

Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon Share Message with the World

By [Forest Peoples Programme](#)
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We, the traditional authorities and elected leaders of the Uitoto, Muinane, Andoque and Nonuya peoples of the Middle Rio Caquetá region of the Colombian Amazon are in Bogotá between the 25th and 28th of April to represent our peoples and our Traditional Association of Indigenous Authorities – the Regional Indigenous Council of Middle Amazonas (CRIMA) in meetings with different State institutions and international agencies. We self-identify ourselves as the “People of the Centre” and heirs of the Green Territory of Life in the Amazon rainforest.

We are here to demand guarantees for our rights and to share concerns regarding forest, climate change and biodiversity projects that affect our territory, including the National Parks Department’s Heart of the Amazon Project supported by the World Bank and Global Environment Facility, and the Vision Amazonia Programme funded by the UK, Germany and Norway. We wish to express concerns that these programmes are undermining our principles of consent and participation and are applying processes that are not appropriate for our way of thinking and decision making.

Asserting our rights: Under our Law of Origin, and in accordance with our uses and customs, we have maintained a respectful relationship with our territory and the natural world. Before colonisation, our ancestors lived well. More than a century ago the cauchería came to exploit, enslave and displace our peoples, and almost exterminated us. We are the survivors of that genocide. We have since been reconstructing our society by building our malocas (ceremonial houses) and practising our ritual dances using the Word of Life and the wisdom of our elders. Since the 1970’s, our Cabildos (Councils) and Traditional Association of Indigenous Authorities have undertaken collective actions to legally securing our territory and to claim our rights.

Messages of the People of the Centre

To the Colombian government: We are not here to ask for projects. We want the national government to fully recognise our autonomy and our rights to govern our territory. We wish to see our applications for the extension of Reserves of Monochoa, Puerto Sábalo-Los Monos and Aduche properly processed and titled in favour of our communities to consolidate the Territory of Life belonging to the People of the Centre. In addition, we seek the formation and legal registration of an Indigenous Territorial Entity under our full jurisdiction in order to manage, administer and preserve our traditional territory and forests and maintain our way of life.

To international institutions: We inform the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, donor governments and cooperation agencies of Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway,

that they must reach agreements directly with us, as our ancestors did. They did not talk to outsiders by means of third parties. We don't want to have the interference of intermediaries such as NGOs and environmental funds: we seek a direct relationship between programmes, international donors and our traditional authorities. We demand that we are recognised and respected as environmental authorities in our own territory, with our own indigenous system of territorial ordering. We demand that the agencies respect our rights to own, manage and control our territory. To this end, we seek formal steps to develop and implement a Safeguard Plan for our peoples.

To the world: These demands are not just our concerns. Many other peoples in the Amazon and the world have similar claims and proposals for protecting peoples' rights and sustaining the forests. When we say that we manage our territory and have our own government we are not talking about nature as an object or natural resource, but rather as a space with natural beings with whom we relate guided by our Word of Life and mutual respect. We want to let the world know what "territory" means to us. This week we will share the teachings of the Muinane people about our care of territory. The Uitoto, Andoque and Nonuya peoples have been working in the same direction in documenting our ways of managing and preserving the rainforests. We want to invite all the Peoples of the Centre, America and other parts of the world to join us in this effort to defend life and territory.

Contacts:

Hernando Castro, Regional Indigenous Council of Middle Amazonas: hecasu68@yahoo.es

Tom Griffiths, FPP: tom@forestpeoples.org

Camilla Capasso, FPP: camilla@forestpeoples.org

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