

VI Panamazonian Social Forum – Cobija, Bolivia

November 28th - December 1st 2012

LETTER FROM COBIJA

We are the people of all peoples. We are the men from the forest and the women from the rain; we are Panamazonia, the heart of the planet.

In our lands and rivers, a decisive battle for the fate of humanity is being fought. On one side, transnational corporations, agribusiness and large mining companies promote the destruction of our forests and our waters in the name of a progress that benefits only the owners of capital. On the other, we - indigenous peoples, peasants, *quilombolas*¹, workers of the fields, forests and cities - are fighting for our lands, for the rights of Mother Earth, for our cultures, and for our rights to live well, in harmony with nature.

The price of the systematic destruction of nature is an unprecedented environmental crisis. This first signs of this crisis are found in the melting of the Andean glaciers, the decreased flows and contamination of rivers, streams and creeks, and droughts and floods in the Amazon linked to uncontrolled mining, oil exploitation and agribusiness in forest lands. This situation is aggravated by mega-projects such as the construction of large-scale hydroelectric dams in Amazonian rivers, the privatization of forests and major infrastructure projects that are developed without consulting the people who have lived in these regions for centuries.

We reaffirm once more that in order to stop this cycle of death it is necessary to defend our territories, demanding the immediate recognition and ratification of indigenous lands, collective titling of *quilombola*¹ lands and those of other traditional communities and the full right to free, well-informed consultation and prior consent for projects with social and environmental impacts. We defend true democratic and binding consultations to avoid fraud and false consultations, such as those that have occurred in the recent past with Brazilian indigenous peoples during construction of the Santo Antonio, Jirau and Belo Monte dams.

Mother Earth is not a product; it cannot be sold and mercantiled. Therefore we reject green capitalism, which only exacerbates the social and environmental crisis, following the same logic of an unbridled quest for economic growth, concentration of wealth and power, as well as the appropriation of the commons. The so-called green economy wishes to make a great business of the climate crisis, leaving untouched the mode of production, which associated with patriarchy and racism, is

¹ Descendants of runaway slaves

leading the planet and its population to depletion and degradation. We are against the payment of environmental services, the commodification and financing of nature, and we denounce the weakening of environmental laws in order to favor large companies.

We defend and build alliances between peoples of the forest, fields and cities. The struggle of peasants for land, the rights of small farmers and the need for technical assistance, cheap and simplified credit, and the just demands for health, education, transport and decent housing for all, are a part of our common heritage.

We strive for a society without exclusions, with freedom, justice and popular sovereignty. Each day, we fight all forms of exploitation and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, social class and sexual identity. Particularly, we will strive to overcome the invisibility of people of African descent in their struggles and proposals on power, autonomy and territory.

At the same time that the offensive of big businesses moves forward into Amazonia, the efforts of peoples' resistance are also multiplying. Globally, the Peoples Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June / July 2012, represented an extraordinary advance in the unity of all who dream and fight for another world. Rivers' alliances emerged from the Amazonian territory uniting different peoples in the struggle against dams. The movements against mining and development of infrastructure on indigenous lands without the consent of indigenous peoples also gained momentum, as well as the fight against open pit mining in the Andes.

A part of our struggle against the colonial exploitation is the demand for measures to protect traditional communities from biopiracy, and to seek the preservation, valorization and development of their ancestral knowledge. Likewise, we fight for just, democratic and sustainable cities according to the diverse realities of each region, taking into consideration the diversity of social actors who live in these cities. For the same reasons we also defend food sovereignty, household economy, community-based extractivism and agroecology. We emphasize the strategic importance of the struggle for democratization of the media, inseparable from the practice of freedom of expression, which is vital to establish dialogues between the different peoples of the Amazon and the world.

In this sense, we confirm our support for the Earth Charter and the Declaration of Cochabamba. Their words will continue to guide our steps.

In Pan-Amazonia, as in all of Latin America, we face the militarism that acts as mediator between colonialism and imperialism. We condemn the criminalization of social movements, poverty and indigenous peoples. We reject colonialism in French Guiana and support the efforts of its people to achieve independence. We welcome the start of peace talks in Colombia and expect their results to be a peace with equality and social justice. Likewise, we protest against the obstacles which try to prevent the free movement of peoples between our countries; we defend the rights of migrants and of all those who seek other lands for a free and dignified life. We

want a world without borders; a world where the state guarantees the protection of social and natural heritage; a world where all the worlds fit in.

At this VI Pan-Amazon Social Forum we especially salute the Palestinian resistance - our brothers and sisters of the desert - whose struggle for a free and independent homeland we will continue to support. We also honor our martyrs brothers and sisters who shed their blood in the massacres of Bagua, Pando and all indigenous peoples affected by the violence of their exploiters.

Here in Cobija, Amazonian land of Bolivia, at the tri-national border between Peru, Brazil and Bolivia, under the protection of rubber and chestnut trees - symbols of Bolivian Amazônia - we launch our calling: the unity of Amazonian peoples to transform the world.

Cobija, December 1st, 2012