

Press Conference Public Eye Awards 2010  
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## List of Candidates for This Year's Awards – The Abyss Behind Green Veneers

Even more than a dozen years of work in the environmental sector, in the shadow of major corporations and corrupt governments, do not necessarily exhaust the feeling of outrage against the destruction of the environment and social exploitation. Unfortunately, I was almost tempted to think as – with growing indignation – I worked my way through the roughly 40 cases that had been nominated in November: The behavior of some very reputable global corporations, firmly anchored in the so-called "developed" and democratic countries of the North is just outrageous. It also contrasts sharply with the glossed over messages of enterprises, governments and global organizations such as the United Nations that would have us believe that **environmental pollution, climate destruction and social exploitation out of pure greed for profit** are catastrophes of yesteryear or only happen in the least developed parts of the world.

A good look at the list of this year's nominations will tell you otherwise. The very corporations that rank at the top of the Dow Jones sustainability index and carry the United Nations' "Global Compact" label certifying commendable conduct are the worst exploiters of people and the environment – as if concepts such as environmental protection, climate change or human rights did not exist. Among this year's nominees, companies such as GDF/Suez, Holcim, Sinar Mas, Nestlé, Coca Cola, Petrobras, Shell or Vattenfall play the role of hypocrites.

The **plethora of disgrace** uncovered and passed on to Public Eye by dozens of NGOs, including many small or even tiny groups, shows that this platform is needed more than ever, because even big global organizations such as Greenpeace, Amnesty or Oxfam cannot shine a light on all corners of the world. At the same time, these examples show that the Public Eye Awards give NGOs operating with very limited means all over the world a kind of leverage they would find hard to achieve otherwise. The pullout of last year's "Swiss Award" winner BKW from a climate-damaging coal power station project in Northern Germany emphasizes the significance of the Public Eye.

It was not easy to draw up a shortlist from the nominations submitted from all continents and it was hard to digest the amount of outrageous injustices still – or possibly more than ever – being perpetrated day after day in the service of shareholder value all over the world.

Often this happens with the complicity of governments as in the case of a **dam project of GDF/Suez**. The company wants to build a giant dam on the biggest southern tributary of the Amazon and has enlisted the vigorous support of both the French and the Brazilian government in pursuit of the project – against the rights of the indigenous population and without any respect for the environment.

It is also striking – and shocking – to find a country such as **Canada**, which one would not hesitate to count among the countries with a relatively high environmental consciousness and a functioning democracy, on the shortlist not once but twice – and in an especially scandalous way.

Looking at pictures of oil extraction sites in Alberta, in Canada's Northeast, by far the biggest, most unprofitable and least ecological oil fields in the world, it is not even the Third World that

comes to mind but Moon or Mars: on an area as big as Switzerland and Austria combined the surface of the earth is stripped bare in search of tar sands, a process that leaves behind billions of liters of greenish, yellowish and reddish tinted waste water that floods and pollutes the land. This was once a landscape of forests, rivers and marshes, the homeland of the 23 indigenous nations of Alberta. (The 2009 documentary Petropolis by the Swiss-Canadian filmmaker Peter Mettler contains impressive images of the site.)

And then there are the **Vancouver Winter Olympics** in Western Canada that will take place just a few weeks from now: not only were unique landscapes sacrificed on the altar of sports and big money, including important bear retreats and salmon spawning grounds but also the livelihood of the Indian First Nations. And once more we witness "green washing" on a big scale. The Canadian Organizing Committee calls the event the "greenest ever Olympic Games", even though 100'000 trees of old growth forest have been felled and freeways cut through nature reserves – without compensating the original forest owners by the way.

Joining these candidates (GDF/Suez, Royal Bank of Canada und IOC) in the competition for the "People's Award" are three more cases from the "Global" and "Swiss" shortlists – cases no less appalling than the ones I have just introduced. There is **Arcelor Mittal**, the world's biggest steel conglomerate (with major shareholder Lakshmi Mittal from India) that pollutes whole regions in **South Africa**, with devastating consequences for the environment and the local population. Toxic substances contaminate soil and ground water, cancer rates for residents are horrendous, livestock is born with deformities.

**Roche**, on the other hand, already known for earlier scandals such as Seveso or the dump sites for hazardous wastes in the Basel area, is doing research in China for a drug to prevent the rejection of transplanted organs even though it is known that more than 90% of transplanted organs in China are harvested from **executed prisoners**. Roche is currently engaged in kidney and liver transplant research in various clinics in China but has made no effort to verify the origin of the organs used in its research.

And last but not least, there is the case that many of you may already know about involving the **PR firm Farner**. Working for the Swiss arms lobby (mainly the government-owned RUAG), Farner infiltrated and spied on the "Gruppe Schweiz ohne Armee" (Group Switzerland without an Army) to gain a decisive advantage for its campaign against the initiative to ban the **export of war material** from Switzerland.

From now until the award presentation on January 27th in Davos polling for the "**People's Award**" is on. On the new Public Eye website you can cast your vote to select one of the six candidates for Worst Company of 2010.