valuable and sensitive ecosystems,” noted Jerónimo Rodríguez, AIDA’s legal advisor in Colombia.

Mining impacts on the *páramo* have already caused concern among Colombian authorities such as the Colombian Attorney General, which noted in its cautionary report, *The Situation of the Colombian Páramos in the Face of Human Activity and Climate Change* (2008), that “threats from activities with highly negative impacts on the *páramos*, such as mining, imply not only a loss of biodiversity, but also a national security problem related to the loss of a large number of environmental goods and services, among which is principally, our water supply.”

“If this provision of law is determined unconstitutional, in the future when mining exploration and exploitation projects are proposed within these ecosystems, even if they have not been defined or declared protected, there will be sufficient reason for environmental authorities to deny licenses for these activities,” concluded Rodríguez.

AIDA is a non-profit environmental law organization that works in the Americas to strengthen people’s capacity to guarantee their individual and collective right to a healthy environment through the development, implementation, and effective enforcement of national and international laws. Among other issues, AIDA focuses on protecting the right to water and ensuring adequate fresh water resources for communities and ecosystems in this hemisphere.

For more information, visit: www.aida-americas.org

For more information about the importance of páramos, visit: <http://www.paramo.org/>

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