

Rio Branco, February 17, 2012

Dear colleagues of the Missionary Indigenous Council (CIMI) Western Amazonia,

The Indigenous Movement of Acre has won various victories in its history that were possible thanks to the courage and determination of our leaders in fighting for our rights. The movement played an important role in political organizing and representation of indigenous peoples of Acre and southern Amazonas. We have always believed in our potential and our self-determination in deciding the future of our peoples.

We were greatly shocked and dismayed on becoming aware of the contents of the Affidavit presented by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) – Western Amazonia, to the Federal Prosecutor's Office in Acre (MPF-Acre), which claims that indigenous leaders and their organizations are being manipulated by the state government of Acre, by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and by local and international NGOs and induced into accepting carbon projects and REDD. All the more since these statements were made by CIMI, an institution that was a partner of the indigenous peoples in the 1980s in the struggle to defend their lands. Apropos of which, at the time when indigenous leaders fought side by side with the Acre Pro-Indian Commission (CPI/AC) and CIMI for the demarcation of their territories, were these leaders induced into fighting for their ideals, as a matter of life and survival of our peoples?

To say that the Indigenous Peoples of Acre are being manipulated and induced to accept a project imposed by third parties is, at a minimum, to doubt our capacity to interact with government agencies and civil society and to formulate plans that can consolidate our territorial rights, the management of our territories, and the economic self-sufficiency and the well-being of our communities. We do not need tutelage; we seek serious partnerships that recognize and respect our autonomy.

Among the highlights of the workshop held in Rio Branco, in the CPI/AC Training Center for Forest Peoples, were emphasis on indigenous peoples' rights, their exclusive usufruct of their territories, the right to free, prior and informed consent, the importance of social and environmental safeguards to avoid risks in payment for ecosystem services projects, and reflection on the State System of Payments for Ecosystem Services (SISA) developed by the Government of Acre. Present at the workshop discussions were leaders of 25 territories and 28 Acre indigenous groups, in addition to representatives from the Coordinator of Brazilian Amazon Indigenous Organizations (COIAB) and the Amazonian Working Group (GTA), who have taken leadership roles in dialogue on and elaboration of safeguards at the national and international levels.

No one is forcing the indigenous organizations to do anything. We are mature leaders with extensive experience in the indigenous and environmental movements in Acre, Brazil and the world. We will not be treated as Indian wards who need NGO to defend their rights. We are

sovereign peoples, and only we will decide if we wish to participate in a project involving our lands or territories.

We have at no point decided if we are for or against REDD projects. First we must inform ourselves and our communities of the opportunities and challenges. Both those in favor of and those against REDD must be serious and ethical in conveying correct information and establishing continued dialogue. Those in favor of REDD cannot promote it as something that can resolve all the problems of our communities; those against it cannot terrorize our peoples using western capitalism as a backdrop and creating a climate of distrust and fear based in suppositions and untruths.

What we will not accept or permit is for our peoples and organizations to be pawns in the heated debate between NGOs and governments.

We believe that CIMI needs to renew itself and embrace the indigenous cause and fight side by side with indigenous peoples once more. Of late, its distance is creating a distorted view, unrelated to our reality. We invite CIMI to join our meetings to hear us out and talk straight with us. We at no point authorized CIMI to represent our interests before the Federal Prosecutor's Office. If at any moment we find that our rights are being violated, we can call on the Federal Prosecutor of Acre to defend our rights under the Federal Constitution and international treaties signed by Brazil (ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

Hoping to have made our position clear, the following associations sign this letter.

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