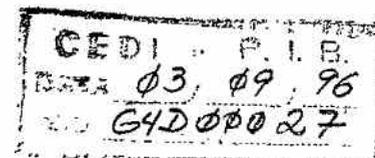


# COICA



**Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica**  
Coordinating Body for the Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of the Amazon Basin / Coordenadora das Organizações Indígenas da Bacia Amazônica



## OUR AGENDA

FOR THE BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL FUNDERS

OF

AMAZON DEVELOPMENT:

**AIDSESP**  
Perú

**CIDOB**  
Bolívia

**CONFENIAE**  
Ecuador

**ONIC**  
Colombia

**UNI**  
Brasil

World Bank, Interamerican Development Bank,  
US Agency for International Development,  
European Economic Community

We, the Indigenous Peoples, have been an integral part of the Amazon Biosphere for millennia. We have used and cared for the resources of that biosphere with a great deal of respect, because it is our home, and because we know that our survival and that of our future generations depends on it. Our accumulated knowledge about the ecology of our home, our models for living with the peculiarities of the Amazon Biosphere, our reverence and respect for the tropical forest and its other inhabitants, both plant and animal, are the keys to guaranteeing the future of the Amazon Basin, not only for our peoples, but also for all of humanity.

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A. What the COICA wants:

1. The most effective defense of the Amazonian Biosphere is the recognition and defense of the territories of the region's Indigenous Peoples and the promotion of their models for living within that Biosphere and for managing its resources in a sustainable way. The international funders of Amazonian development should educate themselves about the Indigenous People's relationship with their environment, and formulate new concepts of Amazonian development together with new criteria for supporting Amazonian development projects which would be compatible with the Indigenous People's principles of respect and care for the world around them, as well as with their concern for the survival and well-being of their future generations.
2. The international funders must recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples as those are being defined within the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, established by the UN Human Rights Commission. These rights should form the basis of the institution's policy towards the Indigenous Peoples and their territories who live in those areas where the funder is supporting development work. The funders should consult directly with the organizations of the Indigenous Peoples throughout the process of establishing this policy and should distribute that policy widely among governments and the organizations of Indigenous Peoples.
3. There can be no development projects in indigenous areas without the informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples affected. The funders must make every effort, through field research conducted by personnel of the funding institution, to verify the existence of indigenous population, or the possible negative impact on an indigenous population, in areas where they are considering the implementation of a project. If either is the case, the funder must openly recognize the existence of this population or the negative impact on them, and then should establish as a condition for further funding the project
  - that the government responsible for implementing the project also recognize the existence of the population and/or the negative impact;
  - that the affected population be informed of the plans and impact of the plans; and
  - that the affected population consent to the implementation of the plans.
 These conditions should be monitored by both the funder and the organization which represents the affected population.
4. If the indigenous population has given its informed consent to the implementation of a development project within its territory, the project must be designed in such a way that it respects the territories of the population as they define them, their economy and their social organization, according to the institutional policy as described in Point One. There should be special components of the project which lend support directly to the indigenous population for their own needs and for the development proposals which they may have. The organization which represents the affected population should participate in the design of the project.
5. The international funders should enter into a direct relation of collaboration and mutual respect with the organizations of Indigenous Peoples, through their representatives. This relation should establish the basis for:
  - consultations on all aspects of projects implemented in areas with an indigenous population or which have an impact on an indigenous population;
  - participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects;

- exchange of information of mutual interest on plans, projects, activities, and needs of both.

**B. How the COICA Proposes Implementing this Agenda:**

1. Each funding agency should establish written accords with the Coordinating Body at the international level, and with each member organization of the Coordinating Body at the national level. These written accords should specify the conditions and objectives of the relation based on collaboration and mutual respect.
2. The representatives from the headquarters of the funder should meet with the representatives of the Coordinating Body at least once a year in order to monitor the implementation of the accords and of the institution's policy on Indigenous Peoples. This meeting could take place at the headquarters of either the funder or of the Coordinating Body.
3. The resident representatives of the funder (country mission director, area representative, etc.) should meet periodically with the representatives of the member organizations of Coordinating Body in order to make the necessary consultations, to exchange information, and to monitor the implementation of the accords.
4. In the event that projects be proposed for an area in which there are indications of the existence of an indigenous population, or if there is reason to suspect that the project may have an impact on an indigenous population, the Coordinating Body recommends establishing the following procedures:
  - As a first step, the funder, through personnel hired by the funder, should verify in the field the existence of an indigenous population in the project area, and the possible impact of the proposed project on that population; during this verification process, the researcher should consult directly with the Coordinating Body and with the member organization within the country in question.
  - If it is determined that the proposed project will affect an indigenous population, a Tripartite Commission should be formed with a representative of the funder, the government, and the Coordinating Body through its local representative (including a representative of the local organization which directly represents the affected population, if such an organization exists).
  - This Tripartite Commission should have the following functions:
    - inform the affected population of the development plans and determine if that population consents to the plans;
    - determine if the proposed project represents a threat to the indigenous population and make recommendations about how to proceed;
    - determine what the priorities of the affected population are and make recommendations about how to best meet the priority needs;
    - design the project component for the indigenous population, participate in the overall design of the project, and monitor the implementation of the project;
    - design and implement a permanent evaluation of the impact of the project on the indigenous population.

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## TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

**AIDSESP**  
Perú

**CIDOB**  
Bolivia

**CONFENIAE**  
Ecuador

**ONIC**  
Colombia

**UNI**  
Brasil

## THE C.O.I.C.A. FOR THE FUTURE OF THE AMAZON

October 1989

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## I. AMAZONIAN REALITY AND ANTI-AMAZONIAN POLICIES

The recently proclaimed "Law for Amazonian Development" in Peru, Brazil's announcement of a new program for "Our Natural Environment" after two decades of burning down the Amazon, the meeting of the Presidents of the Amazon countries in Manaus to review Amazonian development policies, and the rapid expansion of coca leaf production and drug trafficking are but a part of the overall context in which both politicians and the public are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of the conquest and development of the Amazon Basin.

We must analyze closely and critically the economic and social policies and practices of the Amazonian countries if we are to avoid a major human disaster. We propose to do that here from the point of view of the indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon. This means first of all we must take into account the long-term interests of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, because our number one priority is guaranteeing the conservation and reproduction of the natural resources needed for the future life and well-being of our peoples, and that in the broad sense, means for all Amazonian peoples. However, this is not to say that we do not share the concern for the well-being of the national societies as a whole, or in the development of the countries of which we, as indigenous peoples, are citizens.

All of the Amazonian countries have made preposterous claims that the great empty Amazon jungle can finance national development, it can provide an alternative for overcoming historical structural problems, and it can become the countries' breadbasket. These flippant and irresponsible claims, which have been the basis for development policies for over three decades, are of great concern for us, not only because of their disastrous consequences for our indigenous peoples, but also for the threat they pose to the very future of the entire Basin.

### The Amazon Coordinating Body

The COORDINATING BODY OF THE INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE AMAZON BASIN (COICA) was founded in Lima on the 26 of March, 1984. The Coordinating Body is an organization created by the national Indian organizations of each Amazonian country to strengthen the ties between us, to share our experiences, and to join together in the defense of our rights and of the Amazon Basin, our homeland. The following organizations are members of the Coordinating Body:

1. The Inter-Ethnic Association for Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDSESP), which brings together 21 regional organizations representing 60 indigenous peoples with a total population of 300,000.
2. The Central of Indigenous Communities and People of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB), an association of 9 regional organizations representing 41 indigenous peoples with a total population of 300,000.
3. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuadorian Amazonia (CONFENIAE), made up of 9 organizations representing 8 indigenous peoples with a population of 150,000.

4. The Union of Indigenous Nations of Brazil (UNI) which brings together over 150 different peoples with a population of 300,000.
5. The National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Colombia (ONIC) which represents 170 peoples with a population of 150,000.

During the first three encounters of the Coordinating Body, the General Assembly agreed on the following objectives for the Coordinating Body:

- To represent the point of view of the member organizations in international meetings and forums with representatives of governmental and inter-governmental bodies, and of non-governmental organizations.

- To foster the unity and mutual cooperation of all indigenous peoples.

- To promote the indigenous cultural values through a process of autonomous development within each country, through such programs as intercultural bilingual education and health programs, respecting the autonomy and the particular customs of each local organization and peoples.

- To incorporate those indigenous peoples in the process of organizing themselves who may wish to join.

### The Impact of Development on Indigenous Peoples

In order to analyze the impact of the economic policies and practices in the Amazon, we must begin by explaining how we understand "development". There are many different ways to understand and to measure development. We indigenous peoples have long had many different development models imposed on us and our territories by both the State and the private sector, and we have suffered enormously. You see, we do have some experience to speak from.

We believe that there can be development only when the well-being of the entire population involved is improved; there is no development when only a few are benefited at the expense of the majority. That is why we cannot speak of development in the Amazon region when such policies usurp the land and resources of its ancestral inhabitants, nor when hundreds of thousands of poor peasants from other regions are irresponsibly pushed into the Amazon in search of land and livelihood. There can be development only when the benefits created go to the local people, but not when the fruits of the development flow towards the centers of economic power, whether they be national or international.

Development can occur only when the population it affects participates in the design of the proposed policies and the model which is implemented thereby corresponds to the aspirations of the local population. Development can be guaranteed to the people only when the foundations are laid for sustained well-being of the region; only continued poverty can be guaranteed when the policies lead to pillage and destruction of the local resources by those coming from outside.

The indigenous peoples of the Amazon have always lived there; the Amazon is our home. We know its secrets well, both what it can offer us and what its limits are. For us, there can be no life if our forests are destroyed. We want to continue living in our homeland. We have no interest in taking everything the forest has to offer and moving to the city to live in material comfort from the profits of our plunder. We become very angry and indignant when we hear Peru's President Garcia ask what the fuss is over a few trees, which is nothing compared to the bomb dropped on Hiroshima or the oil spilled on the Alaska coastline. We are not talking about a few trees; we are talking about 250-300,000 hectares a year which go up in smoke in the Peruvian Amazon alone.

The reality of this disaster is all the more serious for us indigenous peoples because we live there. This disaster has meant impoverishment for our people, regardless of whether or not we now wear shirts and pants. Our very own sources of nourishment have been reduced dramatically as we exchange fresh fish for noodles, and wild game for white rice. Millions of hectares have already been destroyed: 12% of the Amazon is deforested, and it is estimated that 20 million acres of virgin forest are annually deforested in the region.

At last serious studies are being undertaken on the long term effects of this massive deforestation. One example are the changing water levels in the major rivers. The incidence of major flooding along the Ucayali valley in Peru has increased with the deforestation of the eastern slopes of the Andes. The Quichua people along the Napo river complain of increased flooding; they continue to suffer from the effects of the floods, especially the loss of fish in the river. These changes are not a product of nature's whims, but a direct result of the massive deforestation taking place for African oil palm plantations in Ecuador.

In the conquest of the Amazon Basin, extreme forms of violence have always been present. Ever since the first Spanish forays in the 16th century, the many attempts to conquer and settle the Amazon have resulted in millions of deaths for indigenous peoples, because of disease, slavery, and direct confrontation. Much of the Amazon continues to be "beyond the Law", where a fierce racism and contempt for indigenous peoples makes them easy targets for all sorts of crimes. These crimes are so common place they rarely make the newspapers. In one case which did make it to the papers in Colombia, we learned that the assassins of a group of indigenous peoples told the judge that they didn't know it was a crime to kill an indian. In our communities, there are all kinds of murders, not just the massacres which make it to the newspapers.

The Amazon is not a great empty expanse, though it is being emptied of its indigenous population with the decimation of as many as 6 million of its original inhabitants; 6 million indians who lived in the Amazon before we knew about development. The Amazon is empty for those who don't want to see us, for those who continue to think it is a great act of pioneering heroism to clear us from our territories, dead or alive.

#### Slavery: Alive and Well in the Amazon

For those who think we are referring to the Far West, or to ancient history, we want to remind you that AIDSEP of Peru denounced before the world in 1986 the terrible situation of the Ashaninka people in Atalaya. To this day, hundreds of families are kept as slaves on farms or sent to cut timber, with no pay, no food, but with armed guards. Young girls are kept captive in the lords house to service him as his will. Both young and old are

mutilated and beaten for trying to escape. Tuberculosis is rampant. The local authorities know this is going on, but they close their eyes, because, in their own words, if the lords had to pay for the labor, the local economy would collapse. The local forestry officials know that the lumber which is sent out of the area is cut by slave labor.

Last year, after several visits, the central government agreed to form a High Level Commission, to deal with the situation, and even managed to frighten a few of the lords. However, after a few months of inaction, the Lords realized that the state would do nothing, and they clamped down even harder on their indian slaves. This is how indigenous people are integrated into development. This is the price we must pay for Amazonian development.

Surely this is what makes the Amazon exotic. Not the hundreds of indigenous peoples who are trying to maintain what is left of our culture and our dignity. No, what is exotic in our countries is the slavery that still exists at the end of the twentieth century, the crushing poverty, the disdain for our rights, the shrug of the shoulders for those who, over a cow, kill 17 Tikunas along the Brazilian Solimoes, or blind a young Ashaninka, Grimaldo Pintayo, with machete blows. These exotic aspects of our life are created by those very gentlemen whose votes, surely, will benefit the politicians who, from luxurious hotels in Europe or from their ocean-front mansions, try to convince the world that our identity and our millenarian culture are the obstacles which block the development of our peoples.

The resulting struggle among poor people over each millimeter of land in our impoverished Amazon, carefully manipulated by large interest groups, generates violence. And our forest today is the land of violence. Poverty, corruption, injustice, and lack of the most basic security all generate violence. That is why the Amazon is so violent today.

### The Violence of Development

To give you an idea what the impact of Amazonian development is from our point of view, look at the incident that happened recently in the Bolivian Chimore. A young Yuki, member of a little contacted group of Indians, shot an arrow at a colonist. The newspapers played up the savagery of the attack and called on evangelical missionaries to civilize the Yuki. But there was no mention of the fact that a few days before, when a group of Yukis were hunting in their traditional hunting reserves, colonists carrying government issued land certificates along with their guns, took the lives of 11 Yukis and later hung their bodies to make sure others did not return. In this way, the colonists incorporated more empty Amazonian territory for development. Could it be that the Yukis stood in the way of development?

Over the past 5 years, the Aguaruna community of Chamikar on the Marañon River of northern Peru, has been defending its territory from an invasion of settlers and merchants. And in response, the Peruvian authorities jailed the leaders of the Community. Just recently, on June 8, members of the Chayahuita community of Estrella (Peru) who were trying to recover their lands, were repressed by force and accused of being invaders. In the face of such injustice, how can we expect to behave? With patience? We are told to go to court, and we do. But we are Indians and the system of justice is not so blind that it cannot see this. Only once, the Aguaruna won a court case, after tremendous expense in money and time. This was in the community of Tsun-tsuntsa, also on the Marañon River. The day after the court made its decision, the settlers surrounded these Aguaruna and killed the

elder chief, Chu Nugkag Kit. Who do you think was jailed? None other than the indigenous peoples of the community. No one else. An investigation of this crime would have been interesting since the bullet which killed the chief was military issue.

Violence of this type does not simply spring into existence on its own. It is generated out of social conditions. Who created the violence which comes with the drug trade? Indigenous peoples? The peasants who begin to cultivate coca leaf because no one will buy their meager rice crop? The politicians continue dreaming about developing the Amazon, they continue confronting us poor people against each other, and they keep blaming us for the violence on the Amazon frontier.

One of the common myths about these conditions of violence and abuse is that they are the cost of civilization, and that national development calls for the integration of indigenous peoples who need to be taught to be productive. And when indigenous peoples do not want to be productive on the terms established by that "civilization" we are told to get out of the way. We are told: you have no right to own any land if you don't know how to produce. If we are so unproductive, why then do so many settlers and landlords employ us to clear the forests for their pastures, to cut lumber, and to gather rubber and brazil nuts? Is this not straightforward colonialism? A very highlevel official of Amazonian Development in Peru once stated that, if the Indians couldn't make a living from agriculture on the tiny amount of agricultural lands the State was willing to cede to them, they should urbanize their communities and live on the industry and commerce which naturally develop in urban areas. These myths, these stereotypes, and this abuse is part of our everyday life.

### More Myths of Underdevelopment

During millennia, indigenous societies have developed a thorough knowledge of the forest and how live within it. So that long before modern scientists began studying the Amazon and "discovered" the need to use the forest in a rational and sustained way, we already practiced this. Yet many people, those with more prejudice than knowledge, want to blame us for destroying the forest. They say that we clear and plant land only to abandon it after a year or two. In fact, we manage our clearings in such a way that when they no longer produce annual crops, we introduce other plants and trees which we can use for several more years until the clearing is completely overgrown. Ecologists who have begun studying our productive systems were amazed to find practices for enriching the forest with certain plants which they had assumed were wild. Unfortunately these practices are disappearing in many areas because of the pressures to produce crops for the market.

For those who come to the Amazon with the idea of conquering it and exploiting its resources, the forest is seen as an enemy of civilization, as a wild and savage scourge which must be felled and destroyed in order to produce any wealth. But if we compare the 25 kilos of meat produced in one hectare of forest converted to cattle pasture, with the nutritional value of the animals, birds, grubs, and plants produced by the same hectare of forest, we begin to see that the forest is not an enemy. It can be a very productive ally. Many serious studies have demonstrated that not only is the current conquest of the Amazon foolish and shortsighted in ecological terms, but also in terms of the economic results which are produced. And yet, the governments of the Amazonian countries continue to insist on repeating such experiences despite their proven failures.

In his enthusiasm for conquering the Amazon, President Belaunde (Peru 1963-68; 1980-85) estimated that for each kilometer of road which his administrations built in the Peruvian Amazon, between 400 and 1000 hectares would be incorporated into productive activity

benefiting the nation. We wish that were true, for if it were, we would have more than enough food to feed the entire country. But what we see along these "penetration" roads are wasted pasturelands, burned over forest, and denuded hills, and desperately poor peasants. Look at any of the roads into the forest: the new route between Chanchamayo and Satipo in Peru, the road to Lago Agrio-Coca in Ecuador, BR364 in Rondonia, Brazil, the road into the Bolivian Beni. Road building is no guarantee of development. In fact it is dangerous to allow roads guide and define Amazonian development. It is estimated that of the five million hectares that have been destroyed along the eastern slopes of the ANdes, only between 20% and 30% are still under production.

And have the costly colonization projects fared better? The experience throughout the Amazon, especially in Brazil, have shown us that they haven't produced better results. The Special Projects for Jungle Development, created by the second Belaunde administration, were supposed to have incorporated vast areas for settlement, to have increased national food production, and to have improved the quality of life of the rural population. The results were predictably disappointing. Even more so if we compared the results of the massive investments in these projects with the amounts of foreign debt incurred to finance them. By 1987, almost \$500 million was invested in the Special Projects in Peru; of this, approximately \$235 was borrowed from foreign lenders. Even more alarming is that fact that much of this investment and foreign debt ended up benefiting the production and traffic of cocaine!

### Drug Production and Trafficking

Between 1974 and 1980, the cultivation of coca grew in Peru by 3437%. In 1988, the journal Actualidad Economica estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 hectares of forestland were planted in coca. The magazine QueHacer estimated that the Alto Huallaga valley alone produced enough raw material to manufacture 55% of the cocaine consumed in the world. Add to that list, the Chapare valley and the Beni lowlands in Bolivia, much of eastern Colombia, and growing areas of Brazil, and the size of the problem becomes evident.

The growth of coca leaf cultivation is basically an economic phenomenon. Small farmers in the Amazon receive virtually no support from central governments; and the prices they receive for their products, given the costs of transporting them to markets and the government policies keeping food prices low, keep them in continual debt and poverty. Even in relatively successful areas of settlement like the Alto Mayo valley in Peru where paddy rice was introduced by the Special Project, production costs have for many years outstripped the market value of the crop. There are not any real options left, particularly when the lands obtained, after their initial production spurt ends, often cannot be used for any crop other than coca.

### The Lumber Industry: Our Forests Cut and Dried

The exploitation of the timber is not going much better. On the one hand most of the timber reserves are burned. When vast areas are felled for cattle ranching or other monocropping, millions of cubic feet of wood are burned and wasted. In 1978, Peruvian forestry expert G. Malleaux estimated that only 6% of the timber felled in Peru reached the market at all. The misuse of the timber resources is growing along with the clearing of

the Amazon. In 1988, in the Brazilian state of Acre, local authorities had to close down the airport in Rio Branco, the capital city, because the haze of smoke from the burning forest reduced visibility to such an extent that planes could not land.

Forest extraction, although regulated by laws in each of the Amazonian countries, finds a thousand ways of escaping control. In Peru, the law establishes that the forestry tax should be invested in reforestation. However, the areas reforested rarely go beyond the few experimental plots established to demonstrate the government's commitment to forest management. Little attempt is made to introduce forest management techniques nor to maintain National Forest Reserves nor to keep settlers out of logging areas. Under this system of forest use, the lumber ceases to be a renewable resource. The lumber industry is currently in crisis in part because it has exhausted the more readily available forests, and because it has shown no interest in developing new products that would use a larger variety of forest species.

The failure of Amazonian development policies is also reflected in the extraordinary growth of its urban slums. In many areas, colonization projects are just a point of passage into the slums of nearby urban areas, a place where the victims of this great myth of Amazon development look for a way to survive. Rondonia, Brazil is a case in point. With the paving of BR364, settlers flooded into the area from all over Brazil; by 1984, population growth in the state was an unheard of 15%. But the growth rate of the few urban centers is even more staggering. Porto Velho, a sleepy river town just 20 years ago, is now a teeming commercial center of half a million; Rolim de Moura, founded 13 year ago in the middle of the principal colonization area, is now a city of 120,000.

In Iquitos, Peru, a center of the rubber boom a century ago, there are currently over 30 slums and about 15 new outlying settlements that haven't even reached the status of slum. It is estimated that over 70% of Iquitos's population lives in these marginal areas. Pucallpa, along the Ucayali River in Peru, does not fall far behind with 21 shanty towns around its perimeter, and Puerto Maldonado, despite all the gold extracted from the Madre de Dios River, is surrounded by 20 shanty towns where disillusioned colonists, gold diggers, and others who believed in the Amazonian myth live in misery. While all of these cities are supplied with some locally produced crops, by far the major portion of the food is imported from areas of the country outside of the Amazon, and from Europe and the USA. The freight charges for this imported food make the cost of living in these Amazonian urban areas among the highest in Latin America. Isn't this absurd? Is this sustainable development?

### Indigenous Peoples and the Environmental Movement

In recent years, some sectors of the industrialized countries have developed a consciousness of environmental issues regarding Amazonian development, while scientists have sounded the alarm about the future of the Amazon ecology and the impact this will have for the entire global system. Through pressure from these growing environmental movements, the institutions which fund Amazonian development are changing their outlook and urging the Amazonian countries to introduce to their development programs more safeguards for the environment and for indigenous peoples. These changes are to a large extent the result of the clamor raised by the organizations of indigenous peoples who are

members of the Coordinating Body, together with the organizations representing environmentalists and the more environmentally sensitive public opinion. With the possibility of environmental disasters of such magnitude, we can no longer keep our eyes closed.

The irony of this is that we have been raising this clamor with our own governments for decades, but we had to wait until it was said in English coming from the north, before it was listened to. Our governments do not usually hear when indigenous peoples speak.

However, during the past few months, the Amazonian countries, headed by Brazil, have reacted to this pressure with a certain amount of Amazonian jingoism. First there was a meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Quito, and then a meeting of the Presidents in Manaus, to discuss the criticisms of Amazonian development; the joint declarations which came out of these gatherings charged the critics and even the funding institutions of Europe and the United States with intervening in the internal affairs of sovereign countries and of seeking to internationalize the Amazon Basin.

These declarations point out that Europe and the United States destroyed their forests and altered their natural environment in order to develop their economies, and now, when the countries of the Amazon Pact want to do the same, they protest. But that misses the point. If Europe and North America destroyed their forests and environment, that's no excuse for our countries doing the same. If other regions developed by destroying their environment, then we must accept the challenge and find a new kind of development which does not destroy the environment. We believe it is both necessary and possible to accomplish this.

We also wonder how sincere these nationalistic arguments could be. In the first place, we've watched our governments hand out the most important resources of the region to transnational corporations, in some cases in exchange for the foreign debt. This is the case of the minerals, lumber, and even large cattle ranches in Brazil, and the oil in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The recent campaign against the expansion of african oil palm plantations in Ecuador revealed that most of the capital behind the enterprise was British and German. These transnational corporations and fraudulent "national" companies which hide foreign capital receive government protection and support to act against the interests of the population of the Amazon, that is against the interests of the indigenous peoples, the rubber tappers, the river dwellers, and the poor settlers. But in the long run, this is not in the national interests of our countries because the destruction of the Amazon will leave the future generations of Bolivians, Brazilians, Colombians, Peruvians, Venezuelans, and Surinamese with an impoverished natural environment and an impoverished economy. The "nationalistic" arguments which we have heard from our governments in defense of their development policies are not truly nationalistic, but rather, a cover for surrendering Amazonian resources to foreign corporations.

But clearly these jingoistic arguments are not being aimed at the large corporations exploiting the Amazon's resources nor at the governments of the industrialized countries: this rhetoric is aimed at us, the indigenous peoples, and our allies, who have been winning world public opinion in favor of our ancestral rights and in favor of development policies which care for and use the Amazonian resources wisely.

#### Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation

The Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation could well be an important international instrument for indigenous peoples and their organizations. That is why we are interested in looking closely and critically at this Treaty and finding ways to resolve its own contradictions.

We believe that this Treaty must state clearly what kind of future it proposes for the region and its peoples. So far, from what we see, the declarations made in the Treaty seem to go in one direction while the actions taken by the governments go in another. Given the realities of Amazonian development, this should come as no surprise.

The Declaration of the Amazon Pact Chancellors meeting in Quito earlier this year recognizes the fragility of the Amazonian Biosphere, and speaks for the need to develop the region in ways which are in keeping with the ecosystem. The Pact agreed to establish a Special Commission on the Environment whose objective is to ensure that development plans do not destroy the environment. We applaud these new developments. However, the same declaration, without any explanation, underlines the importance of research on how to expand the plantations of African oil palm. How could the Chancellor speak out in defense of the Amazonian ecosystem, and ignore the ecological and social impact which the African oil palm plantations have had in Ecuador?

The Quito meeting also established a Special Commission on Matters Concerning Indigenous Peoples. The stated objective of this Commission is to strengthen indigenous identity, and to guarantee our participation in determining the future development of the Amazon. In establishing this Commission, the Chancellors stressed the need to officially recognize our cultures. Again, such a step is very positive. Now the next step must be to incorporate the COICA onto this Commission as well as onto other commissions dealing with matters affecting Indigenous Peoples.

### The Indigenous Peoples Perspective on Our Own Autonomous Development

Faced with a continuous dispossession of our resources, an ongoing invasion and loss of our territories, the growing pillage of our forests, and the systematic and intentional disintegration of our cultures and ways of life, we are now asked to provide the industrial world which has colonized us with development alternatives. Under these conditions, our obligation to our people, to our children, as well as to our land, rivers, and forest is to struggle to halt this destruction. We have had little spare time during the past 500 years to think about development.

If you want to know what development means to us, you must be willing to accept that our mode of development is not the same as yours. Many development agents have come into our villages, and inspired by what you call White Man's burden, say to us: "Soon, you will be able to give us your miserable huts and live in tin-roofed houses." But we like our houses. Our architecture is the result of generations of experimentation and adaptation to the heat and rain of the Amazon. For us, tin roofs, while perhaps a symbol of economic wealth and success, turn our houses into ovens. Even the chickens suffer from heat exhaustion when we put tin roofs on their coops.

Our development is not based on accumulation of material goods nor on the greatest rates of profit, obtained at the expense of our territories and future generations. Our development is not based on small individual land holders, who tremble with each rise or fall of the market prices. For us development must take into account the well-being of our entire community or group; it must take into account the future, not just of a government which only lasts for 5 years, but of an entire people, who have existed from the beginning of time, and who, ever since that sad date of 1492, have resisted the conquest and colonization led by other people, who calling themselves Peruvian or Brazilian or Colombian, only demonstrate their contempt for us. Our development aims to share, not to dominate and

accumulate. For us development would allow us to maintain our own world, and not force us to exchange it for a slum in Manaus or Santa Cruz. Development for us is definitely very different.

The key to development for us is an extensive, diversified, and integral territory where all its occupants, people, animals, trees, and rivers, will share the benefits. With the peace of mind that would come from an end of hostilities against us and our territories, we could begin to concentrate on our own development. We could begin to teach you about development. Our development is our own territory, safe from invasion and threat, and respect for our right to conduct our activities in an autonomous way. Yes, we have the right to demand resources from the state for our health, our education, and our economic development. We are not going to forfeit this right. But our development demands that those resources be placed under our own direct responsibility and in agreement with our own interests.

In general terms, COICA and its member organizations believe that development must begin with self-sufficiency, which is the key to autonomy. Our development must emphasize our capacity to feed ourselves--you call it subsistence farming--and to satisfy the material needs of all our people. When we are able to do this, then we can begin to look toward the market and learn how to deal with it without destroying our territories. Market oriented economic activity which destroys the integrity of the forest, its diversity and balance, is not development. We were taught by missionaries and development workers to raise cattle. But we are beginning to realize that we made a poor deal: we sacrificed thousands of useful and potentially useful species just to feed a cow. Why can't you understand that the Amazon's wealth lies in its forests; that is what gives life to all of us. How is it possible that national legislatures have given away millions of hectares of Amazonian forest to be burned over for cattle raising, while at the same time, they complain that the thousands of hectares which we have fought for are too much.

A few months ago, the President of Colombia, Virgilio Barco, handed over to the Huitoto and Bora title to the huge Putumayo Estate, which once belonged to the notorious Arana rubber barons. His words at that occasion indicate that he has some measure of understanding of what development of the Amazon should really be about. After saying that land and Indigenous Peoples belong to each other, he indicated that the degree to which the Amazon could be protected was in direct relation to the degree of control over the Amazon which is in the hands of Indigenous Peoples; that no other measure would produce the same degree of protection, and as a result, if what the Amazonian states really wanted was to foment the rational use of the Amazon, they should begin by putting an end to colonization. Yes, they are only the words of a politician, but even just a decade ago, we would never have heard a politician say such things.

Another president, this time in Peru, stated recently in a gathering of indigenous peoples that we were here long before the Garcias and the Perez, and that he didn't understand why it is that the newcomers are the ones who legalize the ancestral property of the indigenous inhabitants of this land. It should be the indigenous inhabitants, he said, who legitimize the governing officials. Well, we do not legitimize any government at all, past, present, or future, in any of the Amazonian countries, as long as they do not recognize that we are the original peoples in this land and that justice demands a re-composition of our territories. That's where development begins for us Indigenous Peoples, who have deeper roots than anyone in this land, the true nationals and aboriginal inhabitants of our America.

# COICA

**Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica.**

Coordinating Body for the Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of the Amazon Basin / Coordenadora das Organizações Indígenas da Bacia Amazônica



## TO THE COMMUNITY OF CONCERNED ENVIRONMENTALISTS

**AIDSEP**

Perú

**CIDOB**

Bolivia

**CONFENIAE**

Ecuador

**ONIC**

Colombia

**UNI**

Brasil

We, the Indigenous Peoples, have been an integral part of the Amazon Biosphere for millennia. We used and cared for the resources of that biosphere with respect, because it is our home, and because we know that our survival and that of our future generations depend on it. Our accumulated knowledge about the ecology of our home, our models for living within the Amazon Biosphere, our reverence and respect for the tropical forest and its other inhabitants, both plant and animal, are the keys to guaranteeing the future of the Amazon Basin, not only for our peoples, but also for all of humanity. Our experience, especially during the past 100 years, has taught us that when politicians and developers take charge of our home, they are capable of destroying it because of their short-sightedness, their ignorance, and their greed.

We are pleased and encouraged to see the interest and concern expressed by the U.S. environmentalist community for the future of our homeland. We are gratified by the concrete efforts you have made in the USA to educate your peoples about our homeland and the threat it now faces as well as the efforts you have made in South America to defend the Amazonian rain forests and to encourage proper management of its resources. We greatly appreciate and fully support the efforts some of you are making to lobby the US congress, the World Bank, USAID, and the Interamerican Development Bank on behalf of the Amazonian Biosphere and its inhabitants. We recognize that through these efforts, the U.S. environmentalist community has become an important political actor in determining the future of the Amazon Basin.

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#### OUR CONCERNS:

- WE ARE CONCERNED, however, that the Amazonian peoples and in particular the indigenous peoples, have been left out of the environmentalists' vision of the Amazonian Biosphere. The focus of concern of the environmental community has typically been the preservation of the tropical forests and its plant and animal inhabitants. Little concern has been shown for its human inhabitants who are also part of that biosphere.
- WE ARE CONCERNED that the indigenous peoples and their representative organizations have been left out of the political process which is determining the future of our homeland. The environmentalist community has at times lobbied on our behalf; it has spoken out and written in name of the Amazonian Indians. While we appreciate those efforts, it should be made clear that we never delegated this power to the environmentalist community nor to any individual nor organization within that community.
- WE ARE CONCERNED about the "Debt for Nature Swaps" which put the environmentalist organizations in a position of negotiating with our governments the future of our homelands. The case of the Chimanes Forest which Conservation International negotiated with the Bolivian government demonstrates how these swaps can happen with the most brazen disregard for the rights of the indigenous inhabitants and result in the ultimate destruction of the very forests which the "swap" was meant to preserve.
- WE ARE CONCERNED about the violence and ecological destruction of our homeland caused by the growing production and trafficking of cocaine, most of which is consumed by North Americans.

#### WHAT WE WANT:

- WE WANT the environmental community to recognize that indigenous peoples are an important and integral part of the Amazonian Biosphere.
- WE WANT the environmental community to recognize our rights as Indigenous Peoples as we have been defining those rights within the process of the UN Work Group for Indigenous Peoples.
- WE WANT the environmental community to recognize that the most effective defense of the Amazonian Biosphere is the recognition and defense of the territories of the region's Indigenous Peoples and the promotion of their models for living within that Biosphere and for managing its resources in a sustainable way. For this reason,
  - WE WANT the environmental community to consider "Debt for Indigenous Territory Swaps" which would return areas of the Amazonian rain forest to our care.
  - WE WANT to work with the environmental community to develop and test new models for occupying and using the rain forest.

--WE WANT to represent ourselves and our interests in all negotiations concerning the future of our Amazonian homeland through our representative organizations.

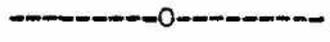
WHAT WE PROPOSE

--WE PROPOSE ESTABLISHING A BROAD ALLIANCE IN DEFENSE OF OUR AMAZONIAN HOMELAND.

--WE PROPOSE joining hands with those members of the U.S., European, and Latin American environmentalist community who:

- recognize our historical role as caretakers of the Amazon Basin,
- support our efforts to reclaim and defend our traditional territories;
- accept our organizations as legitimate and equal partners;

--WE PROPOSE joining hands in alliance with other Amazonian peoples such as the Rubber Tappers, Brazil Nut Collectors, and others whose livelihood depends on the non-destructive extractive activities, many of whom are of indigenous origin.



# COICA

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### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ALTERNATIVES

### FOR AMAZONIAN DEVELOPMENT

**AIDSESP**  
Perú

**CIDOB**  
Bolivia

**CONFENIAE 1.**  
Ecuador

**ONIC**  
Colombia

**UNI**  
Brasil

An important task of the Coordinating Body is to present to the international community the alternatives which we indigenous peoples offer for living with the Amazonian biosphere, caring for it and developing within it. This is one of our important contributions to a better life for humankind. The following represent, in general terms, OUR PROGRAM FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE AMAZONIAN BIOSPHERE.

- The best defense of the Amazonian Biosphere is the defense of the territories recognized as homeland by Indigenous peoples, and the promotion of our models for living within that biosphere and for managing its resources. This implies:
- education for the national and international communities regarding the indigenous people's concept of the unity between people and territory, and regarding our models for managing and caring for our environment.
  - work with national governments, environmental organizations, and international institutions which fund Amazon development to develop new concepts and models for occupying and using the Amazon Basin in keeping with our long term perspective (future generations), our respect for the interdependence between humankind and our environments, and our need to improve the well-being of the entire community; further work with the same institutions to translate these new concepts into concrete programs for developing and caring for the Amazon Basin and its inhabitants.
  - work with national governments, environmental organizations, and international funders to reorganize the occupation of supposedly empty Amazonian territories by combining indigenous territories, with forest, wildlife, and extractive reserves in favor of the indigenous and other current inhabitants; by discouraging the "conquest and colonization" of our homeland; and by recuperating those vast areas devastated by state policies of conquest and colonization.

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- research on the natural resources and traditional crops used by indigenous peoples, on the traditional systems for utilizing and conserving resources, and on models for the extraction of renewable resources.
  - evaluation and systematization of the development projects implemented by indigenous peoples which attempt to combine the demands of the market economy with a respect for indigenous principles of development.
2. The defense of the Amazon Biosphere/Indigenous territories must go hand-in-hand with the recognition of and respect for the territorial, political, cultural, economic, and human rights of the Indigenous Peoples. This implies:
- continued participation and support for the UN process for establishing an international instrument recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
  - education for the national and international communities regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
  - establishment of mechanisms at both the national and international level for defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples in cases of violations of or conflicts over those rights.
3. The right of self-determination for indigenous peoples within their environment/territory is fundamental for guaranteeing the well-being of the indigenous population and of the Amazonian biosphere. This implies:
- respect for our autonomous forms of community, ethnic, and regional government.
  - indigenous control over the economic activities within the indigenous territories, including the extraction of mineral reserves.
  - respect for indigenous customary law and the indigenous norms for social control.
4. Concrete Proposals for International Cooperation:
- For many decades now, most of our peoples have been experimenting with ways to participate in the encroaching market economies of our respective countries while trying to survive as peoples intimately linked to the Amazonian forest. We have done this despite the hostility shown us by the frontier society and despite the fact that, within the context of

the market economy, we are desperately poor. For these reasons, we have organized ourselves in new ways and developed and managed a variety of small programs to improve our health, education, and economy. The following is a brief listing which suggests the kinds of programs which we are currently undertaking or wish to undertake. It is these small scale, locally controlled initiatives which should be the cornerstone of future Amazonian development.

- Programs for Territorial Demarcation and Defense  
including research on territorial composition, land use patterns, soil and forest classifications; demarcation of territories; titling and registration of territories; training of paralegals, topographers; relocation of settlers and miners squatting on indigenous territories; recuperation of lands illegally taken; establishment of complimentary forest reserves, wildlife reserves, national parks and joint programs to manage them.
  
- Programs for Resource Management  
including research on land use capabilities, soil quality, inventories of flora, fauna, and mineral reserves, indigenous management practices; training in research methodology; projects for managing wildlife and aquatic life for food and commercial purposes; projects for managing forests through sustainable harvesting practices; projects for improving the productivity of rubber, Brazil nut, and other extractive activities; projects for recovering lands and resources devastated by conquest and colonization.
  
- Programs to Strengthen Material Self-Sufficiency  
including research on traditional crops, foods gathered from the forest, farming practices, hunting and fishing technologies; projects for improving productivity, stability, and diversity of traditional farming systems; projects to introduce or improve small animal husbandry; projects to manage food resources found in the forest; projects to replenish and manage flora used for housing, clothing, and utensils.
  
- Programs for Economic Development  
including projects for industrialization on a small scale of products extracted from the forest; projects to adapt traditional artisan products to market demands; establishment of community marketing channels; establishment of community controlled transportation systems; projects to improve productivity of agriculture and animal husbandry where directed at the market;
  
- Programs for Maintaining a Healthy Community  
including research on traditional healing practices, traditional medicines, health problems common to indigenous communities; projects to strengthen traditional health practices; projects to improve drinking water, nutrition, and sanitary conditions where deficient; community controlled health systems including primary

care, diagnostic services, and stores of basic medicines; education and training for health care personnel.

- Programs for Bilingual and Intercultural Education  
including research in the linguistics of Amazonian languages, on pedagogies relevant to our situations and cultures; training for indigenous teachers, linguists, and pedagogues; preparation of educational materials.
  
- Programs to Defend Our Rights as Peoples  
including research on reported violations of indigenous peoples rights, on Indian customary law; training of indigenous lawyers and paralegals; recourse to top legal advice when necessary; participation in forums promoting the rights of indigenous peoples; campaigns to end slavery, captive communities, debt peonage, and forced labor among indigenous peoples; campaigns against forced removals or relocations of indigenous peoples.
  
- Programs for Research and Documentation  
including the coordination and systematization of information relevant to the programs of indigenous peoples within their organizations; establishment of libraries and research centers in the service of indigenous peoples and others who seek new models for Amazonian development.
  
- Programs for Strengthening and Communicating our Voice  
including systems which allow easy communication among indigenous communities and organizations; participation in local, regional, national, and international forums where decisions are made which affect our well-being; visits and exchange of experiences among indigenous communities, organizations, and programs.

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