



World Council of Churches

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Stop financing harms caused by the Cerrejón coal mine to people and the environment in Colombia.

Open Letter

In support to the climate justice initiative (OECD complaint) by the Methodist Churches in Great Britain, Colombia and Ireland and the Ecumenical Center for Communication in Latin America (CEPALC):

When we deposit our savings in a bank account, we do so with the expectation that our money will be managed responsibly on our behalf. We trust banks to safeguard our money, and to use it to invest in and support a just and flourishing world, in which communities can live with dignity, and future generations can thrive. It is in this spirit that we write to express our support and solidarity with the victims of the climate emergency, and with communities harmed by the Cerrejón coal mine in Colombia.

We fully endorse the initiative taken by the Methodist Churches in Great Britain, Colombia and Ireland and the Church's Central Finance Board in the UK (hereafter, Epworth Investment) and CEPALC, in filing a complaint through the OECD mechanism¹ regarding harms caused by the HSBC.

Their OECD complaint concerns HSBC's ongoing financial relationship with the global mining company Glencore, the owner of the **Cerrejón coal mine** in La Guajira, Colombia.

Communities in La Guajira have experienced violent displacement, water scarcity, and serious health impacts linked to air and water pollution. Entire communities have been violently uprooted. Hundreds of thousands of people have suffered respiratory illnesses, and children have borne a disproportionate share of these harms. For decades, the harmful impacts of Cerrejón's operations have been raised repeatedly, through legal cases, by civil society and affected communities, and by international bodies including the United Nations².

At a worldwide level climate change is already harming children and adults through more and worse floods, fires and droughts, and will do more damage in years to come. 'Limiting global warming to 2°C or below requires a rapid shift away from unabated coal consumption...by 2050³'

¹ The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (OECD Guidelines) are a set of principles agreed by governments to ensure companies act responsibly. The OECD complaints procedure has been in place since 2003 and enables civil society to seek accountability or remedy for a company's harm to people and the environment through a soft law mechanism.

² [UN expert calls for halt to mining at controversial Colombia site | OHCHR](#)

³ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/chapter/chapter-6/>

as coal emits more greenhouse gases than most other fuels. Cerrejón's coal production is exacerbating this problem, and the effects are global.

We recognise that banks do not set out to cause harm. Financial institutions play a vital role in supporting economies and enabling development. No one expects their savings to be used, even indirectly, to finance environmental destruction or human rights abuses, or to harm children. Where financing remains connected to such activities, there is a clear need for scrutiny, and an imperative to reconcile this with urgent corrective action. The OECD complaint mechanism provides an important opportunity for this.

The Methodist Churches in Colombia, Great Britain and Ireland, Epworth Investment and CEPALC seek accountability from HSBC for its financing of environmental and human rights abuses through the OECD complaint mechanism. They establish the expectation that money belonging to faith communities is not complicit in violence or destruction through the actions of our banks.

As a global community of Christians, we are guided by a shared moral calling. The prophet Isaiah urges us, "*learn to do right; seek justice, defend the oppressed*" (Isaiah 1:17). Our faith compels us to respond to suffering, and to demand accountability and remediation where we see injustices carried out. Thus, we respectfully and urgently call on HSBC to:

1. **Respond in good faith to the concerns raised** by the Methodist Churches in Colombia, Great Britain and Ireland with Epworth Investment **through the OECD process**
2. **Commit to immediate cessation of financing to new and existing clients engaged in thermal coal mining.**
3. Engage in open consultation with affected communities in the La Guajira region to determine and carry out **full and fair remediation for harms caused.**

With this letter, we also commit to accountability in our own finances. As a response to our faith, we encourage Christians to apply scrutiny to the actions of their banks, to seek clarity on how their money is being used, and to ensure their assets are not invested in ways that harm children and human rights, and the ecosystems that sustain them.

Guided by the moral integrity that our faith demands, we stand alongside *Epworth Investment Management, the Methodist Churches in Colombia, Great Britain and Ireland and CEPALC*, and we affirm our shared commitment to a financial system that serves life, upholds dignity, and safeguards creation for generations to come.



Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
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