

[The Pachamama Alliance](#)

This last summer, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa ended his innovative Yasuní ITT initiative that protected a portion of Amazon rainforest rich in biodiversity.

To leave the oil in the soil, he asked the international community to donate US\$3.6 billion – half the amount of the estimated value of crude oil in the ground – in annual increments in exchange for indefinitely conserving the area, rather than opening it up for exploration and drilling.

Showing Ecuador's Government What Is Valued

The terms under which President Correa wanted the funding were suspect, however, and didn't sit well with the international community. As a result, the desired funding was not forthcoming, prompting him to scrap the initiative and blame the international community for failing the effort.

Now, Ecuadorians are taking matters into their own hands. A petition requesting a referendum on the question, "Do you agree that the government of Ecuador should leave the crude of ITT, known as Block 43, below ground indefinitely?" has collected over half the signatures it needs to force a vote. Activists behind the petition feel confident they will garner the full number required.

The Guardian reports that "A referendum campaign would pit Correa against some of his most persistent critics, including former minister of energy and mines, Alberto Acosta," and, "Acosta says that the path of the Yasuní ITT initiative reflected a "logic of permanent blackmail" by combining a threat to drill for oil with civil society's argument for the preservation of Yasuní based on ecological considerations and the rights of the uncontacted peoples."

Why President Correa Ended the Yasuní-ITT

In an earlier news piece we posted on the ending of the initiative, our CEO, Bill Twist, outlined the following as factors contributing to the initiative's failure that, in fact, had nothing to do with

the international community's failure to properly support it:

Ecuador was never willing to actually commit to leave the oil in the ground. They were not willing to have a penalty with teeth in it if some future administration decided to exploit the oil.

The whole time Ecuador was trying to enroll international support they were also moving forward with plans for the 11th Round—oil exploitation of adjacent rainforest lands nearly 20 times the size of the Yasuní ITT oil block.

Ecuador was spending as much each year in subsidies that encourage fossil fuel use in the country as it was trying to raise in the Yasuní ITT Trust fund. International donors that looked closely at the plan didn't step up because the plan lacked integrity.

Mr. Twist also stated that, "Each of these three problems could have been fixed, and in fact still could be."

For now, we wait with bated breath to see if the petition is successful.