



# Forest Peoples Programme

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The President of the Republic of Paraguay  
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March 31st, 2007  
Moreton-in-Marsh, United Kingdom

Dear Mr. President,

It is with great concern that we write to you about the proposed deforestation of more than 18000 ha of pristine forest in Amotocodie, one of the core areas of the Ayoreo People's territory in the northern Chaco, departments of Boqueron and Alto Paraguay (in Spanish referred to as "Proyecto de Explotación Agropecuaria – Ganadera Umbu S.A./Matrícula 631 RQ 01, Mariscal Estigarribia, ex Finca No 1459" by Paraguayan authorities).

The area to be deforested is home to rich biodiversity, crucial habitat for key species of fauna and flora, but it is also the habitat of indigenous (Ayoreo) groups who living in voluntary isolation. The area is right at the core of the territory of the isolated Ayoreo People and any alteration of the forest creates an extreme risk not only of unwanted, imposed contact, breakdown of their diverse life culture and genocide, but may in practice prompt their armed resistance leading to bloodshed and a fatal outcome, as it has happened before. The Ayoreo population is already at great risk of extinction and this development would cause grave harm to their viability. All the necessary permits by Paraguayan regulators towards this massive project that will cause grave damage to the native ecosystems of the Ayoreo territory, have already been granted and contractors are only waiting for good weather to move in and start destroying the forest. This is, as well, prime habitat to animals listed endangered, such as the largest jaguar (*Panthera onca*) and giant armadillo (*Priodontes giganteus*) populations in the Paraguay. It is also habitat to the "tagua" (*Catagonus wagneri*) – also listed endangered - a species of wild boar (peccary) thought to be extinct until 1975, when scientists realized that the Indigenous People – the Ayoreo - had been in contact with them and managed their populations uninterruptedly.

We understand that the Paraguayan State has acknowledged the intricate significance of this region and has therefore taken steps to protect it through the precautionary measure dictated by order of the Attorney general of the State, the Departmental act 02/02 of the Council of the Department of Boquerón and the resolution N°. 37/ 2002 of the Counsel of the INDI (Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Peoples).



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We urge you to implement these measures and halt all developments in this area in order to assure the effective protection of this territory and its environmental integrity. We also urge you to safeguard the constitutional rights of the Ayoreo People who thrive in this area, which is their ancestral territory.

We finally request that you use any and all resources in your power to protect the rights of the Paraguayan Indigenous Peoples, in this case those of the Ayoreo and avoid further deforestation and environmental degradation.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Tom Griffiths  
Forest Peoples Programme

C.C:

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