

**Statement of the Mining Working Group at the UN
to the 4th Session of the Open Working Group
on Sustainable Development Goals
on the Topic of Health
June 19, 2013, United Nations**



Thank you, Mr. Chair. My presentation will touch on the following three points mentioned by the panelist, Alexandra Garita: Well-being, Right to Health, and Equity.

I am representing both the Loretto Community and the Mining Working Group at the UN -- a coalition of NGOs with members living on every continent -- but really I'm speaking on behalf of the millions of people whose lives and health are being destroyed by the devastating impacts of the "extractives development model".ⁱ

I bring you the voices of women living in Central Appalachia -- one of the most biodiverse regions of North America. Last year we held a Women's Tribunalⁱⁱ on the devastating coal-mining practice called Mountaintop Removal (MTR), where mountaintops are blasted away using explosive power equal to many Hiroshima bombs. The experiences of the women who testified echo what we are hearing from our members all over the world.

Please hear these voices:

· A Public Health Nurse: ***"It's not possible to destroy our mountains without destroying us. It's not possible to poison our streams without poisoning our children for untold generations to come."***ⁱⁱⁱ

· A 25-year-old woman: ***"Whether or not to give birth to my future children in my homeland is a decision I should not be forced to make."***^{iv}

The people whose lives are affected by MTR's pollution of air and water demand an end to the human rights abuses inflicted with impunity by the extractives industry.

In the Central Appalachian state of Virginia, coal-mining counties have:

- o **the highest rates of asthma**
- o **25% higher mortality rates**
- o **26% higher rates of cancer**
- o **26% higher rates of birth defects**

And the grim reality is that this is happening all around the world. Given your estimate "that 1/4 of the global burden of disease can be attributed to environmental" factors, we recommend:

- o **that a mandate be given to UN agencies (e.g., WHO, UNDP, UNEP, etc.) to study and monitor the health impacts of the extractives development model.**
- o **Ultimately, health targets should call for an end to preventable illnesses and deaths caused by harmful extractive practices.**

In closing, let me end with a final quote from the Women's Tribunal:

"We don't live where they mine coal -- they mine coal where we live."^v

Statement delivered by Sally Dunne, Loretto Community on behalf of the Mining Working Group at the UN
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ⁱ Extractives Development Model" is used to refer to the nexus of industry, government and the current economic model that drives the unsustainable and destructive methods of global resource extraction.

ⁱⁱ Women & Climate Justice Tribunal, Central Appalachia, May 10, 2012 co-organized by the Loretto at the UN, Feminist Task Force and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition; <http://ftfgcap.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/appalachia-report.pdf>; <http://www.climatejusticetribunals.blogspot.com/2012/05/central-appalachia.html> video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ_cXCaFhZg

ⁱⁱⁱ Testimony from Beverley May, Family Nurse Practitioner, Floyd County Kentucky, Central Appalachian Women's Tribunal, May 10, 2012.

^{iv} Testimony from Ivy Breshear, member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), Central Appalachian Women's Tribunal, May 10, 2012.

^v Testimony from Lorelei Scarborough, Community Organizer, Boone-Raleigh Community Group and OVEC member, Central Appalachian Women's Tribunal, May 10, 2012.