



## **DECLARATION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE FOREST London - October 24, 2017**

We, indigenous peoples and local communities, whose homes are from lowland to mountain areas and from the seacoasts to the small islands, are the guardians of the forest. We are a proven solution to the long-term protection of forests, which according to a recent study launched on 24 October 2017, hold 40% of the solution to climate change. With our sustainable ways of living we contribute to diminish the change of the climate system, yet we are severely affected by climate change.

Indigenous peoples and local forest communities are not just participants. We uphold the inherent rights affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Our rights must be fully recognized and respected in all decision-making processes and actions. Our traditional knowledge, innovations and local adaptation and mitigation practices must be respected, recognized and supported.

Until today, indigenous communities and organizations have expressed opposition to many projects including large hydro-dams, large-scale plantations such as palm oil, pulp and paper, soy and sugar cane; large-scale mining and even conservation programs being planned and implemented without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from communities. Frequently the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples are violated with impunity in the planning and implementation of such projects.

We are alarmed and concerned over the increasing cases of human rights violations, violence to our communities, criminalization of our peoples and the killings of our leaders. As it has been recently reported by Global Witness, last year 200 environmental activists were killed, with more than 40% being indigenous leaders. Hundreds of others are in jail for protecting forests, which are our livelihood, while thousands are being evicted from their territories.

Forest supply us with everything: they are a connection to the spirits of our ancestors that continuously guide our way through millennia; food and water for our generation and the next ones; shelter for our peoples; medicines for those who are sick; cultural identity in a dynamic and changing world; dignity and identity in the current value crisis, which makes us proud to be indigenous. Forests are our home and the home for all living beings. Forests are an inseparable part of our existence.

While we are fighting to protect our home against invasion and desolation, we are also challenged to show evidence that our way of life is sustainable and promising for the continuity of future generations. Our practices can provide a clear alternative and a sustainable solution to climate change.

Therefore, we strongly recommend the following:

1. States shall take all necessary measures to stop criminalization, violence and murder of indigenous and community leaders. Strong safeguards on all its investments must be established. Enforcement actions must be strengthened by using a multi-legal regime approach and corporate

criminal liability. Sanctions such as embargo against commodities whose production are linked to the killing of indigenous and community leaders shall be considered, as well as actions against the killing of indigenous leaders and environmental activists.

2. States shall declare crimes against environment or *ecocides*, which includes land grabbing, as a crime against humanity.
3. The legal recognition of indigenous peoples' and local communities right to lands, territories and resources, and focus on the demarcation and protection of collective land rights of indigenous peoples must be ensured. All activities—whether for conservation or development-- that affect indigenous territories must be subject to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Mechanisms for resolving and transforming cases and conflicts over the lands, territories and resources of indigenous peoples, including redress mechanisms shall be established.
4. The implementation of the Paris Agreement must be based first on recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, and the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification mechanisms (MRV) should include cultural, social and environmental safeguards, including human rights and indigenous rights, benefit sharing, technology transfer and the development of sustainable economic models. Indigenous peoples shall have the opportunity to develop and present their own parallel reports.
5. Ensure that a greater percentage of international finance for climate and development reaches local level, with more direct access by indigenous peoples and local communities. Compared to the huge amount of funds allocated to subsidize commercial agri-business, very little is allocated to help indigenous peoples and local communities manage their tropical forests, resources, lands and territories.
6. Indigenous and communal traditional knowledge, technologies and innovations must be recognized, including the protection of heritage and intellectual property rights. Benefit sharing from the use of Indigenous traditional knowledge, technologies and innovation must be assured and compliance monitored.

We hereby sign,

Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA)

Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB)

Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago, Indonesia (AMAN)

Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB)