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The President of Chile
Mr. Patricio Aylwin

OPEN LETTER FROM NORWEGIAN NGOs
ABOUT THE BIO-BIO DAMS

REPUBLICA DE CHILE					
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Norwegian environmental and human rights groups urge You as President of Chile to safeguard the rights of the Pehuenche people and to secure the integrity of the rich ecosystems within the area of influence of the proposed Bio-Bio dams.

Both of these are threatened by the construction of the Panguue dam in Your country. The dam is being built on the upper Bio-Bio river in an area known to be one of the richest in biodiversity in the world. The area is also home to the Pehuenche Indians who have inhabited the area since precolonial times.

We understand that the Panguue Project is the first in a planned series of dams which will displace hundreds of Pehuenche, and threaten the livelihoods of at least 6000 indigenous people. It will have severe environmental impacts both locally and downstream. We also understand that the project has lead to a split among the Pehuenche communities about whether they want the project. Several communities see this as an assault on their traditional rights to land, and they have filed a lawsuit against the electricity company executing the project.

An IFC loan to the first dam was approved in spite of the Board of Directors recognizing that an important part of the Environmental Impact Assessment was not in place. Environmental and human rights groups world wide have criticised the IFC decision, stating that it lacks a sound basis.

Last week a UNEP conference on biodiversity took place in Norway. Once again it was made clear that every country has a responsibility to preserve its biological diversity. Hence, Chile has a special responsibility to preserve the biodiversity of the valley of the Bio-Bio. Chilean environmental groups argue that there are environmentally sound alternatives to the Bio-Bio dams that should be researched, such as a program for increased energy efficiency.

Norwegian groups are especially concerned about the Panguue project since there is a possibility that it will be constructed with Norwegian equipment. In solidarity with the affected Pehuenches and the environmental groups in Chile we urge You to adhere to their rights:

Stop the construction of the dams on the Bio-Bio! No further work on the dams should proceed until a comprehensive environmental and social impact assessment for the six-dam program is prepared. A thorough electricity planning process should be undertaken taking demand-side and energy saving measures into consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Association for Internatinal Water and Forest Studies
Nature and Youth
The Norwegian Society for Conservation of Nature
The Future in Our Hands
Development Fund
World Wide Fund for Nature, Norway
The Latinamerican groups in Norway
Organisation for Chilean exiles former political prisoners
Sun and Moon
Rainforest Foundation
Norga Sámiid Riiikka Searvi

Contestar a través de
Embajada de Chile
en Noruega.