Agenda for a sustainable water, basin and mining management

The sustainability of the water resources, through the implementation of integrated management processes, has become a responsibility and a fundamental duty for all stakeholders.

The resistance towards some mining projects is due, in several cases, to negative experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders involved, particularly regarding the water demand and use by the mining activity.

Furthermore, the scenarios posed by the climatic change are making us view the water availability and its quality in a very sensitive way.

In this regard, the recently approved Water Resources Law (Law N° 29338) is an important progress that could be the beginning of a new institutionality based on values that contribute to face the current situation, which is characterized by a sectorial and fragmented management, with week regulation systems and bad practices in the production activities.

We consider that a paradigm change, starting from the mining industry and with the rest of the agriculture and city stakeholders, can contribute to vary this situation.

In the last few years, in view of the social and environmental conflicts, several stakeholders in mining investment areas have been creating renewed understandings and new practices regarding the water and basin management, and the mining role in the management of this process.

Therefore, we state that it is possible, under certain conditions, and assuming a hydrological attitude of conservation and protection of the water, for the mining to become a stakeholder that contributes to the sustainable management of the water resources.

In that sense, we propose the following challenge to be assumed by the combined action of companies, communities and the State: To preserve, protect and harvest the water in the basins where the mining takes place, without affecting, in the short or long term, the balance of the water cycle and the vitality of the ecosystems located within them, in a context of climate change.

We start by acknowledging that the access to good quality water is a fundamental human right, and that the basin is the territorial unit from which it should be planned and managed.

Likewise, we respect and value the Andean knowledge, technology and organization, and recognize that the changes could only be possible with an informed participation of all stakeholders by affirming the elements of their cultural identity, and also with the new roles that the women are acquiring.

From being a cause of social-environmental conflict, water can become a powerful vehicle of communication and relations between the stakeholders and build a new language and a new practice that allows transforming the current strive for limited resources into an active cooperation. This makes necessary to strengthen the collective recovery and/or creation of a "water culture", contextualized to very difficult present realities and uncertain perspectives.

Based on this understanding we present the following agenda of obligations and recommendations:

1. Responsible Cooperation and Participation of all Stakeholders in the Basin and Sub-Basin Management Organizations

Contribute with the State and the Autoridad Nacional del Agua (National Water Authority), in the creation and operation of the Basin Councils within the Water Resources Law framework.

The public and private stakeholders and social organizations of the basins with mining activity must support the creation of the Basin Councils and their operation, and generate management spaces arranged by the microbasins. In order to do this, the mining and all economical activities –particularly the agriculture- must compromise to improve their habits, technologies and irrigation systems, conducts and efficiencies in the use of water, assuming the co responsibility that an Integrated Management of Water Resources demands, promoting the necessary changes to be truly efficient and sustainable.

2. Information, Balance and Participation Plans within Reach of Everyone

The hydrological, hydro geological and water quality information must be transparent, easy to understand, of public domain, and the population must have free access to it. The State must lead the preparation and update of this information and count with the cooperation of every institution that prepares or has it.

In order to do this, it necessary to contribute with the State in the creation of hydro geological information systems by basins, articulated to the regional environmental information systems.

Mining companies may develop, starting from their baseline, instruments such as the hydrological and hydro geological balances of the intervention areas and evaluations of water use intake and output in their own operations, which should be shared, socialized and updated during the whole living cycle of the mine.

The State authorities, academic institutions and NGOs must also join this practice of timely and transparent information.

The Balances and Water Resources Management Plans are instruments promoted by the State that need to be dynamic and count with the support and active participation of the stakeholders in the basins with mining activity. This should include diagnosis of water demand and predictions of the water use in the basin; taking into consideration that a good part of water conflicts occur when the demand is not satisfied.

The Territorial Administration Plans and the Ecological Economic Zoning are instruments that we consider valuable because they lead the development of our production activities; they are effective when elaborated with the participation of the group of stakeholders, when they count with technical information duly validated, and are alien to an anticipated turn down of any production activity. Thus, it is important the active participation of the Environmental Department, the National Water Authority and the Regional Government.

3. Spreading Good Water Management Practices in Mining

3.1 *We emphasize that mining, upon the basis of acknowledging past mistakes, has been learning and developing a group of good practices that are visible in many mining areas all over the country and that we will detail below*:

- The "water harvest" practice during rain season, so its availability in the basin is retained, preserved and increased.

- Creation of "environmental actives" to improve the water supply during the dry season for the non miner neighbors by building reservoirs, micro reservoirs and transforming old slits into reservoirs or water storages.

- The addition of conservation activities, during the gradual closure of the mining activities, to the environmental plans of basin, such as erosion and sediments control, and also reforestation and revegetation activities.

- Make agreements with drinking water companies, local and regional governments in order to improve the infrastructure of water treatment (expansions, studies of new water sources, laboratories, health and environmental education, among others).

- Sponsor studies of water reinforcement in the basins that allow determine the best way of supply the current and future water demand.

- Process the water used for mining, in order to return it to the basin with a class III quality, with modern treatment facilities for acid water, black water and the water used in the processes.

- The leadership of the State along with the cooperation of the mining industry to promote the good use of water for domestic, irrigation and stockbreeding purposes in the nearby communities through the drinking water supply and rural drainage, enhancement of the irrigation and technical irrigation infrastructure, improvement of crops and pastures and improvement and increase of the livestock production.

3.2 *We propose the use of the best available technologies and knowledge.*

This implies to set up goals regarding the gradual reduction of fresh water consumption, taking into account the operational needs, by improving flotation processes and tailing management, reducing filtrations and evaporations and using methods according to each mineral that allows the majority recycling of the water volumes required and their return to the basin without affecting the ecosystem negatively.

Also, the agriculture and the population, whose water intake is larger, should promote technologies that help save water and use it more efficiently.

According to the location of the deposits and their financial viability, it is highly convenient to consider the use of new sources, such as desalinated water and the direct use of seawater or black water.

We take into consideration that the Andean knowledge, technology and organization are characterized by an efficient use of water and a respectful management of the ecosystems, which should be more investigated, revalued and spread. On the other hand, we believe that the combination between state-of-the-art technologies an ancestral knowledge can be one key point for the sustainability of the water resources and the life quality in the basins. An example is the usage of the water infiltration in the high parts of the basin to reload the aquifers. In this way, the aquifers are used as large water dams that receive water during the rain season and then, once saturated, can flow naturally during the dry season guaranteeing the presence of springs.

4. Stakeholders cooperation to repair the environmental liabilities.

The existing environmental liabilities with identified holders must be treated as a priority for they constitute a permanent contamination source of rivers, springs and aquifers.

Regarding the mining liabilities left by the State or other private holders without identification, it is important to establish mechanisms to carry out the liabilities remediation plans by promoting joint actions between the State, the companies, the communities and the international cooperation.

5. Monitoring and Participative Environmental Surveillance in the Extraction Industry and the Basin

The transparency in the water management is a fundamental factor to establish and/or reestablish trust between the stakeholders of a basin; therefore, the Monitoring and Participative Environmental Surveillance Committees are created in places where their actions contribute significantly in the legalization of practices and integrated management processes of water resources.

Hence it is convenient to facilitate the creation of those Committees, lead by the State and

count with the presence of all stakeholders. Their field of action must be in different impact areas during the various stages of the mining activity, and they should share the information about the superficial and underground water sources.

They should also establish themselves gradually as components of the basins and microbasins management organization at regional scope and join the local and regional environmental management system.

All stakeholders within the basin must promote and/or strengthen the participation monitoring processes by sharing information and experiences guaranteeing their independence and sustainability.

6. Joint action for non-contaminating and formal local scale mining.

We acknowledge the Regional Government and National Government effort in the organization and formalization of the local scale mining. Due to the scope and complexity of the problem it is important that the local scale miners organizations, NGOs, mining companies and town councils join efforts to help with this task, particularly if they consider the existence of other factors such as drug trafficking, illegal logging and contraband in some of the areas where this activity takes place.

We consider that informal mining is one major source of water contamination. In many areas of our territory, in the coast, in the Andes and the Amazon, dumping contaminating elements like mercury, cyanide, zinc dust and a series of heavy metals has become a public health issue and has caused for some ecosystems to deteriorate.

In order to establish a path of necessary changes for an integrated management of water resources we extend this First Agenda for a sustainable water, basin and mining management, and we offer it as an agreement, which is the result of the dialog between different stakeholders, who despite keeping their differences, are capable of finding common grounds; the relevance and vitality of the Mining and Sustainable Development Dialog Group and dozens of similar experiences are proof of this.

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