Thank you Chair, Distinguished delegates, and fellow colleagues.

When my father married my mother, he gave her a gold ring as a sign of love. My father did not know that 20 tons of mining waste were produced to make that one ring or that one life is lost and 12 serious injuries result from each ton of gold mined. Would my mother have wanted the ring, knowing these costs? Can this gold ring symbolize love when its production threatens lives, devastates communities, and transforms landscapes into toxic waste dumps?

In the current mining industry human rights are being violated. Each day, many children around the world are obligated to labor in mines. These children have the right to a healthy childhood, so we call for the eradication of all forms of child labor in mining. In addition, we believe that communities have the right to determine their own fate. I wouldn't like to wake up one day, to discover mining construction has begun in my backyard. Please, imagine yourself in such a situation.

[pause]
It only seems right to require free, prior and informed consent by affected peoples.

In the current mining industry, essential ecosystems are being destroyed beyond repair. I am referring to the last natural jewels of the world: the tropical forests, wetlands, and high moorlands that Humans depend upon. We need the preservation of these environmentally sensitive areas; These treasures are the real wealth of the world and they are being robbed from us. At what cost? Without them, youth will have no future.

So, was the ring really worth it? Before us, we have an opportunity to provide a future for youth and all peoples of the world that is not only sustainable, but equitable and just. We can no longer abide by business-as-usual and watery, ineffective policy statements.

Your actions not only affect the document you are working on - They affect the lives of real people, whose realities today are not just. Will you allow this to continue? As world leaders, we can decide to stop injustice and inequality in mining. We can make the choice today - for the sake of the earth, the youth, and for ALL of us here.

Thank you.

by: Natalia Fajardo
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