



The Rights of Nature Tribunal releases judgment of its 6th International Session: declares fossil fuels and large-scale mining a global pattern of ecocide

March 22, 2026 — On World Water Day, the International Rights of Nature Tribunal releases the final judgment of its [6th International Session](#), and concludes that the expansion of fossil fuels and large-scale mining represents a systematic pattern of violations of the Rights of Nature, following hearings held in four stages:

- New York (United States) — [“The End of the Fossil Fuel Era”](#) during Climate Week NYC, September 2024, presided by Patricia Gualinga;
- Quito (Ecuador) — [“Impact of Canadian Mining in Ecuador”](#), January 2025 presided by Elsie Monge;
- Toronto (Canada) — [“The Impacts of Mining and the Post-Extractivist Era”](#), February 2025, presided by Heather Milton Lightning;
- Belém do Pará (Brazil) — [“A New Pledge for Mother Nature”](#) final session held alongside COP30 and the Cúpula dos Povos, November 2025, presided by Ana Carolina Alfinito and Nnimmo Bassey.

Across the hearings in New York and Toronto, the Tribunal examined 24 cases from the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, hearing testimony from frontline communities, scientific experts, and defenders of Mother Earth. These cases illustrate the severe environmental, social, and cultural harms associated with the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and large-scale mining for minerals—many of them central to the global energy transition—with particular attention to the role of Canadian mining companies as key actors operating across multiple regions of the world. They also highlight the sacrifices imposed on ecosystems and communities as a result of global dependence on oil, gas, coal, and large-scale mineral extraction.

The proceedings brought together 14 Rights of Nature judges and 33 expert witnesses and representatives of communities and ecosystems directly affected by extractive projects, supported by prosecutors Nathaly Yépez, Linda Sheehan, and James Yap, and secretaries Natalia Greene and Shannon Biggs.

The final session in Belém did not hear new cases but served as a space for additional testimony and reflection that informed the Tribunal’s final deliberations. Among those who addressed the Tribunal were Mary Lawlor, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Indigenous leaders, including Chief Ninawá, who spoke on the expansion of oil and mining frontiers in the Amazon; Josefina Tunki, leader of the Shuar Arutam people; and Leonela Moncayo, who testified on the impacts of gas flaring in the Ecuadorian



Amazon. The Tribunal also heard presentations on alternatives and pathways for systemic transformation from Shrishtee Bajpai, representing the global initiative Tapestry of Alternatives, Gabriella Cabañas of the Pact for an Ecosocial and Intercultural South, and Andrés Gómez of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative. Additional contributions addressed legal developments around the Rights of Nature and the protection of environmental defenders, including interventions by Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

The deliberations in Belém culminated in the [Belém Declaration: A New Pledge for Mother Nature](#), notably the Tribunal's official contribution to the People's Summit and to the broader global discussions surrounding COP30. The Declaration calls for renewed commitments to the protection of ecosystems and the recognition of the Rights of Nature as a guiding legal and ethical framework for addressing the planetary crisis.

In its final judgment, the Tribunal identifies the fossil fuel industry and the global expansion of large-scale mineral extraction as two central drivers of environmental destruction and climate breakdown. In this context, the Tribunal underscores the urgency of a systemic transition away from fossil fuels and extractivism, and expresses its support for international efforts to advance binding frameworks, including an International Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As the judgment states:

"To achieve the climate goals established in the Paris Agreement and other international instruments, it is indispensable to abandon the current economic, political, and energy model that depends on the destruction of Mother Earth. Respect for Nature as a living being with rights constitutes the ethical, political, and legal path for governments, corporations, and societies to adopt effective measures to address the climate crisis."

Scientific evidence presented during the hearings highlighted the gap between international climate commitments and current government plans for fossil fuel production. According to testimony presented to the Tribunal, global fossil fuel production is projected to increase dramatically by 2030, despite the scientific consensus that a significant portion of existing reserves must remain underground to limit global warming in line with the Paris Agreement.

The judgment further concludes that the expansion of extractive industries is generating a systemic pattern of violations of the Rights of Nature and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The Tribunal characterizes this pattern as a form of ecocide, perpetuated under the pretext of development and reinforced by state policies, corporate practices, and financial investments.

The judgment states:



“The evidence is abundant and consistent. A single pattern of ecocide is being perpetrated under the pretext of development, systematically violating the inherent rights of Mother Earth and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities, rural populations, and other frontline communities.”

The Tribunal also raises concerns about what it describes as a new form of “green colonialism,” in which the global demand for minerals associated with a so-called “green transition” through renewable energy technologies places additional pressure on ecosystems and territories in the Global South.

At the same time, the judgment emphasizes the central role of communities and defenders who continue to protect ecosystems and territories despite facing intimidation, criminalization, and violence.

“Communities and defenders protecting their territories represent the greatest fulfillment of the human duty to defend the Rights of Mother Earth.”

In this context, Tribunal Judges’ Assembly Coordinator Francesco Martone presented the Tribunal’s [Policy on the Protection of Defenders of Mother Earth and Territories](#), that recognizes the fundamental role environmental defenders play in safeguarding ecosystems and advancing the Rights of Nature, while increasingly facing threats, criminalization, and violence in many parts of the world, and calls for effective mechanisms to protect them.

The judgment of the Tribunal urges a profound transformation of economic, political, and energy systems, grounded in respect for Nature as a living entity with inherent rights, and recommends halting the expansion of fossil fuel extraction and large-scale mining in fragile ecosystems and Indigenous territories, restoring ecosystems harmed by extractive activities, ensuring accountability for corporations and governments responsible for environmental destruction, and strengthening legal recognition of the Rights of Nature within national and international legal systems. The Tribunal commits to monitoring the implementation of its recommendations.

The Tribunal further announced that this judgment will be shared with organizations and movements convening in Santa Marta, Colombia, for the upcoming Conference on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels, contributing to ongoing global efforts to address the impacts of fossil fuel expansion. The Tribunal also indicated that this process will be followed by a future session focused on oil extraction in the Amazon, building on information received regarding the impacts of ongoing and planned activities, including those associated with Petrobras.

The Tribunal concludes by affirming that respect for Nature as a living entity with inherent rights provides an ethical, political, and legal pathway for governments, corporations, and societies to take meaningful action to address the climate crisis. Achieving this transformation, the



INTERNATIONAL
RIGHTS OF NATURE
TRIBUNAL

judgment emphasizes, must occur in partnership with the communities and defenders who stand on the frontlines of protecting the Earth.

Read the full judgment here: rightsofnaturetribunal.org/digital-library.

[Find the list of all mentioned perpetrators who have been duly notified of this judgment.](#)

Contact Information:

- Tribunal Organization: organizer@rightsofnaturetribunal.org.
- Press inquiries or interviews: communications@garn.org.

ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF NATURE TRIBUNAL

The International Rights of Nature Tribunal is a civil society platform that uses Earth Jurisprudence to review ecological cases, expose environmental destruction, and recommend legal solutions rooted in the Rights of Nature. Since 2014, it has held hearings across the globe, from Ecuador and France to Germany, Scotland, Canada, and now Brazil. Learn more at rightsofnaturetribunal.org.