



# ¡Escazú Ahora!

## El Salvador



### **URGENT APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION FROM NAYIB BUKELE TO PROMOTE EL SALVADOR'S EARLY ACCESSION TO THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT**

From community organizations, territorial networks and citizen groups that work in the defense, care and protection of the environment, we make the urgent call to the citizen President of the Republic of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, to promptly promote the country's accession to the Escazú Agreement.

El Salvador is living in a context of growing threats to the natural commons, a situation that has a negative impact on people's quality of life and on the realization of their legitimate right to live in a healthy, clean, safe, and sustainable environment. Currently, throughout the national territory, with particular emphasis on the coastal marine zone, there is strong pressure due to the megaprojects promoted by the Executive Branch, which threaten communities with evictions and forced displacements, generating speculation on their lands, and denying the right to water, food, habitat and housing.

Environmental, water and land defenders are totally unprotected by the State, since national legislation does not recognize the work of those who are on the front line of defense of the territory, which exposes this significant group of the population to risks and attacks on their integrity and their lives. persecution, censorship, blockades and/or smear and defamation campaigns. The Escazú Agreement is the only treaty in the world that establishes binding provisions for States to recognize environmental defenders, so its implementation in El Salvador would expand the legal foothold to guarantee their protection.

Having a healthy civic space is essential to promote democratic values in a society and to generate a safe and enabling environment for the exercise of citizenship, however, it is worrying to observe the accelerated process of deterioration that the country is experiencing, where social and political dialogue has been unilaterally abandoned by State institutions. The approval of the Emergency Regime and other government decisions that restrict citizens' rights and freedoms have revealed the cruel reality that in El Salvador today, there are no institutional or constitutional guarantees for anything or anyone.

The imposition of the megaproject model generates and deepens the multiple crises that the Salvadoran people are already facing, having as their main concerns the impacts of climate change and disasters, environmental pollution and the accelerated loss of biodiversity, which disproportionately and differentially affects groups and populations that have been historically and systematically excluded. such as children, youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Adherence to the Escazú Agreement and its full implementation is a pressing need, it is worrying to observe the low level of ethical and political will towards the environment manifested by the 3 Organs of the State. The environmental dimension has been deliberately abandoned and in its place, we observe the deepening of a culture of privilege and impunity for those who plunder and pollute the natural commons, before which we ask ourselves the question: What "development" are they talking about if ecosystems collapse? And we express forcefully that: "If it destroys nature, **IT IS NOT DEVELOPMENT**".

It is urgent and necessary for El Salvador to advance in democracy and environmental governance, we consider it unacceptable that while some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are laying the foundations for the effective implementation of the Escazú Agreement, the country continues to regress and cause damage that may become irreversible against the integrity of the environment.

We still have time to correct the course, the imaginary of life of the peoples who inhabit this territory that today is called El Salvador, is not the progress that is sold as modernism. Sustainable and lasting solutions are urgently needed, **ENOUGH OF FALSE SOLUTIONS!**

The health and well-being of peoples and nature must be the priority in the environmental public policy of every people and nation, we express our deep commitment to the defense of the territory and we will continue to educate the participation of citizens to promote an ecological culture, affirming the strategic importance of the Escazú Agreement, as a key instrument to work towards the creation of a present and future of peace, justice and sustainability in the country and the region.

San Salvador, August 31, 2023

