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*Environmental and human rights violations committed by European companies in Latin America are being examined at a people's tribunal in Lima, Peru this week (13-16 May).*

The tribunal is one of the events at the 'Enlazando Alternativas' peoples' summit being held in parallel to the official EU-Latin America and Caribbean meeting of heads of state. Friends of the Earth, together with the biregional network Europe-Latin America, is using the tribunal to draw attention to the impacts of EU politics and transnational companies on people and the environment in Latin America.

Cases brought by Friends of the Earth against four European companies will be heard by an international panel of judges at this session of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal focusing on European transnational companies in Latin America. Established in 1973 the tribunal seeks to redress shortcomings in international law. A final resolution based on the accusations, evidence and witness testimonies heard at the session will aim to expose the violations committed by these companies and the conflict between economic systems and peoples' rights.

Carlos Santos, of REDES-Friends of the Earth Uruguay said: "The neoliberal economic model promoted by the EU allows European companies to get away with their crimes in Latin America. Because no other legal mechanism exists to make companies accountable for their social, environmental and human rights violations we have organised this session of the people's tribunal."

Friends of the Earth groups from Latin America are bringing cases against four European corporations:

- Spanish energy company Unión Fenosa is accused of serious human rights violations for failing to fulfil its contractual obligations to improve and expand the electricity network thereby causing cuts in the electricity supply which have led to deaths and unjustified price increases which exclude broad parts of the population from access to fundamental electricity services, and for violating labour and trade union rights in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua. (Case brought by Censat Agua Viva - Friends of the Earth Colombia)

- Finnish cellulose and forestation company Botnia is accused of endangering food sovereignty and causing negative economic, social and environmental impacts by establishing large forest monocultures for cellulose production. The plantations impact on the water supply for small scale agriculture and natural ecosystems, cause soil erosion and affect workers' health through the intensive use of agrotoxics. (Case brought by REDES - Friends of the Earth Uruguay)

- French company Veolia Environmental and Spanish company Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas (FCC) - as the joint venture PROACTIVA - are accused of denying access to basic services such as water, sanitation and waste management to large parts of the local population in the Colombian Caribbean. The venture has increased tariffs without justification; charged for water and canalisation services in areas where these services have not been provided, and failed to comply with its contractual obligation to restore and expand the network. (Case brought by Censat Agua Viva - Friends of the Earth Colombia)

At the official EU-LAC summit the EU plans to progress economic association agreements with the Latin American blocks of Central America, Andean community and MERCOSUR. Under its 'Global Europe' agenda, the EU prioritises competitiveness of European companies in its external trade and economic negotiations.

Christine Pohl, of Friends of the Earth Europe said: "The European Union, under pressure from transnational companies, is promoting policies that have disastrous impacts on people and the environment elsewhere. In Latin America for example, the European demand for agrofuels is wreaking havoc in countries where large-scale plantations are causing enormous social and environmental problems and are seriously putting food sovereignty at risk."

As well as presenting cases at the tribunal, Friends of the Earth is organising a range of other activities in Lima. Through these activities, Friends of the Earth, together with other groups, is attempting to build resistance to detrimental association agreements between Latin America and the EU, expose the negative impacts of the World Bank arbitration mechanism ICSID, and halt the expansion of agrofuel plantations in Latin America to serve European energy demands.

*Friends of the Earth Europe campaigns for sustainable and just societies and for the protection of the environment, unites more than 30 national organisations with thousands of local groups and is part of the world's largest grass-roots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International.*

### Friends of the Earth Europe

