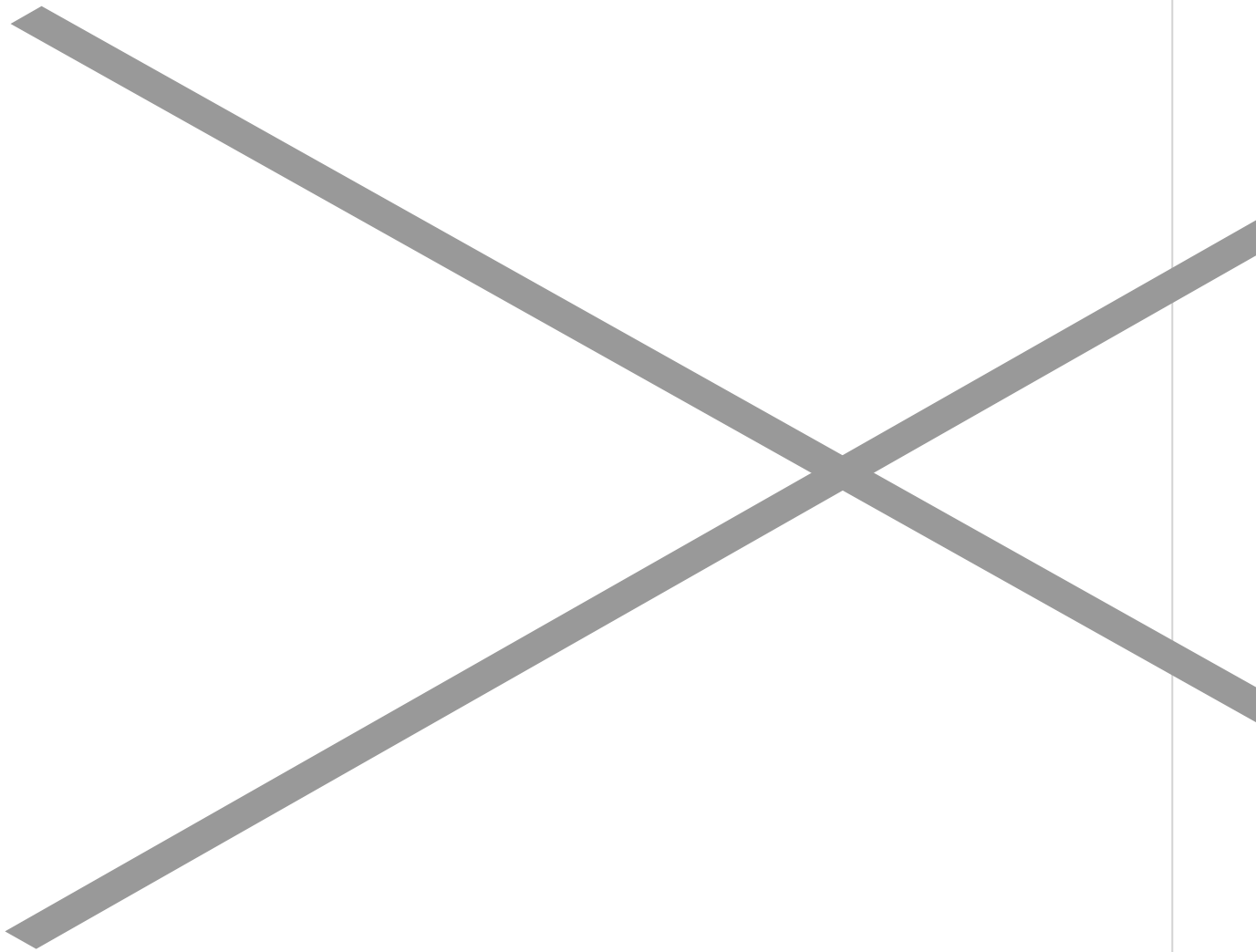


Ecuadorian voters back referendum to ban oil extraction in Yasuní National Park

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Quito, August 22 (RHC)-- Ecuadorian voters overwhelmingly supported a historic referendum on Sunday, blocking oil extraction in the Amazon's Yasuní National Park — the largest protected area in Ecuador with massive petroleum reserves crossing through Indigenous Yasuní land.

The effort was spearheaded by Indigenous leaders and environmental defenders. The group Yasunidos said on social media: "This is the first time a nation chooses to defend life and leave petroleum underground."

Scientists have warned that the Amazon could soon reach a tipping point: Deforestation from oil mining and other industries is linked to reduced rainfall, which in turn could accelerate the demise of the rainforest.

And the decline of the Amazon could have global repercussions, as the forest serves as a crucial carbon sink, capable of absorbing carbon emissions from the atmosphere. But ahead of Sunday's vote, supporters of drilling warned that a ban would damage Ecuador's economy, which relies heavily on oil extraction.

Energy Minister Fernando Santos told Al Jazeera this month that ending the drilling would "result in a loss of \$1.2bn annually, which would be detrimental to the country's economy." But activists celebrated Sunday's vote as a victory for Indigenous and environmental protections.

"Today Ecuador takes a giant step to protect life, biodiversity, and Indigenous people," the country's two main Indigenous groups, CONFENIAE and CONAIE, said in a joint social media post.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/331985-ecuadorian-voters-back-referendum-to-ban-oil-extraction-in-yasuni-national-park>



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