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Excellency Mia Mottley, QC, M.P.
Prime Minister's Office
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Dear Prime Minister Mottley,

We write to you as concerned citizens of Guyana and inhabitants of CARICOM who have followed your stewardship as Prime Minister since your election in 2018. Your relationship with the current political administration in Guyana has been a matter of some hope for us and this is the reason we are writing. Equally important has been your advocacy at the national, regional and international levels on the issues of climate heating. Barbados has been at the forefront in advocating for a sustainable and equitable future for our planet and, in particular, for small island developing states (SIDS) and low-lying coastal states. At the United Nations Conference on SIDS in 1994, hosted by Barbados, the concept of common and differentiated responsibilities was further developed and became a cornerstone of subsequent iterations in varied fora. As you have argued eloquently, development must take account of impacts, especially on countries like ours in CARICOM who are paying the price for runaway global heating and anthropogenic climate change.

We admire deeply your international stature and your clear advocacy on issues of climate heating and its repercussions, particularly for AOSIS countries. We are writing to you in your public capacity and our intention is to make this letter public as the issues we outline concern all the citizens of CARICOM. We are heartened by the protections and safeguards accorded to CARICOM citizens, including to environmental rights, set out in CARICOM's Charter of Civil Society (1997).

As you may be aware, Guyana's massive offshore oil reserves, announced in 2015, have introduced new and old issues with respect to fossil fuel exploration and their relationship to climate heating. In the leadup to the Paris Agreement of 2016, Guyana and CARICOM as a whole argued for a sustainable path and called for an end to industrial activities that would push temperature increase beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius. Regrettably, the oil reserves in Guyana have opened an even more urgent concern for all citizens of CARICOM. The subsea drilling for exploration and extraction wells extends two miles deep into the earth's crust, beneath a mile of water. ExxonMobil (XOM) alone has and is now drilling at least 16 development/production wells in the Liza-1 and -2 fields and 6 wells already in the Payara field. XOM currently plans to drill a total of 158 wells in four oil fields by 2030 in the southeast corner of the Stabroek tract alone.

Robert Bea, among the world's foremost forensic engineers and a leading expert on the 2010 BP Macondo oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, worries that Exxon's operations appear to lack the appropriate preparation or planning to head off a deepwater blowout and major oil spill. "[I am far from comfortable](#)," Bea, co-director of the Marine Technology and Management Group Center for Risk Mitigation, said. "They [ExxonMobil] should be too." Yet there seem to have been [little advances in avoidance, control and mitigation methods for oil spills](#) in the following decade.



In particular, Bea is worried about a loss of well control, or blowout – which could cause a catastrophic oil spill. He finds that Exxon has not kept the risks of such events as low as “reasonably practicable”, based on the documents he reviewed. Bea cites numerous problems with Exxon’s plans.

Madame Prime Minister, we enclose the map prepared by ERM, the consultancy firm that has done all of XOM’s Environmental Impact Assessments to date in Guyana. That map shows that the northwesterly currents of the Guyana territorial sea would push even a small oil spill to the southern Jamaican coast. Even a small oil spill would bespoil the Caribbean Sea and threaten the livelihoods of fishers and the tourism industry, not to mention the harms to marine life and ecosystems. We draw to your attention the limited capacity in the Guyanese regulatory bodies to exercise oversight of the offshore oil industry, which imperils the entire Caribbean.

Scientific studies have established the harms to marine life from the frequent and intense noises caused by deepsea oil production and from the discharge of wastes. The accompanying breakneck pace of 4D seismic surveys and the velocity of the current and projected oil drilling and pumping are greater than any other exploration and/or extraction that have occurred hitherto globally for offshore oil extraction. XOM intends to continue seismic survey throughout the expected 20-years lifespan of the oil fields.

We urge you to take the lead in convening CARICOM leaders and experts in assessing the scale, intensity and risks posed to the entire Caribbean by the reckless pace of oil exploration and production taking place in Guyana’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

At the recently held Guyana Energy Conference and Expo, you stated, “We are people who have been victims of colonization and exploitation.” Over the past four years, Guyanese and global citizens have painstakingly detailed the shockingly one-sided nature of the 2016 Petroleum Agreement signed by the Government of Guyana with Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL), CNOOC of China and Hess of the USA. You can find some of the published letters on [our website](#). You will have noted [the absence of opportunities for interaction](#) between the oil companies, their contractors and civil society at the International Energy Conference and Expo, this absence following the pattern that XOM and its EIA contractor do not answer questions from civil society but engage only with high levels in government.

Honourable Prime Minister, we appeal to you, cognizant of your special relationship with the Government of Guyana. We hope that you will urge the governments of CARICOM to evaluate the scale, intensity and risks posed to the entire Caribbean by the ongoing high velocity oil exploration and production in Guyana’s EEZ. We hope you will assess the deeply inequitable and neo-colonial arrangements between the government of Guyana and petroleum companies, in which the public wealth of Guyana is privatized and negative environmental harms to both Guyana and the Caribbean are socialized. We look forward to your acknowledgement and response. We stand ready to engage with you on these issues.

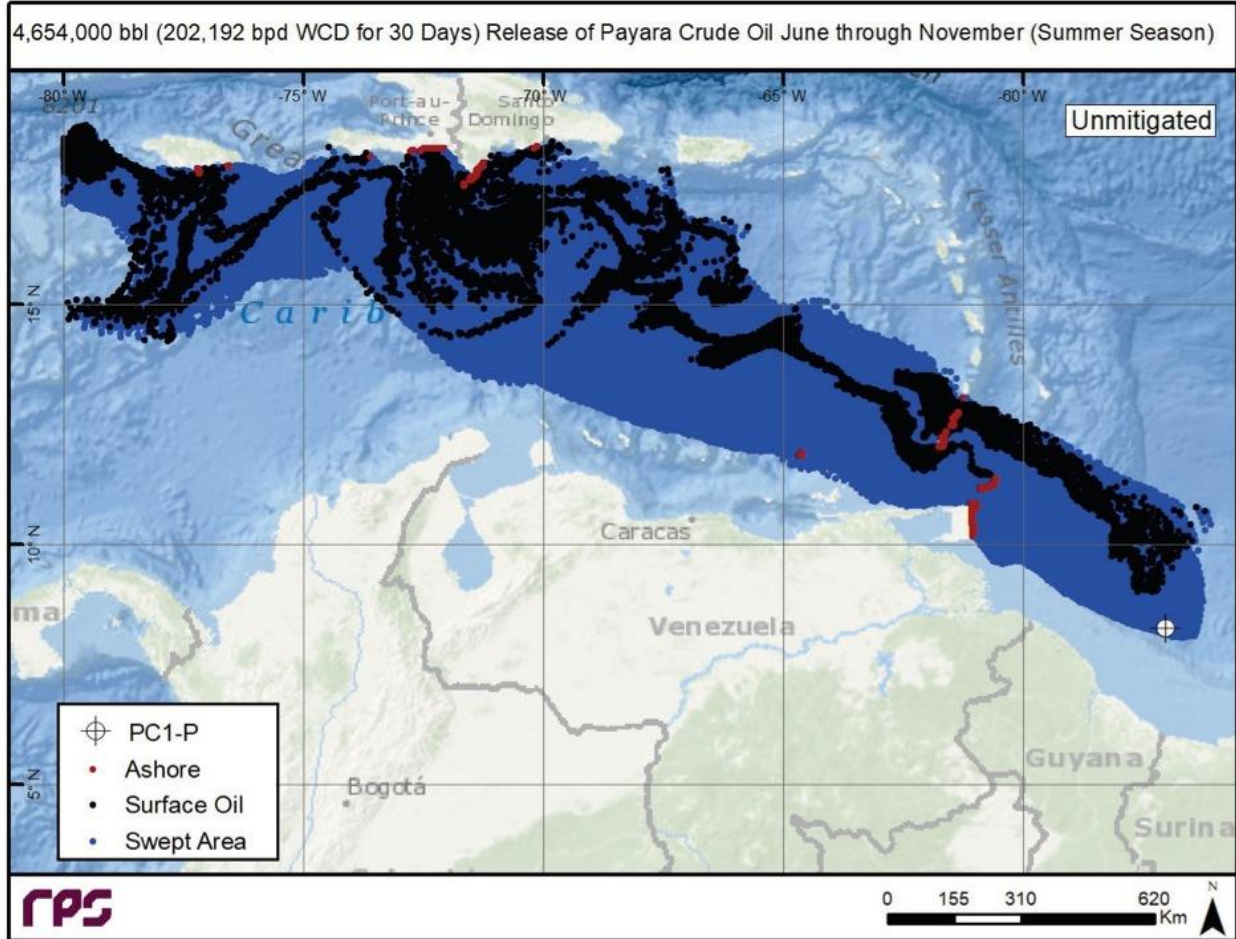
Yours Sincerely,

Alfred Bhulai
Janette Bulkan
Dennis Henry
Jerry Jaillal
Darshanand Khusial
Mike Persaud
Joe Persaud
Ganga Ramdas
Charles Sugrim
Oil & Gas Governance Network (www.oggn.org/about)





Reference Map:



Map is displayed as Figure A-22 on page 276 of 474 pages. In: ERM. (2021). *Environmental Impact Assessment. Yellowtail Development Project. Volume III. Prepared for Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited.* 474 pages.