

Transcript: Isabel Zuleta at Export Development Canada (EDC), 20 November 2019

Participants:

- Isabel Zuleta (spokesperson, Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia)
 - Karen Hamilton (program officer, Above Ground)
 - Kathy Price (campaigner, Amnesty International Canada)
 - Louise Casselman (Social Justice Fund officer, Public Service Alliance of Canada)
 - Sebastián Vielmas (regional working groups officer, Canadian Council for International Cooperation)
 - Carl Burdock (executive vice-president and senior business officer, EDC)
 - Caroline Elie (manager of stakeholder relations, EDC)
 - Brianna Peterson (manager of environmental and social risk management, EDC)
 - Justine Hendricks (senior vice-president of sustainable business enablement, EDC)
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[The recording begins a few minutes into the meeting.]

Caroline: The team here...

Justine: ... for sustainable business and development. So under my function is the Corporate Sustainable and Responsibility Team and Brianna is one of my team members.

Brianna: So I've already been introduced, but I am Brianna Peterson, manager of the Environmental and Social Risk Management Team here at EDC. We are responsible for a range of things, including reviewing transactions when they come in the door, as well as the Environmental and Social Risk Management policy framework here at EDC.

Carl: And I'm Carl Burdock. I'm the executive vice president and chief business officer at EDC. So I have the responsibility for all of our business operations here at EDC. So I wanted to thank everyone for joining us today... specifically to thank you [Isabel] as well for coming here to Canada to meet with us today. So we... EDC did provide a loan to EPM. And, as you know, we had publicly disclosed that. We do disclose all of the financing that we provide. And you may have also heard our CEO at a major speech in Montreal two weeks ago addressing a group of 3 to 400 people talking about the impact of this transaction. So she recognized the... the disaster that has ensued at the construction site of the dam and how that... as part of providing our financing to EPM, you know, we are now linked to... with the events that happened. We recognize that. So we are trying to continuously improve how we look at transactions, how we look at the business that we do, how we could do it better. So today we'd like to hear your perspective of what is it that... that... what has your experience been, what were you looking at, what were you seeing, what are other indicators that we could look at. So your perspective will be very valuable in... in helping us shape how we look at business. So with that I'll just open it up...

Karen: *Isabel. Te iba a presentar... pero ahora no sé si prefieres presentarte a ti misma...*

[Isabel. I was going to introduce you... but now I don't know whether you'd prefer to introduce yourself.]

Isabel: *Cómo quieres.*

[It's up to you.]

Karen: I'll offer a very short introduction for Isabel and then we'll let Isabel take over. So, as you all know, we're here with Isabel Cristina Zuleta, a sociologist and a Colombian environmental and human rights activist. She is the spokesperson for the Ríos Vivos Movement of Antioquia, which is a group of organizations and families that for over a decade has acted in defense of communities and territories impacted by dam construction and mining projects in Northern Colombia... and obviously one of those projects is the Hidroituango dam on the Cauca River. Isabel is in Canada with the support of over 20 Canadian civil society organizations. She's been in various other cities before today. And she's here to denounce, among other things, the forced displacement, the environmental destruction, the loss of livelihood related to the dam construction, as well as the violent attacks and criminalization suffered by community members and social leaders. She's also here with specific asks for Canadian institutions that have supported this project, such as EDC. And we'll now allow Isabel...we'll pass the mic to Isabel now. Thank you.

Isabel: *Buenos días. Muchísimas gracias por recibirme a mí y, en mi nombre, a toda la comunidad afectada por Hidroituango... que hemos decidido ejercer el derecho de oposición al proyecto.*

Sebastián: Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for receiving me and, through me, all the people of the movement who have decided to use their right to oppose this project.

Isabel: *Somos 15 organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Hay pescadores, barranqueros (que son mineros ancestrales), agricultores, mujeres y jóvenes de los municipios afectados por el megaproyecto.*

Sebastián: *So we are 15 organizations. Um... we have fishers, we have artisanal miners, we have young people, women and families from the affected municipalities.*

Isabel: *Mi comunidad ha enviado a través mío algunos mensajes para ustedes, las instituciones del gobierno y la sociedad civil canadiense, que tengo la responsabilidad de dar en este momento.*

Sebastián: So through me, this organization of the community has transmitted some messages so that I can pass on to Canadian government institutions and also civil society organizations.

Isabel: *El primero es que Empresas Públicas de Medellín ha mentido y ha destruido el medio de vida de subsistencia. Ha dejado sin alimentos y sin trabajo a miles en las comunidades.*

Sebastián: So the first is that EPM... we will use EPM from now on... it's easier for me to translate... has lied about the project... the impact has been destroying the food supply and the livelihoods, the jobs of many, many people in the communities.

Isabel: *El embalse lo llenaron sin avisar a las comunidades y eso implicó que tenían que rescatarlas. Eso fue un proceso muy doloroso porque lo mínimo que esperaban era que nos avisara que iba a llenar el embalse.*

Sebastián: So the dam was filled without telling the communities that they were going to do so. Um... that forced the company to rescue the communities and that was a very painful moment as the communities had expected at least to be notified of the filling of the dam.

Isabel: *Las comunidades que fueron rescatadas, hoy no tienen vivienda, no tienen un modo de subsistencia y están comiendo una vez al día gracias a la solidaridad que hemos conseguido de las organizaciones nacionales e internacionales.*

Sebastián: So these communities that have been rescued... they have no housing, they have no way to earn their livelihood, and they're only eating once a day thanks to the solidarity from national and international organizations.

Isabel: *Están todavía en albergues y no ha habido ningún medio que nos posibilita recuperar las viviendas, recuperar los lugares en donde las comunidades vivían.*

Sebastián: So they are still living in temporary housing and there has been no way to try to recover the... their former houses and they're trying to get back to that territory.

Isabel: *El segundo mensaje... además de... de decirles que la inversión que ustedes realizaron también tiene responsabilidad y en el sufrimiento que hemos tenido, en la falta de alimentos, en la falta de vivienda, en la falta de trabajo... es que esto está generando más conflicto armado en el territorio.*

Sebastián: So the second message is that these investments of which you're also responsible, alongside with the impacts on the food supply, on the housing and on the lack of jobs for the community... it has also brought more armed conflict into the region.

Isabel: *Los niños están siendo reclutados por grupos al margen de la ley, y muchos de ellos se están yendo para estos grupos porque no hay comida y los grupos están ofreciendo dinero.*

Sebastián: So, for example, many children are being recruited by illegal armed groups that are offering food, as food is not available otherwise... they are compelled to join.

Isabel: *Los pescadores hoy están sembrando o raspando cocaína.*

Sebastián: *¿Raspando? ¿Qué quiere decir?*

Isabel: *Raspando quiere decir... procesando.*

Sebastián: For example, the fishers... they are now, instead of fishing... they are cultivating and processing cocaine.

Isabel: *Por eso, este megaproyecto ha traído más conflicto armado al territorio y aleja las posibilidades de paz.*

Sebastián: So these are the reasons for which this project has augmented the violence and has decreased the likelihood of a peace process being successful.

Isabel: *Con los dineros de Hidroituango construyeron bases militares y tienen convenios militares con la fuerza pública y con ejércitos de seguridad privada.*

Sebastián: So with some of the funds for the Hidroituango project, some military bases and private military groups were also funded, and they're installed in the region.

Isabel: *Nosotros pedíamos que antes de que se desarrolla el proyecto, se soluciona el conflicto armado en el territorio... por la gran cantidad de grupos al margen de la ley que existen, por las disputas territoriales y para nosotros... para poder participar con tranquilidad.*

Sebastián: So before the project was implemented and approved, we ask that the armed conflict would end first so that the communities... we can actually participate without feeling fear.

Isabel: *Las comunidades afectadas por su inversión en su mayoría somos víctimas del conflicto armado.*

Sebastián: The communities that have been affected by your investment are in the majority victims of the armed conflict.

Isabel: *Entonces nuestra vulnerabilidad es mayor porque ya hemos sufrido mucho y estamos sufriendo más con el megaproyecto.*

Sebastián: Therefore our vulnerability... it's higher because we have suffered already a lot and we are still suffering from these new projects.

Isabel: *Siempre solicitamos que no era lo mismo afectar a comunidades víctimas que a comunidades que no han sido víctimas.*

Sebastián: And we always highlighted that it is not the same to affect communities that have not been victims of the armed conflict than affecting communities, as ours, that have been victims of the armed conflict.

Isabel: *Por eso solicitamos que el proyecto no dañara las fosas comunes y los sitios de enterramiento de cuerpos de los más de 3000 desaparecidos que tenemos en la zona.*

Sebastián: So that's why we asked that the project would not flood the places where there are mass graves, where there are burying places for more than 3000 people that have been disappeared in the context of the armed conflict.

Isabel: *El gobierno, la empresa, y a través de ella, suponemos todos los inversionistas, deberían de saber que en el territorio ocurrieron más de 124 masacres oficialmente reportadas y más de 134 con los reportes comunitarios.*

Sebastián: So the government, the EPM and the investors should know that there has been more than 124 massacres reported officially, and more than 134 according to the community reports, that have happened in this region.

Isabel: *La mayoría de los cuerpos masacrados eran arrojados al Río Cauca para desaparecerlos y las comunidades los rescataban y los enterraban en sus riberas.*

Sebastián: Most of the bodies of the disappeared people were thrown into the Cauca River... Río Cauca... and the community members would try to rescue them and bury them at the sides of the river.

Isabel: *Por eso hubo una lucha muy grande para rescatar estos cuerpos antes de la inundación. Solo alcanzamos a que se rescataron 159 cadáveres pero quedaron muchos más.*

Sebastián: So that's why we fought a lot before the flooding to rescue these bodies... these remains... and we were only able to save 159 but we know that there are many others who are still there.

Isabel: *La lucha del movimiento ha sido por los derechos económicos, sociales, culturales pero también el derecho al respeto a la muerte.*

Sebastián: So the movement has had as an objective the defense of economical, social and cultural rights but also the right to a peaceful death... to respect death.

Isabel: *Además de eso la empresa decidió trasladar cementerios. Trasladó tres cementerios con una universidad y desapareció a los muertos. Hoy tenemos a vivos desaparecidos y a muertos desaparecidos.*

Sebastián: So, also, the EPM decided to relocate cemeteries with the collaboration of a university, but these human remains... the bodies have disappeared. So right now we have people who are alive and were forcibly disappeared but also we have now bodies of dead people who have disappeared.

Isabel: *Tenemos 347 cadáveres en custodia por una medida cautelar de la jurisdicción especial para la paz porque estos cuerpos no fueron identificados... están custodiados en la Universidad de Antioquia.*

Sebastián: And right now, in that context, there are 347 bodies being kept by judicial order of the special jurisdiction for peace at the local university that have not been identified but they are being... by this judicial order being kept there.

Isabel: *Nosotros estamos luchando para seguir buscando a los desaparecidos, incluso debajo del agua.*

Sebastián: And we are keeping fighting to try to find the disappeared even if they're under water now.

Isabel: *Por eso hemos solicitado que se continúe la búsqueda porque Colombia tiene más de 86,000 desaparecidos.*

Sebastián: That's why we have asked to keep looking... keep searching... because Colombia is a country that has more than 86,000 people disappeared.

Isabel: *Y las familias necesitan encontrar a sus seres queridos y tienen derecho al duelo.*

Sebastián: And families need to find the remains of their beloved ones because they have a right to grief.

Isabel: *El estado colombiano, a través de la autoridad nacional de licencias ambientales, demandó penalmente a las Empresas Públicas de Medellín y a Hidroituango por falsedad.*

Sebastián: Recently the state of Colombia... the Government of Colombia, through the national authority of environmental licensing, has accused of lying... has accused EPM and Hidroituango of lying.

Isabel: *Porque hizo construcciones y obras sin su permiso y no anunció que se estaba desarrollando.*

Sebastián: Because they realized building activities and have building sites without telling the authority that they were doing so.

Isabel: *La obra tiene más de 12 procesos administrativos por violación a las normas ambientales.*

Sebastián: The project has more than 12 administrative processes because of administrative failures of the regulations... environmental regulations.

Isabel: *De esos procesos se han derivado más que 9000 millones de pesos en multas y sanciones a la obra.*

Sebastián: So the project has received from these 12 administrative processes fines... they have been forced to pay fines for an amount of more than 9000 million of Colombian pesos.

Isabel: *Nosotros denunciarnos por los delitos ambientales, y la jurisdicción decidió juntar nuestra denuncia como comunidad por delitos ambientales con la denuncia de la autoridad ambiental por falsedad.*

Sebastián: So, as a community we also filed... we denounced the enterprise [company] for environmental crimes and the judicial authority have... has decided to join this community... the process for the community with those of the environmental authority. So they are together now.

Isabel: *Un juez de la República nos otorgó medidas cautelares para proteger nuestros derechos... el derecho de saber si la obra es estable o no... que ha sido nuestra petición... y si seguimos en riesgo... si está en riesgo nuestra vida.*

Sebastián: So a judge has given a restraining order in order to protect our right to know if the dam is safe and the right to know if we are under risk.

Isabel: *El estado Colombiano dijo no tener capacidad para resolver la pregunta y el orden del juez.*

Sebastián: The Colombian government... the Colombian state answered that they don't have the ability to answer the demands of the judge of the restraining order.

Isabel: *Los únicos que dicen que la obra es estable es la empresa. Nadie más del estado lo afirma y ninguna otra entidad ha logrado afirmar que la obra es estable.*

Sebastián: So the only ones who assert that the dam is stable is EPM and no other authority from government... from the state or any other authority has been able to confirm that the dam is stable.

Isabel: *El procurador general de la nación y el contralor general de la nación también han afirmado que Empresas Públicas de Medellín ha mentado en sus informes.*

Sebastián: So, also the attorney general of the country and the comptroller general of the country have asserted that EPM has lied about the dam.

Isabel: *Y han analizado que la obra no recuperará el dinero público... de todos los colombianos... hasta dentro de 14 años... de 114 años.*

Sebastián: And they have analyzed that the investment of public money from Colombian taxpayers will only be recovered in 114 years.

Isabel: *Pero nadie nos responde a la pregunta cuándo podríamos retomar la vida, si nos van a dar tierras y si va a ver un censo real de las comunidades afectadas.*

Sebastián: But no one is able to answer when we will be able to get back to our normal lives, whether we will have new lands and if there will be a census to identify all those affected.

Isabel: *Después de la avalancha, la gente tiene pesadillas y hay muchos conflictos psicosociales. La gente no quiere estar en el territorio por miedo a una nueva avalancha y están yendo a la montaña.*

Sebastián: After the avalanche, there is a lot of fear in the community. There are many psychosocial conflicts and people don't want to be in the territory because they are fearful and they don't know what will happen.

Isabel: *No confiamos en la información de la empresa porque nos dice que ya la montaña es estable, que la llenó con cemento. Pero nosotros la vemos caer.*

Sebastián: So we don't trust the enterprise [company] EPM because they have asserted the mountain is stable now, that it has been filled with cement. But we have seen it move and... and therefore we don't trust their judgment.

Isabel: *El daño ecológico, social y ambiental y la agudización del conflicto ya está hecho.*

Sebastián: The damage from the ecological point of view, social point of view and environmental point of view, and the impact on the peace process is already done.

Isabel: *Necesitamos salir de esta situación y recuperar la vida.*

Sebastián: So we need to get out of this situation and recover our lives.

Isabel: *Pero sabemos que no es la única amenaza, que hay otras amenazas como las mineras canadienses en el territorio.*

Sebastián: But we know that this is not the only threat in the territory. We also are under the threat of Canadian mining companies in this very same territory.

Isabel: *Entonces venimos a decirles no solo que su dinero hizo daño sino que no vuelven a invertir en proyectos en zonas de alto conflicto como el nuestro y que nos vuelvan a re-victimizar.*

Sebastián: So we are coming here today to tell you that the investment you did... did a lot of damage but also to highlight that you should not be investing in projects in this zone... in these zones of conflict because otherwise we will get re-victimized again.

Isabel: *Una de las mineras que tiene operaciones en el territorio se llama Continental Gold, de propiedad de aquí, de Canadá.*

Sebastián: One of the mining companies operating in this territory is called Continental Gold and it is of Canadian... it's made up of Canadian investors.

Isabel: *Esta minera tiene una multa y una sanción por contaminación de las aguas, aguas que dan al mismo río que está represado.*

Sebastián: This company has already received fines and official sanctions about the pollution of the waters going to the very same river that the dam is containing.

Isabel: *A pesar de todo eso se sigue negando la realidad de la situación que estamos viviendo, por eso es muy importante que ustedes nos acompañen también a visibilizar que está pasando en una misión de verificación en el terreno, que estamos solicitando desde acá... desde Canadá.*

Sebastián: So even... even with all this evidence there has been denial of this reality happening and therefore we are calling you to join a mission of verification that we are proposing to go to the territory... and... so you can get a first-hand view of what's happening.

Isabel: *Creemos que la ética en la inversión tiene que ver no solo con reconocer el daño sino visibilizar la verdad de lo que ha sucedido.*

Sebastián: So we think that ethical investment is not only about recognizing the damage that has been done, but also visibilizing the reality of what happened.

Carl: Sorry, can you repeat just the last part?

Sebastián: That ethical investment is not only about recognizing the... the damage that was done but also visibilizing... making it invisible... making visible what happened.

Kathy: Seeing it for yourself... and confirming it because it's being denied. That's what she said.

Isabel: *Además les pedimos que hagan un llamado público a otras instituciones financieras para que no inviertan en territorios con alta conflictividad armada, en territorios que están minados y que pueden ser un riesgo para desarrollar cualquier operación.*

Sebastián: And we also invite you to make a public call... calling other financial investment organizations and other financial organizations in general not to invest in these territories with a high level of armed conflict... because, among other things, there are some of these lands that are mined and therefore this is a risk to any kind of investment. [Here, Isabel is referring to land mines.]

Isabel: *No hay posibilidad de que en mi territorio una operación financiera no tenga relación con los grupos al margen de la ley.*

Sebastián: There is no possibility in my territory for any financial operation to happen without having contacts or being involved with illegal armed groups.

Isabel: *Y lo tercero es que nosotros consideramos que el daño causado merece una reparación por lo que hemos sufrido.*

Sebastián: And the third thing is that we think that the damage that was done... it makes it necessary for reparations to be... to be given to those affected.

Isabel: *Muchas gracias.*

Sebastián: Thank you very much.

Carl: So thank you... it's...

Isabel: *¿No pueden regular agua por favor?*

Sebastián: Water?

Isabel: Es la calefacción...

Sebastián: I think the heating is drying....

Carl: It's very dry in the cold weather here too.

Isabel: Mi tierra es caliente.

Sebastián: My land is more warm than this.

Carl: Well, thank you. It's... just listening to all the impacts... I have to say it's... it's very moving to hear your experience so... so thank you for sharing that. I just want to wait for Caroline to come back with the water before we start.

Caroline: Someone's coming.

Carl: So it should just be a couple of minutes. So, Caroline, we were just saying as you were out... it's quite impactful to hear... to hear the experience that Isabel has described to us.

Louise: Could I just...?

Caroline: Yeah, go ahead.

Louise: My name is Louise Casselman and I'm with the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I'm officer for the Social Justice Fund. And I just want to say... just to give us some breathing space... that this is hard information to absorb. We've been working on Colombia since 2004. The union has been very engaged with different partners, both union, Aboriginal and Afro-Colombians. And I think for us still, knowing everything that we know about Colombia, this situation about Hidroituango is absolutely shocking to me because of how much was known ahead of time. And somehow there's an opaque structure that prevents that information from getting through. It's not because we haven't brought people... attention to the government, I must say. Ongoingly... ongoingly, Amnesty International and others. It's just we get to the point where we say, "Why do we bother?" But we need to bother because we need to make sure that this cannot be repeated, ever. And it's very... I find it very upsetting myself, personally. I find it very hard to hear this. Because we were attentive... we were in the country at the point of collapse. We had a delegation in the country... in Medellin and places like that. We didn't have the contact with the Ríos

Vivos Movement yet, but we certainly were witness to the shock of the nation as we were there with workers... public sector workers and others in the Antioquia region... indigenous peoples... about how everyone was shocked about this avalanche. But all of the indicators were there way back. Which I guess, my question is... it's a question to all of us... how could this happen when we knew? This is a zone of conflict where people have been disappeared. You know, the fact that the communities wanted to recover their bodies... that there should never have been a major project in this region. What is happening with our international investments that this could've been perceived? So I just say that... to take a breathing space, it's shocking to us all. And I think the other question I'm concerned about... what happens now? Aside from damage repairing... for the damage done to the community... if that could ever be done. The company may put forward proposals to the investment community about how to fix this, and I think that one of the things that Isabel didn't mention is that some of the fixes that will be discussed, like throwing cement into these holes and, you know, they're going to look for international funding for this. So you have to be your... you know, your antennas have to be out there. Because this is very, very serious and the mining... you know, we work with many communities being affected by mining and oil... and there's no time in the day. We don't know how to respond to this because it's like an avalanche of development projects now that are totally pulling apart communities. It's almost worse than the civil war.

Kathy: And if I can just add... I don't want to take from Isabel's time because I think the most important thing here is for you to hear straight from the frontlines, and her organization and organisations and movements like hers are exactly who you need to listen to... because they live in this reality. Just to absolutely repeat what [Louise] just said, we have... we've been monitoring the situation in Colombia for forever, and there is absolutely no shortage of information... particularly about this region... our urgent actions denouncing and making public what has been happening in that region and many other regions. I know our secretary general, Alex Neve, would have liked to have been here today. That's how seriously we see this situation. Unfortunately he's on the other side of the country so he couldn't. But the reality in Colombia, the reality in Isabel's region... but more broadly across the country... it is not a post conflict society. It is a society... a country that is still in the midst of conflict in which, exactly as Isabel's saying, the implications... the exacerbation of existing violence and getting embroiled in very, very serious situations of violence. And just... I mean, again... I would come back to the issue of due diligence and absolutely looking at independent sources. You cannot just be talking to the company and believing what they have to say. I've been to meetings... we've been to meetings with the Colombian government where the picture they paint about the reality in Colombia... you would think it was a country of miracles. No resemblance to what we document... and I think you can believe our reports. You know, I heard the vice president of Colombia actually say, "You know, we had some conflict. It's all resolved now. But there's this empty land from which people left, and we're just waiting for people to come and invest." I heard him say that. This is not the reality that communities are living. And you must... you must as part of due diligence be consulting independent sources. Amongst many other things, we have concerns about the gaps in the human rights policy. So, anyway, I want to... I don't want to take more space. We can have a further conversation.

Caroline: So, I'm going to reiterate what I think Carl said. I think I myself and my colleagues are all feeling that it's very moving and, again, we greatly appreciate you taking the time to come, to talk about your country that is in a very complex situation and that is facing so many of these challenges. And I think that we can all agree that we would like to continue to... to work together to understand... to better understand the context, to better understand the... the involvement and the type of investments that work in Colombia. I think it's important to keep an open dialogue and to continue hearing about what's happening in your community. We're definitely open to hearing from more independent sources, as well.

I think that's something that's very valuable. We... in the course of our due diligence, we don't only work with the companies. Sorry... do you want to translate? ... But I think it's important for us to always consider... [Water arrives and is circulated.] Thank you. So, as I said, I think it's important that we continue to keep an open dialogue and that we hear from these additional sources outside of our contacts with the Colombian government, outside of our contacts with the company and the research that we do on the ground... that is often done through independent researchers... but sometimes things will be missed. And we really appreciate having the opportunity to continue this conversation... to start the conversation with you specifically. But let's work at how we could be better connected going forward. Do you want to say something?

Carl: Yeah, I think... you know... that it's really about dialogue on human rights and the impact on people. And, at the beginning of this year, we formalized a human rights policy. We had had human rights... human rights practices and screenings and standards for many years, but we've put them into a formal policy this year. And it's not just about the policy. It's the dialogue we're having. Like, we've brought third party organizations in to talk to us about understanding the human rights impacts and I think what you describe is... is... the challenge of really understanding all of the downstream and ancillary human rights impacts, and the impacts that occur from other factors in a certain environment. And that's been a big part of our... of our review of our own standards and procedures and how we look... and how we look further. I... I just take away... in addition to the impacts you describe... I mean you talk to us about being very careful about investment in zones where there are conflicts, and today there are different types of conflicts. It's not just war, it's internal conflicts and it's other types of conflicts that you described. So I take that away and also your comment around community engagement and the depth and the type and the diversity of community engagement that we have. These are the types of dialogues we're having in terms of, you know, how we look at... how we look at business that we do. And ultimately... our ultimate intent is to make things better for people, right? And that's really what the human rights policy is about. So you bring forth for us the impact of this and also some... some thoughts that we can take away and really... really reflect on to shape our approach. So thank you for that.

Karen: *Isabel, ¿quieres contestar? Porque luego tengo una pregunta. No sé si quieres decir algo en respuesta.*

[Isabel, do you want to answer? Because then I have a question. I don't know if you want to say anything in reply.]

Isabel: *Sí. Para nosotros, no es posible acceder a la información que ustedes emiten acá porque no sabemos inglés ni francés, y la mayoría de mi comunidad no sabe cómo leer ni escribir.*

Sebastián: So one of the challenges that our community faces to access the information that you share from here, is that most of the people... everyone in the community... don't understand English or French and, in fact, there are many people who don't know how to write or read.

Isabel: *Por lo tanto, la transparencia no es real si no llega a nosotros.*

Sebastián: Transparency is not real if it doesn't arrive to the community... to us.

Isabel: *Si no fuera por las organizaciones de acá, no podríamos venir y comunicarnos con ustedes.*

Sebastián: So if it wasn't for civil society organizations here, we would not be able to communicate and talk with you.

Isabel: *La empresa lo sabe y genera mayor distancia, porque incluso ha prohibido reclamaciones orales y exige que sean por escrito cuando sabe que le gente no sabe escribir.*

Sebastián: And the EPM knows this and it increases the distance with people because knowing in this situation they don't allow to have any oral complaints.

Isabel: *Me parece muy bien sus políticas, pero mi pregunta es ¿qué van hacer con el daño realizado en mi comunidad?*

Sebastián: So I think... I think that the policies you have adopted are very good but my question is, what are you going to do about the damage that you contributed to in my community?

Isabel: *Considero que si sus investigaciones hubieran sido rigurosas no estaríamos en esta situación y ustedes no hubieran invertido en ese proyecto.*

Sebastián: I think that if your research had been rigorous we would not be in this situation because you would have not invested in this project.

Isabel: *Sin el dinero del extranjero, Hidroituango no hubiera sido posible.*

Sebastián: Because without the foreign investment, this project would not have been possible.

Isabel: *Seis opositores y gran líderes de Ríos Vivos han sido asesinados.*

Sebastián: Also six of the militant activists of the Movimiento Ríos Vivos... of the movement have been killed.

Isabel: *La mayoría de nosotros estamos amenazados. Yo he tenido varios ataques directos y situaciones de seguridad muy complejas.*

Sebastián: Most of us, we are threatened and, myself personally, I have been victim of threats and direct attacks and we are facing a very difficult security situation.

Isabel: *A nosotros oponernos a Hidroituango, nos estamos oponiendo a sus inversiones.*

Sebastián: So finally when we oppose Hidroituango, we are opposing your investments.

Isabel: *Somos también opositores de EDC.*

Sebastián: So we are therefore also opponents of EDC.

Isabel: *Por lo tanto la responsabilidad de nuestra vida y de protección también es de los inversores.*

Sebastián: Therefore the responsibility for protecting our lives and our security is also of the investors.

Caroline: So I... I can appreciate the challenge with receiving the information when it's only in English and French, and especially given what you said that many people in your community won't necessarily

have access to the Internet to get it or be able to necessarily read or write. So thank you to Above Ground and Amnesty and PS... Public Service Alliance of Canada for supporting bringing you here and I think that's an important dialogue for us to continue... is how can we, through our civil society organizations in Canada, be better connected to communities where we're working and that's something that I'm... that we're certainly willing to have a discussion about and to work on. Karen, you said you had something you wanted to ask.

Karen: [To Isabel] *¿Me permites repetir tu pregunta?*

Isabel: *Sí.*

Karen: I'm just going to repeat the question that Isabel asked which... what is EDC doing to ensure that the people impacted by the dam... by EDC's investment... will be adequately remedied?

Caroline: So we've been... we've been in continued discussions with EPM about how they're monitoring the situation and what... what they are... how they're working on the ground, and recognizing that there needs to be more visibility to it... from other sources. At this point they're no longer... we no longer have financing with them. That being said, we continue to have conversations with them about... about what the situation is.

Carl: So, I think that the fact that we no longer have a loan, let's put that aside... let's just put that aside. As our CEO said publicly, we are following this closely. What you describe is a very complex situation. We also understand that there are many inquiries under way to root out what are the facts and then, you know, what are the outcomes that would make it better. So... so we're following that very closely and, again, setting aside that... that we no longer have a loan with EPM, we continue to follow this very closely to see, you know, what is happening... what will come from the different inquiries... and what are the solutions... and what you describe is a very complex scenario. So... so... so today, you know, we don't have a solution today, but we are following very closely.

Sebastián: So Isabelle was asking while I was translating about the inquiries underway. She's asking if these inquiries you're referring to are internal EDC inquiries or if you are referring to the inquiries being done in Colombia.

Justine: Inquiries...

Sebastián: Inquiries... yeah...

Caroline: So... being done in Colombia.

Karen: I just wanted to follow up on what you were saying and also speak to the human rights policy, which I know you, Kathy, have some questions about. There's a lot of discussion in that policy about leverage, and EDC's use of leverage. Do you see, in this case, that you have leverage with EPM? And do you intend to use it? I know you were saying, set aside the fact that there's no longer an active loan in place, what do you... how do you see your relationship? And how do you see your ability to have leverage... to leverage solutions from EPM?

Caroline: So that's why I raised that we no longer have financing with them. We... we take our business from a relationship perspective... building... we started to look at our business from a relationship

perspective and not on a transaction-by-transaction basis. I bring up the financing because that's where, as a financial institution, a lot of your leverage is... when you have financing with a customer. That being said, through our screening for our reviews and in building a relationship with a company, that's where we do see an opportunity to encourage that leverage, or to make requests for seeing certain policies in a company, seeing certain ways that they work on the ground... sorry, I should be speaking to you, Isabel... seeing procedures that they have in place. Brianna is our expert in this and so, do you want to...?

Brianna: Yes. So, thank you. Thank you for the question around leverage. As you know, EDC has been working for some time, as Carl flagged earlier, to align ourselves with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, in which leverage is a very key concept. I think one of the struggles with leverage, as you know, is that it is... can be complicated and can have many different forms. And, as a financial institution, the ones that we are most familiar with is... is financial leverage. In this instance, we don't have that. And so I think there [are] efforts underway... looking at our relationship with the company is one. But I think one of the things we're working to explore, and part of the public implementation plan that we've put out around the human rights policy, is really trying to dig into leverage and what it means and what other forms it can take, and how EDC is going to approach leverage. This is an interesting case study for us in terms of... because we don't have that financial leverage to explore that in more detail. And we will be consulting with our stakeholders around that and so we would also be interested in your views of what kind of leverage you think we have in this particular instance.

Isabel: *Nosotros creemos que la... no entiendo muy bien lo de... lo de la influencia. ¿La influencia contractual... o por fuera del contrato?*

Sebastián: So I don't understand well the issue of leverage (that I translated as influence) regarding the contractual aspect of it and the outside of the contractual aspect of it.

Isabel: *Porque para nosotros en el mensaje que traemos no solo es la influencia hacia la empresa sino la responsabilidad de ustedes con nosotros... de manera directa.*

Sebastián: So because in the message that we are bringing from the community, there's not only the issue of the leverage that you have with the company... with the enterprise, EPM... but the direct responsibility that you have with us.

Isabel: *Además es la influencia con el gobierno de Colombia porque es una... una empresa pública y no solo se ejerce influencia directa sobre la empresa... lo que... ustedes tienen la capacidad de influir en el gobierno colombiano que favorece... impulsa que se mienta sobre la realidad que vivimos como dolorosamente. Como nos cuenta Kathy, tenemos una realidad muy distinta a la que vende el gobierno del Colombia en el exterior.*

Sebastián: Because leverage is also with the Government of Colombia, and in this case we're talking about a public enterprise. And this is a context of... this is a government that allows to... allows itself to lie about the situation that is very different to the picture that they paint about it, and of which Kathy has also talked about.

Isabel: *Y es muy importante que si a ustedes les mintieron sobre esta realidad, lo digan... lo denuncian. Porque va a seguir pasando. No hay otra manera de parar esto sino decirlo... decir lo que realmente ocurre.*

Sebastián: So if you got lied to, it is very important that you say so because there's no other way to stop what's happening than doing so.

Louise: Only the truth will stop the situation

Carl: So this is your concept of bringing visibility?

Isabel: *Sí. De lo que... las razones que les llevaron a ustedes a invertir en un caso tan grave como este. Nosotros queremos saber exactamente si esa inversión de ustedes se usó para comprar armas o no. ¿Qué pasó con el dinero? ¿Adónde fue el dinero? El detalle... para saber realmente el daño directo que el dinero causó en nosotros.*

Sebastián: So, yes, and we also want to know the reasons why you decided to invest in this very grave context and, among the things that we want to know is whether some of these funds... these capitals... were used to buy weapons. And we want to know the details about what was done with this investment.

Isabel: *Quisiera hablar más del bosque, de la biodiversidad, de los aspectos relacionados con el ambiente que es, digamos, nuestro corazón. Pero ante la situación humana, tenemos que hablar principalmente de lo humano. Pero tendrá que hablar un momento de los impactos de largo plazo... de los casos del efecto invernadero y la crisis climática que genera el Hidroituango.*

Sebastián: So I would also like to talk more about the forest and biodiversity and the environmental impacts, but the urgency of the human situation is too grave to. Anyway I would like to have the opportunity also to talk about the impact of the project on greenhouse effects... emissions... CO² emissions on the climate in the long term.

Isabel: *Además quisiéramos saber ustedes cuánto ganaran... cuánto dinero ganaron. ¿Cuál es la rentabilidad del préstamo que tuvieron? Porque esta rentabilidad es a costo nuestro.*

Sebastián: And we also would like to know what was the return on the investment... the return on the loan. Because, in the end, that earnings... this profit was made through damaging us.

Isabel: *Quizás no entiendo mucho la generalidad de la política. Entiendo que ustedes se preocupan por los aspectos generales. Pero mi misión son los aspectos particulares de la comunidad... de la realidad que vivimos.*

Sebastián: Maybe I don't understand that you are responsible for the more general aspects of policy here, but my obligation here is to present these very concrete... these very concrete issues that are being... from the community.

Carl: We appreciate that. The concept of visibility is one where we're playing a bigger role. And, again, I'll refer back to our CEO's speech a couple of weeks ago where she talked about, "Well, we lent money to a company that was building a dam and this happened." And, so, that is visible in itself. Being vocal and visible about understanding the impacts of business and, ourselves, the journey we've been on to look at

things differently so... so that's a leadership role that we've taken in terms of putting this in the public dialogue ourselves... and engaging in the dialogue... in raising visibility. Because we are an organization that deals with a lot of companies around the world. And so we've put that in the public dialogue.

Karen: Can I interrupt you for one moment? Sorry, did you want to translate? Yes, just with respect to those comments that Ms. Lavery made and that were also made by your spokesperson, Shelley Maclean, I believe her name is. In both cases they were misleading. In both cases they said the money did not go for a specific project, and that is misleading. There was no acknowledgment that 45% of the loan provided in 2016 was destined for the Hidroituango project. So, just in the context of your comment, I want to raise that... that, in fact, it was said publicly by both people that the money was not for a project. I understand that it's not project finance, but you did know ahead of time that 45% was destined for construction of the dam.

Carl: So... so I think ultimately we're talking about the exact nature of the financing. I think it's known that there was a group of development and other lenders that... that made specific loans for the dam. What we're acknowledging is that we lent money to the company that built the dam. So we understand that funds can flow... and that was part of Shelly's comment.

Karen: But is it right that EDC knew that 45% of that loan was for the construction of Hidroituango? I mean, in the press release from EPM and from the president of Colombia, that's what they said.

Caroline: Yes, so we were... at the time of financing we were aware of that.

Karen: Because my issue is really with transparency. That if we are trying to be transparent, and EDC is trying to improve its transparency, those comments are not very transparent... with respect to the information EDC had regarding where the loan was going... that the loan was intended for... that part of it was intended for this project.

Isabel: *O sea ¿prestan el dinero en general y hay libertad que la empresa... ejecute este dinero como la empresa quiera?*

Sebastián: So Isabel is asking if you, for example, lend the money to EPM... is the enterprise [company] free to invest this money as they wish?

Caroline: So if we lend it as... are they free to invest it in...

Justine: It depends on the type of loan.

Karen: If you provide a general corporate purposes loan, does the company decide how it uses that loan?

Isabel: *¿O hay alguna condición que no se use en ciertas cosas?*

Sebastián: Or is there any condition that this investment, even if general, should not be used in some things?

Caroline: So I think it depends on the type of loan. I think this is going to your question earlier about was this invested in weapons. So, in that case... and I don't have the loan documentation here... but I don't

think I need it... that's not something that EDC would provide... would be providing. So that would be a condition of our loan... of one of our loan agreements... that it can't be used for illegal activity.

Isabel: *No. No. Las actividades... los convenios militares de la empresa son legales... y las contrataciones de seguridad privada... pero también son inversiones en armas y en violencia.*

Sebastián: So the agreements between the enterprise and the military and private military are legal. They are totally legal. But they are investments anyways in funding the buying of weapons.

Louise: It's protection of the project. These are legal contracts that they do through different... with the military, ex-military, etc. These are the... always the problematic guards that are around these projects.

Carl: Okay, so I understand. I understand the question.

Isabel: *No solo es legal, sino... hay mucho dinero invertido en esta seguridad legal por el contexto de la zona. Pero eso ha aumentado conflicto en la zona porque hay más hombres armados. Y el intento de desaparición en mi contra fue por la seguridad privada de la empresa. Y los intentos de asesinato y los ataques directos a Ríos Vivos han sido por la seguridad de la empresa.*

Sebastián: Yes, so this is all... these are legal investments. But in the context of the conflict this means more armed people, even if it is legal. And this means more conflict. And, in fact, those involved in the... in the case when they tried to make me disappear, and also in the attacks on the Movement... they were from people from the private security of EPM.

Isabel: *Por eso hablamos del detalle de saber en qué se invierten los recursos... la necesidad de saber el detalle. Porque a través de eso es que sabemos las implicaciones de ese dinero en nuestra vida y en nuestra seguridad y en la situación que tenemos hoy.*

Sebastián: So that's why we insist on the details about where the investment is being made... because this has direct implications with our security and our conditions of life.

Kathy: Can I? I know that we should probably look for another meeting to discuss in detail the human rights policy and questions that we might have about it... to flush that out and have a deeper discussion about that. But maybe I just wanted to come back to the question of leverage. Because, I'm sorry, but I'm stuck on that. Because I want to know, hearing the details that Isabel has shared here, and thinking back to yet another dam project that EDC was involved in in Colombia... the Urra dam... this is going back 20 years... so many of the same things that Isabel is talking about... so many of the same impacts. The fuelling of more violence, the environmental impacts that obviously affect peoples' livelihoods and ability to live... live on their land with no other alternatives. But the fomenting of violence, the fuelling of violence, the protection, the increase in armed actors in the zone, the disappearances, the killings... and I have to just ask the question, what is your criteria for looking at the situation and saying, "We will not invest in this because this is the likelihood of what will happen?" So that you're not having to look at what are we going to do now, what are the solutions now. But not being involved in it in the first place. So that's my question. I have a hard time with... I mean leverage is fine, you know, but... but Isabel is saying if you hadn't invested in this, what might have been the situation for them? And, so, the question of the criteria... what's your monitoring, who are your sources, how do you evaluate these situations? Because Colombia... this is what is Colombia. It is still like that, no matter what the government wants to tell you.

Caroline: Do you want to speak to...?

Carl: I mean, we do have a detailed due diligence. I don't know if you...

Brianna: Yeah, so, in general, I can speak to the due diligence that we undertake when a transaction comes in. Some of the things we're looking at are industry... from the environmental and social perspective... and I would like to caveat, of course, the environmental and social considerations are part of the wider decision-making process here at EDC.

Sebastián: Can I interrupt you?

Brianna: Sure.

Sebastián: Isabel really needs to go to the washroom. Sorry about that.

Brianna: Yeah, no problem. So we will wait, I assume.

Louise: I was just going to... this is something we can say without Isabel in the room. I'm thinking of what you can do about leverage... I'm always concerned in these meetings that these people don't go back to a worse situation. And you do have leverage with the Colombian government, and the Colombian government pulls all the strings, you know. Let's face it. And the Duque government... there's not killings that happen independent of the government... we know that. So, we think that it's very important and we've asked people always to remember the people that come here and their movements. These people need to be protected and we're not... we'll do our best but I think you have some leverage you can use there too. Slip a note to somebody. That's the way it works. And... and I think we can ask the Canadian government in a separate meeting that you need to visit these communities... be seen. They need to receive them in the embassy. This is all very important.

Brianna: So, you are planning to meet with the Government of Canada? Specifically with Global Affairs Canada?

Karen: We have a meeting this afternoon.

Brianna: Because I think that's an important message you should be conveying in that context, as well. Because government-to-government conversations I think are... are an important aspect of this. And we are a Crown corporation of the government but, of course, the main diplomatic channels are through Global Affairs Canada.

Louise: But they're a separate channel... there are diplomatic relationships there...

Brianna: Absolutely. I think the diplomatic channel is an important one that you should be exploring as well.

Louise: For sure.

Kathy: But you as well, right? Since you are the money, right? You are the money. And so for you to say that you value the important work of people like Isabel, who is undermined and attacked... you know,

the 'opponents of development' kind of critique that is used to then go after people and kill them in... in Colombia. So for you to recognize the value and legitimacy of... of the work to defend human rights and environmental human rights, and concerns for the safety of the members of Movimiento Ríos Vivos... it's just really important. It's not just Global Affairs or the Canadian government that can deliver that message. It is also you.

Caroline: Absolutely. And we're not trying to dismiss that, but just to say that...

Brianna: There are multiple channels.

Sebastián: Well, in fact, over a month ago a number of civil society organizations in Canada representing a big chunk of civil society sent a letter regarding... about protecting social leaders in Colombia. And I can talk to Americas Policy Group work, which some of the members are here... it has been a continuous work with them. So any other effort would add to that.

[Isabel returns.]

Caroline: So, I think before you left we were talking about leverage and...

Justine: And our due diligence process.

Brianna: So, we would be happy to have a follow-up conversation, particularly with the Canadian civil society organizations here, to talk about this in more detail. But just to give you a broad sense of the type of criteria of things we are looking at from an environmental and social perspective, and as I mentioned earlier, it is important to keep in mind that environmental and social considerations are one among many considerations in the organization, including those of our sister group, the Business Integrity Unit, that would be looking at things like corruption and bribery. So the key criteria that we are looking at from an environmental and social perspective are the industry of operations, the country where the operations are... where the company is engaging in the operations. We are looking at the track record of the company. So here is where the third-party information that you were talking about is very important to us. So, we are looking at media reports, information that we received by other third parties... we would agree with you that that is critical to our due diligence process. And that would be the things that we would screen for instances... where we would identify potential for higher risk situations... when we look at those criteria. And then when we get into a due diligence perspective, we're really looking at the management capacity of the company: what kind of environmental and social risk management systems they have in place, if they have particular policies in place with respect to human rights, their engagement with community and other stakeholders, whether they have grievance mechanisms in place. We do look at... another indicator that we would be looking for is the presence of vulnerable peoples. So these are a number of the factors that we would look at in general when we have a transaction that comes through the door.

Isabel: *Yo quisiera preguntar... y perdón la insistencia. ¿Qué pueden hacer ustedes por nosotros?*

Sebastián: I would like to ask you again... and I'm sorry for insisting. What could you do for us?

Caroline: I think unfortunately right now we don't have an answer for you. I think that the information you shared is critical and we would like to, as I've said, continue the conversation. But, what Carl shared,

was that we will be having to take into consideration all the inquiries in the area, and looking at what our options are for... for leverage. But I don't think we'll have an answer for you here today.

Carl: I think you've had an impact on us and how we would look at... at transactions.

Brianna: I do want to underscore that the context in which companies operate is very important for us in terms of future due diligence, and the information that you bring forward here... and the meeting that we had a couple of weeks ago... is really helpful for informing that context and how we would look at the information that we look at when it comes to this.

Isabel: *¿Ustedes podrían realizar un préstamo a la comunidad para comprar una tierra?*

Sebastián: Could you, for example, give a loan to the community to buy land?

Caroline: That's not something that I think... I'm not even sure how that would work under the way... under EDC's structure. But I think... let's continue to have a conversation with our society colleagues here and see...

Carl: You know, when I made my comments earlier about the environment you described... like... if you see solutions, I encourage you to give some examples and... that would give us some... some things to consider and think about as well. I mean, you know... what you're talking here about is a local environment. And so if you see solutions in the local environment... and I would also encourage you to speak, as you're here in Canada, to other organizations about that. Because there are Canadian government and civil society organizations that are working in Colombia on very specific initiatives in communities. And, so, if you see some of those as this example, I would encourage you to share them with us, so that we have both the impact and how we should look at things in the future, but also understanding what are specific needs that would help. Because one of the comments you made is to be careful. That if you provide financing in this environment, you don't know where it goes. So if there are specific areas, make those known. There are different institutions in Canada that I think would be interested in hearing that. So I would encourage you to...

Caroline: I would just like to add, in addition to that, I know that you have contacts in the Government of Canada... but if that's something that you would also like us to facilitate... an introduction to someone who might be valuable or to share that information, then we would also be happy to do that as well.

Isabel: *Nosotros sabemos que la empresa no va a dar soluciones a los opositores. Así lo ha dicho. Tenemos conciencia de ello. Da soluciones a otros, pero por estar aquí, por atrevernos a denunciar, no va haber soluciones para las 1200 familias que hacemos parte de Ríos Vivos. Por eso, nos atrevemos a decir, si ustedes prestan dinero... nosotros no tenemos con qué pagar pero podemos trabajar para pagar. Porque necesitamos encontrar soluciones para los que hemos atrevido a denunciar.*

Sebastián: We know that the company won't give solutions to the opponents of the project, especially for being here and... and having the audacity of denouncing the situation. There won't be solutions for the 1200 families that are part of the Movimiento Ríos Vivos. So, for example, if you lend us money we can't pay it back, but we can work because we need to find solutions for all of the community.

Isabel: *No quiero importunar más.*

Sebastián: I don't want to disturb you anymore.

Carl: Well, thank you for your time.

Isabel: *Muchas gracias.*

Everyone: Thank you.

[The meeting ends.]