

Colombia's fossil fuel industry drives biodiversity loss and environmental injustice, but international financial and legal structures make it difficult to equitably transition the economy away from extraction.

Colombia is a megadiverse country, hosting close to 10 percent of the planet's biodiversity.⁸⁶ The country ranks first in bird and orchid species diversity, and second in plants, butterflies, freshwater fishes, and amphibians worldwide.⁸⁷ Colombia has international commitments to conserve biodiversity under the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD), and its new government has promised to move the country away from its economic dependence on fossil fuel exports.⁸⁸ And yet, Colombia's economic trajectory is ecologically unsustainable, with the extractive sector among the leading drivers of deforestation and biodiversity decline.⁸⁹ This case study demonstrates how Colombia's autonomy to rein in the impacts of extraction is limited by international financial pressures and investment law, which incentivize continued production for export, all in the context of capital flight and currency devaluation.

A battle between government priorities and macroeconomic obligations has been playing out at the largest open-pit coal mine in Latin America: El Cerrejón. Owned by transnational mining company Glencore,⁹⁰ the mine is located in a vulnerable dry tropical forest region in the north of Colombia, considered the most threatened lowland tropical ecosystem in the world.⁹¹ Since the early 1980s, nearby communities have suffered a range of human rights violations and environmental impacts stemming from the mine, including the violent dispossession and displacement of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities from their ancestral territories,⁹² deforestation,⁹³ and the contamination of air, water, and soil.⁹⁴ The mine has been the subject of multiple Supreme Court human rights cases, which declared the environmental and health impacts from the mine to be unconstitutional.⁹⁵ In 2020, several UN Special Rapporteurs called for mining at El Cerrejón to be halted due to pollution and displacement,⁹⁶ yet extraction continues at this site and at other coal mines across Colombia.

⁸⁶CBD, "Colombia — Main Details," CBD, accessed November 7, 2023, www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=co.

⁸⁷CBD, "Colombia — Main Details."

⁸⁸María Paula Rubiano A., "How Colombia Plans to Keep its Oil and Coal in the Ground," *BBC*, November 16, 2022, www.bbc.com/future/article/20221116-how-colombia-plans-to-keep-its-oil-and-gas-in-the-ground.

⁸⁹Colombia's NBSAP acknowledges ongoing tensions between "reconciling conservation with development prospects," see: Paula Rojas and Emilce Mora Jaime, "Biodiversity Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Policy for the Integral Management of Biodiversity and Its Ecosystem Services 2016 — 2030," Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, 2017, www.cbd.int/doc/world/co/co-nbsap-v3-en.pdf; González-González, Clerici, and Quesada, "Growing Mining Contribution to Colombian Deforestation."

⁹⁰Until early 2022, Glencore, Anglo American, and BHP had equal shareholdings of the mine.

⁹¹An estimated 95 percent of the country's dry forests have been reduced from their original cover, including close to 70 percent of typically Andean forests, see: CBD, "Colombia — Main Details;" Yamileth Dominguez-Haydar and Inge Armbrecht, "Response of Ants and their Seed Removal in Rehabilitation Areas and Forests at El Cerrejón Coal Mine in Colombia," *Restoration Ecology* 19, no. 201 (2011): 178–184, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1526-100X.2010.00735.x>.

⁹²Jen Moore, "Colombian courts must not be undermined by shadowy international tribunals, say campaigners," Institute for Policy Studies, September 13, 2022, <https://ips-dc.org/colombian-courts-must-not-be-undermined-by-shadowy-international-tribunals-say-campaigners/>; Astrid Ulloa, "The Rights of the Wayúu People and Water in the Context Of Mining in La Guajira, Colombia: Demands of Relational Water Justice," *Human Geography* 13, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942778620910894>.

⁹³González-González, Clerici, and Quesada, "Growing Mining Contribution to Colombian Deforestation."

⁹⁴Lise Josefsen Hermann, "In a Fight Over a Colombian Coal Mine, Covid-19 Raises the Stakes," *Grist*, July 29, 2020, <https://grist.org/justice/in-a-fight-over-a-colombian-coal-mine-covid-19-raises-the-stakes/>.

⁹⁵Jen Moore, "Colombia: Corporate Claims vs. Human Rights," Institute for Policy Studies, July 17, 2023, <https://ips-dc.org/colombia-corporate-claims-vs-human-rights/>; these environmental and health impacts disproportionately harms women, who are often responsible for and connected to water systems, see: Ulloa, "The Rights of the Wayúu People and Water;" Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, "New Directions in Research on Women and Gender in Extractive Industries," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 9 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2022.101048>.

Exporting 90 percent of the coal it extracts,⁹⁷ Colombia is the fifth largest global coal exporter and the third largest exporter of the coal-based fuel, coke.⁹⁸ While the regions where coal mines are concentrated depend heavily on coal mining royalties,⁹⁹ the unequal distribution of burdens and benefits results in a range of injustices for local communities.¹⁰⁰ For example, over 336,000 cases of respiratory illness in North Colombia are directly attributable to mining activities.¹⁰¹ And while the El Cerrejón mine provides 44 percent of the region's GDP, it remains one of Colombia's poorest jurisdictions.¹⁰² Over half of the region's population lives below the poverty line and at least a quarter of the population lives in extreme poverty.¹⁰³ These are symptoms of an asymmetrical global supply chain that imposes environmental and social costs on already-marginalized populations in Colombia to deliver benefits elsewhere¹⁰⁴ — a prime example of extractivism.

This paradigm of coal export is both inequitable and unsustainable.¹⁰⁵ So, why does it continue? What maintains coal projects like El Cerrejón, which contravene stated national environmental priorities as well as local health and safety? Colombia's mining sector is embedded in the history of violent conflict and internal resource grabbing in the country. But it is also powerfully maintained by international financial institutions and legal systems, despite government commitments to scale back the industry and transition away from fossil fuels. This case study addresses how international financial and legal structures obstruct Colombia's just transition and biodiversity conservation agendas.

The role of coal in Colombia's economy

The Colombian government has historically framed extractive industries, including coal, as the key way to gain public revenue to put an end to the armed conflict that has shaped the country, reflecting a prevalent discourse that equates peace (or pacification) with development.¹⁰⁶ This framing was exemplified by Plan Colombia in 2000, a US program to combat drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups. The plan provided US military aid to paramilitary death squads, which carried out political killings against left-wing forces,¹⁰⁷ and also stated that economic growth through economic liberalization was the path toward achieving peace from armed conflict.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁶“UN expert calls for halt to mining at controversial Colombia site,” United Nations, last modified September 26, 2020, www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/09/un-expert-calls-halt-mining-controversial-colombia-site?LangID=E&NewsID=26306.

⁹⁷Rubiano A., “How Colombia Plans to Keep its Oil and Coal in the Ground.”

⁹⁸“Coal,” National Mining Agency, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://mineriaencolombia.anm.gov.co/sites/default/files/2022-02/Fact%20Sheet%20Coal%2001%202022.pdf>.

⁹⁹Coal mines are concentrated in the administrative departments of Cesar and La Guajira (where El Cerrejón is located), which are also areas with a significant population of Indigenous and Afro-descendent people; Gabriel Weber et al., “Exploring Resilience in Public Services within Marginalised Communities During Covid-19: The Case of Coal Mining Regions in Colombia,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 415 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.137880>.

¹⁰⁰Noel Healy, Jennie C. Stephens, and Stephanie A. Malin, “Embodied Energy Injustices: Unveiling and Politicizing the Transboundary Harms of Fossil Fuel Extractivism and Fossil Fuel Supply Chains,” *Energy Research & Social Science* 48 (2019): 219–234, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2018.09.016>.

¹⁰¹Kees Kodde and Bram Joanknecht, “A Toxic Legacy: Glencore’s Footprint in Colombia and Peru: European Banks and Investors Must Take Responsibility,” Fair Finance International, Finanzas con Derechos Peru, and Finanzas Justas Colombia, Oxfam International, 2023, <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/a-toxic-legacy-glencores-footprint-in-colombia-and-peru-european-banks-and-inve-621550/>.

¹⁰²Line Jespersgaard Jakobsen, “Extractive Subjectivity in a Corporate Coal Mining Site in Colombia,” *Geoforum* 148 (2024): 103605, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.07.007>; coal does not uniformly benefit local communities, but it upholds mining employee livelihoods. When 2 mines closed in 2020 due to commodity price drops, it sent nearby communities into an economic downturn, revealing the persistent importance of coal exports on many people's livelihoods, even as coal revenues do not substantively address poverty and even contribute to inequality, see: Rubiano A., “How Colombia plans to keep its oil and coal in the ground.”

¹⁰³Jacqueline Elyse Gilbert, Tamra Gilbertson, and Line J. Jakobsen, “Incommensurability and Corporate Social Technologies: A Critique of Corporate Compensations in Colombia's Coal Mining Region of La Guajira,” *Journal of Political Ecology* 28, no. 1 (2021), www.doi.org/10.2458/jpe.2952.

¹⁰⁴Federico Suárez Ricaurte, “Two Tiers And Double Standards: Foreign Investors and the Local Community of La Guajira, Colombia,” *Globalizations* 19, no. 6 (2022): 854–864, doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2054511; Aviva Chomsky, Steve Striffler, and Garry Leech, eds., *The People Behind Colombian Coal: Mining, Multinationals and Human Rights* (Bogotá: Casa Editorial Pisando Callos, 2007).

¹⁰⁵Ciara Nugent, “No Oil Producer Wants to Be the First to Give Up the Fuel. Except Gustavo Petro's Colombia,” *Time*, June 22, 2022, www.time.com/6189763/colombia-oil-gustavo-petro/.

¹⁰⁶John-Andrew McNeish, “Extracting Justice? Colombia's Commitment to Mining and Energy as a Foundation for Peace,” *The*

Plan Colombia coincided with a broader neoliberal policy turn in the face of Colombia's foreign debt crisis in the late 1990s. This crisis led to a series of legal and economic policies geared towards freeing and specializing markets in line with the Washington Consensus.¹⁰⁹ This framework positioned foreign investment as an essential driver of development and financial stability.¹¹⁰ Consequently, many public services, telecommunication organizations, banks, ports, airports, health services, social security agencies, and other entities were sold to multinational companies — as was the coal industry.¹¹¹ The 2001 Mining Code, which was drafted with the advice of a law firm representing mining companies and under the influence of the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), ended state mining companies, limited government regulation, and created preferential conditions to attract foreign investment.¹¹² Foreign direct investment (FDI) in mining consequently rose by 700 percent, from USD 2 to 3 billion per year in the 1990s to USD 10 billion in 2005, and more than USD 16 billion in 2012.¹¹³

These policies facilitated a mining boom in the country.¹¹⁴ During the first decade of the 21st century, coal production increased by 80 percent,¹¹⁵ as hundreds of mining titles were approved, including in national parks and territories held by Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.¹¹⁶ According to Colombia's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP), between 2004 and 2007 there was an 87 percent increase in titles for coal mining;¹¹⁷ subsequently, coal production more than doubled from 38 million tonnes (Mt) in 2000 to nearly 89 Mt in 2015.¹¹⁸

Narratives that equate mining with peace also persisted over this time. In 2015, then-President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón proclaimed, "Colombia needs, I reiterate, and I want to repeat it to you, a strong mining sector, organized, competitive, especially now that we are decidedly progressing on this road to peace and towards reconciliation."¹¹⁹

International Journal of Human Rights 4 (2017), doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2016.1179031; "Secretary-General's remarks at United Nations Private Sector Forum [as delivered]," United Nations, last modified September 24, 2018, www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-24/secretary-generals-remarks-united-nations-private-sector-forum; María Carolina Olarte-Olarte, "From Territorial Peace to Territorial Pacification: Anti-Riot Police Powers and Socio-Environmental Dissent in the Implementation of Colombia's Peace Agreement," *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 67 (2019): 26–39, doi.org/10.7440/res67.2019.03.

¹⁰⁷Oliver Villar and Drew Cottle, "FARC in Colombia: Twenty-First-Century US Imperialism and Class Warfare," *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (2020): 1–21, doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6_207-1.

¹⁰⁸Daniel James Hawkins, "Reconfiguration of the Colombian State: The Difficult Balance between Consensus and Coercion," *Íconos: revista de ciencias sociales*, no. 35 (2009): 105–116, <http://hdl.handle.net/10469/944>.

¹⁰⁹Nancy Birdsall, Augusto de la Torre, and Felipe Valencia Caicedo, "The Washington Consensus: Assessing a Damaged Brand," Center for Global Development, 2010, www.files.ethz.ch/isn/118196/wp213.pdf.

¹¹⁰Ricaurte, "Two Tiers and Double Standards."

¹¹¹Leila M. Harris and María Cecilia Roa-García, "Recent Waves of Water Governance: Constitutional Reform and Resistance to Neoliberalization In Latin America (1990–2012)," *Geoforum* 50 (2013): 20–30, doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.07.009; William Avilés, "The Wayúu Tragedy: Death, Water and the Imperatives of Global Capitalism," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 9 (2019): 1750–1766, doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1613638.

¹¹²Avilés, "The Wayúu Tragedy."

¹¹³Andrea Cardoso, "Behind the Life Cycle of Coal: Socio-Environmental Liabilities of Coal Mining in Cesar, Colombia," *Ecological Economics* 120 (2015): 71–82, doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.10.004.

¹¹⁴Laura Gutiérrez-Gómez, "Mining in Colombia: Tracing the Harm of Neoliberal Policies and Practices," in *Environmental Crime in Latin America: The Theft of Nature and the Poisoning of the Land*, eds. David Rodríguez Goyes et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan London, 2017): 85–113, doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55705-6.

¹¹⁵"In addition, 80 percent of human rights violations between 2001 and 2011 were committed in mining and energy producing regions," see: Avilés, "The Wayúu Tragedy."

¹¹⁶Gutiérrez-Gómez, "Mining in Colombia."

¹¹⁷Rojas and Jaime, "Biodiversity Action Plan," 48–49.

¹¹⁸Claudia Strambo and Angélica Johanna Puertas Velasco, "The Changing Politics of Coal Extraction in Colombia," Stockholm Environment Institute, 2017, [jstor.com/stable/resrep02786](https://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep02786).

¹¹⁹Quoted in Claudia Strambo and Ana Carolina González Espinosa, "Extraction and Development: Fossil Fuel Production Narratives and

However, the debts that justified economic liberalization continue to exert influence on economic and environmental policy in Colombia. Coal underpins Colombia's economy,¹²⁰ with revenues used to fund important services.¹²¹ But this reliance on coal has also locked the country into an extractive economic model that depends on specialized, short-term commodity exports in order to acquire foreign exchange to repay debts and maintain financial stability.¹²² These debts partially stem from government borrowing to pay for health care, vaccines, and social services during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the nation's climate action plans to reduce emissions and promote economic circularity.¹²³ According to the World Bank (WB), Colombia paid USD 8.8 billion to service public and publicly guaranteed debt and for International Monetary Fund (IMF) surcharges in 2022,¹²⁴ and interest payments alone grew to 15 percent of net government revenues in 2022, from an average of 8 percent from 2010 to 2021.¹²⁵

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Repayment of these external debts requires Colombia to generate foreign currency, including through exports. From 2018 to 2022, coal accounted for an average of 18 percent of the country's export earnings and all fossil fuels at 50 percent (see Table 1). These revenues are central to Colombia's international trade, balance of payments, foreign exchange acquisition, and royalties revenue.¹²⁶ The foreign exchange earned through these exports also allows Colombia to stabilize its currency — this is particularly relevant given that the government's stated intentions to stop fossil fuel production is said to have contributed to a 20 percent drop in the Colombian peso against the US dollar.¹²⁷ Such depreciations of the peso against the dollar also make foreign debts denominated in currencies like dollars more expensive, creating a cycle of dependence that goes beyond the loss of immediate revenues. This dependence on extraction for export clearly constrains the Colombian government's ability to act on biodiversity and climate change mitigation.

Counternarratives in Colombia," *Climate Policy* 20, no. 8 (2020), doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1719810.

¹²⁰Claudia Strambo et al., "Privileged Coal: The Politics of Subsidies for Coal Production in Colombia," Stockholm Environment Institute, 2018, thecoalhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sei-2018-pubs-coal-subsidies-political-0129.pdf.

¹²¹Angela Picciariello, Adriana Quevedo, and Ipek Gençsü, "Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Subsidies in Colombia: A Crucial Step Towards a Just Energy Transition," ODI Working Paper, 2022, cdn-odi-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/ODI_Working_paper_Phasing_out_fossil_fuel_subsidies_in_Colombia_9rTjlfQ.pdf; Strambo et al., "Privileged Coal."

¹²²Tobias Franz, "Spatial Fixes and Switching Crises in the Times of Covid-19: Implications for Commodity-Producing Economies in Latin America," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement* 42, no. 1–2 (2021): 109–121, https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2020.1832881.

¹²³"Colombia Calls for Global Financial Consensus to Avert COVID Debt Crisis," UN News, last modified September 21, 2021, https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1100512.

¹²⁴"World Development Indicators," World Bank, accessed February 5, 2024, https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators; this figure includes Debt Service on External Debt, Public and Publicly Guaranteed, and IMF Repurchases and Charges.

¹²⁵UNCTAD, "A World of Debt," UNCTAD, 2023, https://unctad.org/publication/world-of-debt; To access this data, one must navigate to the "Debt Dashboard" tab and select Colombia as the basis of comparison, then click on "Public debt interest payments as a share of revenues" on the wheel-like display, and finally select "Trend over time" on the graphic on the right side of the screen.

¹²⁶Silvio López and Fernando Patzy, "Carbón Térmico en Colombia: Implicaciones para la Economía de la Guajira y Cesar," Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2021, resourcegovernance.org/es/publications/carbon-termico-en-colombia-implicaciones-para-la-economia-de-la-guajira-y-cesar.

¹²⁷Peter Millard and Patricia Laya, "As the World Backpedals on Ditching Fossil Fuels, One Oil Major Plows Ahead," *Bloomberg*,

International trade policies keep coal flowing out of Colombia

International investment law also upholds extraction. Countries establish international investment agreements, generally to promote liberalized trade. Through a mechanism in international investment law called Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS), investors can legally sue states if they perceive a breach of contract; for example, cancelling an existing project due to environmental impact.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Colombia has entered 21 international investment agreements (IIAs), with 8 in force in 2023, including 1 with Switzerland, which hosts the multinational resource company Glencore (the owner of El Cerrejón).¹²⁸ These agreements are arbitrated by a panel of international judges. In recent years, Colombia has faced a volume of arbitration claims that is among the highest in Latin America, with the bulk of arbitration cases involving extractive industries.¹²⁹ Pending claims as of March 2023 totaled USD 13.2 billion — equal to 13 percent of the nation's budget for 2023.¹³⁰

Conversely, states — and, more saliently, affected communities — are unable to sue investors, leaving them without clear legal avenues to pursue restitution for financial or ecological damages caused by mining companies. This structure gives the advantage to mining companies and privileges the economic interests of investors/multinational enterprises (MNEs) to uphold extraction.¹³¹

For example, ISDS have enabled Glencore to mine and profit at the expense of local communities and the ecologies on which they depend.¹³² In 2010, Glencore and Colombia entered a contract for mining royalties. The state later attempted to terminate the contract because the mine was losing money, contaminating water, and dispossessing people from their land.¹³³ In 2017, Colombian courts ruled mining in the Arroyo Bruno region (where El Cerrejón is located) to be an unconstitutional violation of the rights of the Indigenous Wayúu community, whom coal mining exposed to toxic levels of water and air pollution.¹³⁴

But Glencore consequently levied and won 3 ISDS against the state for breach of contract. In 2019, an International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes panel ordered Colombia to pay Glencore USD 19.1 million,¹³⁵ and in 2022, the ISDS panel ruled that Glencore could legally continue mining operations.¹³⁶

October 26, 2022, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-26/colombia-s-petro-pursues-energy-transition-despite-economic-cost?embedded-checkout=true; Rodrigo Campos and Nelson Bocanegra, “Colombia Will Export Fossil Fuels for a Long Time, Finance Minister Says,” *Reuters*, June 20, 2023, www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-will-export-fossil-fuels-long-time-finance-minister-2023-06-20/.

¹²⁸“Colombia: International Investment Agreements Navigator,” UNCTAD Investment Policy Hub, 2023, investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/countries/45/colombia; also called International Investment Treaties (IITs), “These treaties grant foreign investors certain protections and benefits, including recourse to Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) to resolve disputes with host states”; see: “Primer on International Investment Treaties and Investor-State Dispute Settlement,” Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, 2022, <https://ccsi.columbia.edu/content/primer-international-investment-treaties-and-investor-state-dispute-settlement>; Ricaurte, “Two Tiers and Double Standards.”

¹²⁹“Report of the International Mission to Colombia: Stop ISDS,” Salvemos el Agua, Salvemos la Vida, and La Guajira le Habla Al Pais Plataforma, 2023, <https://miningwatch.ca/publications/2023/8/24/stop-isds-report-international-mission-colombia>.

¹³⁰“Final Report of International Mission to #StopISDS Recommends Colombia's Withdrawal from System of Corporate Abuse and Impunity by way of a Citizens Audit,” Institute for Policy Studies, August 15, 2023, ips-dc.org/final-report-of-international-mission-to-stop-isds/.

¹³¹ISDS have also been argued to promote a “regulatory chill,” wherein countries embroiled in IIAs may be dissuaded from regulating industrial activity out of fear of a lawsuit. This exacerbates neoliberal turns towards environmental deregulation that often drove nations towards IIAs in the first place; see: Kyla Tienhaara, “Regulatory Chill in a Warming World: The Threat to Climate Policy Posed by Investor-State Dispute Settlement,” *Transnational Environmental Law* 7, no. 2 (2018): 229–50, doi.org/10.1017/S2047102517000309.

¹³²Ricaurte, “Two Tiers and Double Standards.”

¹³³“Colombian delegation attends Glencore AGM to present demands over Bruno Creek,” London Mining Network, last modified May 4, 2022, londonminingnetwork.org/2022/05/colombian-delegation-attends-glencore-agm-to-present-demands-over-bruno-creek/.

¹³⁴Jen Moore, “Colombia: corporate claims vs human rights,” *Latin American Bureau*, July 17, 2023, lab.org.uk/colombia-corporate-claims-vs-human-rights/.

¹³⁵Ricaurte, “Two Tiers and Double Standards.”

Outlook

The El Cerrejón coal mine is scheduled to close in 2034, though there is currently no concrete closure plan.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, members of the Indigenous Wayúu community, in addition to pursuing legal action, are blockading El Cerrejón because the mine has contributed to degraded water quantity and quality in the midst of a deadly drought.¹³⁸ Other Colombians have pursued international legal action through lodging complaints with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development for the violence in the coal supply chain.¹³⁹

Colombian President Gustavo Petro has stated that the state's plan for an accelerated transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewables will require ceasing new oil and coal leases, and replacing fossil fuel-derived foreign currency with other income as the foundation of the national economy.¹⁴⁰ But reforms to international financial and legal structures, in the spirit of international solidarity for a just transition, will be needed to make this plan a reality. Conserving Colombia's rich biodiversity requires not only reforming proximate drivers such as mining, but repairing the deeper injustices that position mining and fossil fuels as necessary to financial stability.

Conserving Colombia's rich biodiversity requires not only reforming proximate drivers such as mining, but repairing the deeper injustices that position mining and fossil fuels as necessary to financial stability.

¹³⁶"Public Statement: Colombian Government Authorises Further Destruction of Arroyo Bruno in La Guajira," ABColombia, last modified November 4, 2022, www.abcolombia.org.uk/public-statement-colombian-government-authorises-further-destruction-of-arroyo-bruno-in-la-guajira/.

¹³⁷See also emerging discussion of "green extractivism" in the region: Astrid Ulloa, "Aesthetics of Green Dispossession: From Coal to Wind Extraction in La Guajira, Colombia," *Journal of Political Ecology* 30, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.5475>.

¹³⁸Brent Patterson, "Glencore Calls on Colombian Police to Remove Indigenous and Afro-descendant Blockades at Cerrejón Coal Mine," *PBI Canada*, last modified September 3, 2022, <https://pbicanada.org/2022/09/03/glencore-calls-on-colombian-police-to-remove-indigenous-and-afro-descendant-blockade-of-cerrejon-coal-mine/>; Carol Sánchez, "In Colombia, Threatened Women of the Wayúu Continue to Fight Rampant Mining," *Mongabay*, December 13, 2021, <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/12/in-colombia-threatened-women-of-the-wayuu-community-continue-to-fight-rampant-mining/>; Oliver Pieper, "Germany's Dirty Colombian Coal," *DW*, May 26, 2022, www.dw.com/en/germanys-dirty-colombian-coal/a-61935515; Avilés, "The Wayúu Tragedy."

¹³⁹Joseph Wilde-Ramsing, "'blood Coal' Complaint Alleges Complicity of European Energy Companies in Abuses," SOMO, last modified April 20, 2023, <https://www.somo.nl/blood-coal-complaint-alleges-complicity-of-european-energy-companies-in-abuses/>.

¹⁴⁰Julián Reingold, "What are the Challenges to a Just Energy Transition in Colombia?" *Energy Monitor*, February 16, 2023, www.energymonitor.ai/policy/what-are-the-challenges-to-a-just-energy-transition-in-colombia/.