
[Second Meso-American Forum against Dams](#)

The Second Meso-American Forum against Dams "For the Peoples' Water and Life" was held from 17 to 20 July in Honduras. One hundred and fifty delegates participated, "concerned over the increasing invasion by dam-building projects imposed by large transnational companies and multilateral bodies, in partnership with the corrupt governments of the Meso-American region."

The Forum's main objective was to "share and analyze our experience to strengthen the struggle in defence of our natural resources, our culture, our territories and even our very life, which are being threatened by the imposition of economic and military plans attacking the self determination of our peoples."

In their assessment of the situation, the participants identified the existence of some 500 projects for hydroelectric dams in the region and noted that "the proliferation of hydroelectric projects in our countries is not due to the energy needs of our peoples but responds to the need to set up the necessary infrastructure to develop the neo-liberal economic model through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the various Free Trade agreements on a continental level, the Puebla-Panama Plan and the Colombia Plan, among others."

They also emphasized that the projects "are located in indigenous and peasant communities, characterized by their considerable natural and cultural wealth. Such projects attack the survival of our peoples and cause the disappearance of their territories."

One of the participants in the Forum (Mauricio Alvarez from Costa Rica), underscored other important results, in particular the fact that the meeting had made it possible to meet with and identify people affected by the dams, both in the region and outside it (such as Brazil and Thailand). It also enabled joint strategies to be prepared, networks to be set up and meetings among countries to be held, leading to the preparation of national and regional plans in opposition of what he called "a hydrogarchy basically comprising transnational companies that appropriate whole watersheds in the region. For this hydrogarchy, hydroelectric energy is secondary, as the process of appropriating water legitimises greater domination of all the other resources contained in the watershed."

In the final part of its declaration, the Forum demands that the governments "immediately halt construction of all the hydroelectric projects that are in process and do not grant any more concessions of any water body to private companies. Furthermore, we demand that the use of water be guaranteed and respected as community-benefiting collective property."

The Forum thus puts forward an alternative and opposing vision to the model presently in force, which gives priority to economic profitability over environmental conservation and social equity, tending to privatize all resources and in particular water and energy and their handing over to transnational companies. The Forum will meet again in one year's time in El Salvador, where actions carried out in the framework of the Action Plan approved at this meeting will be assessed.

Article based on information from: interview with Mauricio Alvarez, FECON, Costa Rica; Declaración

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Esperanza, Intibucá, Honduras, 17-20 July 2003