



5 August 2019

Andrés Manuel López Obrador
President
United Mexican States
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Dear President López Obrador,

On behalf of Workers Uniting, the global trade union of more than two million workers in Canada, Ireland, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States, we write to express our concerns over the systematic violations of labor rights and environmental standards committed by Grupo Mexico.

Tomorrow marks the fifth anniversary of Grupo Mexico's toxic waste spill in the Rio Sonora watershed, perhaps the worst environmental disaster in Mexico's history. Yet thousands of residents whose health and livelihoods were affected have yet to receive adequate services and compensation, and the community has not been fairly consulted regarding the company's proposal to construct a new tailings dam.

As you know, concerns about the effective protection of the environment and the rights of workers in Mexico are key issues in the current discussion on the ratification of the USMCA in the U.S. Congress. Reports of continuing serious abuses of these rights by Grupo Mexico, most recently the spill of 3,000 liters of sulfuric acid into the Sea of Cortez on July 9, exacerbate these concerns. The Mexican Environment Secretariat (SEMARNAT) on July 16 published a list of 22 major accidents at Grupo Mexico facilities that have adversely affected the environment.

In Peru, tens of thousands of citizens in the Tambo Valley and across the country have recently mobilized to protest the national government's decision

to grant a license to the Tía María mine project, raising concerns about environmental contamination and compelling a re-evaluation of this decision.

In the United States, Grupo Mexico subsidiary ASARCO has been charged since 2000 with more than 120 major federal environmental, health and safety violations at its facilities in Arizona and Texas. In 2015, the Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency announced a settlement with ASARCO requiring the company to spend \$150 million to install new equipment and pollution control technology to reduce emissions of toxic heavy metals. The company's failure to install available safety equipment has been held responsible for worker deaths.

Grupo Mexico is also internationally known as a violator of workers' rights. In the United States, its ASARCO subsidiary has not given its workers a wage increase for nine years and has refused to pay contractually required bonuses, despite adverse rulings from Federal District and Appellate courts. At the same time, ASARCO has stalled contract negotiations, offering zero wage increases to a majority of the workforce, demanding cutbacks in health insurance, and seeking to remove language that maintains worker protections if the company is sold.

In Mexico, Grupo Mexico's ill-treatment and repression of its workers is well-known. The bodies of 63 mineworkers remain entombed in the Pasta de Conchos mine since February 19, 2006. We note and applaud your efforts to initiate the recovery of the bodies so that they can be reunited with their loved ones, and reiterate the offer of the international trade union movement to lend its expertise to the recovery effort. At the same time, we believe that until a criminal investigation is concluded and the company and government officials responsible for this tragedy are held accountable, the matter cannot be put to rest.

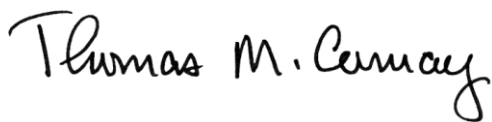
Prior governments assisted Grupo Mexico to suppress the SNTMMSSRM and install protection unions in many of its mines in July 2007. At the Cananea mine in Sonora, striking workers maintained control of the mine until June 6, 2010 when they were defeated by military force after the strike was ruled illegal. The SNTMMSSRM has challenged these actions in the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. At the San Martín mine in Zacatecas, Grupo Mexico continues to operate the mine with scabs despite court rulings upholding the legality of the strike initiated in 2007. The continued presence of employer-controlled unions, established and sustained by coercion, casts doubt on the promise of the labor law reform of May 1,

2019 and heightens the skepticism in the U.S. Congress concerning the efficacy of the USMCA.

We are encouraged by your announcement on June 29 that you intend to convene a dialogue with the union leadership and the employer to address these conflicts, and we pledge our support to this process. At the same time, we ask for your understanding that the Grupo Mexico workers, their families, and the communities affected by its environmental depredations – not only in Mexico but internationally – expect and deserve accountability from the company and remedies for the losses they have suffered.

Workers Uniting stands ready to support all efforts to bring a just and peaceful resolution to these conflicts.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Conway
International President
United Steelworkers (Canada and USA)



Len McCluskey
General Secretary
Unite the Union (Ireland and UK)



Napoleón Gómez Urrutia
President and General Secretary
National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic