



# Forest Peoples Programme

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His Excellency:  
Alan García,  
President of Peru  
Calle Palacio de Gobierno  
Plaza mayor  
Cercado de Lima  
Lima  
PERU

***RE: A Call for just treatment and full respect for the rights of indigenous Achuar, Quichua and Urarinas peoples in the Corrientes river basin in Peru.***

17 October 2006

Dear Mr. President:

The Forest Peoples Programme is writing to you to express its profound concern over the grave situation facing the Achuar, Quichua and Urarinas peoples, who are undertaking a peaceful protest against destructive oil exploitation on their ancestral lands in the *Río Corrientes* region of Peru. We urge the Peruvian government to peacefully resolve the grievances of the affected communities and, to this end, to enter into good faith negotiation with their traditional and representative leaders.

*Background and key issues:*

For 35 years indigenous peoples in the Rio Corrientes region have suffered oil extraction by Occidental Petroleum, Petroperu, and the Argentinean company Pluspetrol (Lot 1AB and Lot 8), which has caused the pollution of their ecosystem and ill-health among affected communities. These negative impacts have been well documented and confirmed in recent government reports that demonstrate that the indigenous population is affected by high levels of cadmium and lead poisoning stemming from oil contamination of local water supplies and fisheries.<sup>i</sup>

The Achuar have made repeated attempts to obtain governmental commitments and government action to provide health care for their communities and to resolve their legitimate grievances.<sup>ii</sup> Despite these efforts, little concrete action has been taken. The traditional authorities of the Achuar and their people have now taken peaceful steps to blockade further oil production inside their traditional lands in an attempt to secure redress and justice for ongoing violations of the right to their lands, lives, and health as protected under international law.<sup>iii</sup>

We understand that the Achuar are protesting within their ancestral territory and are acting peacefully.<sup>iv</sup> Despite this, there are worrying reports of use of tear gas against protesters in some communities. The current situation is now tense and the Achuar and their supporters are concerned that the authorities may return to the use of force to break up their demonstration.

*Recommendations:*

We call on the Peruvian police and other Peruvian authorities to show restraint and to respect the human and customary rights of the Achuar, Quichua and Urarinas peoples, who have acted peacefully to defend their ancestral lands, territories and resources.

We urge you as the President of Peru to ensure that urgent measures are taken to:

- Safeguard the right to life of the Achuar people, their *apus* “traditional leaders”, and their supporters through peaceful resolution of the current crisis
- Enter into constructive dialogue with the aggrieved communities to resolve their grievances in full respect of their human rights
- Honor fully the commitments and agreements made by the government during the meetings with indigenous federations held between September 4-9, 2006
- Immediately halt the oil-related contamination of rivers and streams in the Corrientes region
- Provide urgent supplies of food and potable water to indigenous communities affected by oil pollution and food shortages caused by oil exploitation on their lands
- Finance and implement the agreed Integral Health Plan for treating people affected by heavy metal poisoning caused by oil pollution
- Finance and implement the Land titling, Education and Production Activity Plan approved by the regional government in Loreto
- Halt any plans for oil exploration or oil extraction in Lots 104 and 106
- Ensure that no other hydrocarbon or other resource concessions are imposed on the ancestral territories of the indigenous peoples in the Corrientes region and other areas of Peru.

We look forward to learning how your government plans to address this urgent matter and how it will secure redress for the damages caused to the Achuar’s environment and their communities by the oil industry that has operated with the Peruvian government’s consent and assistance for over three decades.

Sincerely

Dr T F W Griffiths

cc      H.E. Carlos Zapata Lopez, Interim Representative, Permanent Mission of Peru to the Organization of American States

Peruvian Embassy, London

Argentinean Embassy, London

<sup>i</sup> Visita de reconocimiento para la evaluación de la calidad sanitaria de los recursos hídricos y muestreo biológico en las comunidades de la cuenca del río Corrientes Dirección General de Salud Ambiental DIGESA, Informe N° 995-2006/DEPA-APRHI/DIGESA, May 2006

<sup>ii</sup> ¡No Más Concesiones Petroleras en Comunidades Indígenas! Pueblo indígena Achuar llega a Lima para dialogar con altas autoridades de nivel nacional FECONACU Press Release, 4 September 2006

<sup>iii</sup> Informe sobre la movilización de las comunidades indígenas Achuar, Quichua y Urarinas de la cuenca del Río Corrientes, paralizando las operaciones petroleras en los lotes IAB y 8 explotadas por la empresa argentina Pluspetrol. FECONACO Press Release, 12 October 2006

<sup>iv</sup> Comunicado *apus* del río corrientes, lunes 16 de octubre de 2006