



Forest Peoples Programme

1c Fosseyway Business Centre, Stratford Road, Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 9NQ, UK
tel: +44 (0)1608 652893 fax: +44 (0)1608 652878 info@forestpeoples.org www.forestpeoples.org

The Secretary of State for International Development
Rt. Hon. Mr. Benn
Department for International Development
1 Palace Street, London SW1E 5HE

April 4th, 2007

To the Right Honourable Mr. Benn,

It is with pleasure that we submit here comments and recommendations to contribute to the UK Government delegation to the upcoming Spring meetings of the World Bank Group.

We have noted in the past the strong support that the UK Government has provided to the cause of protecting human rights and promoting socially and environmentally equitable and just development. It is thus with anticipation of your attention and concern that we would like to draw your attention to issues related to the World Bank's support to the forestry sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In June 2006, the Forest Peoples Programme, together with six indigenous peoples' support organizations in the DRC, submitted a formal request for an urgent action procedure to the United Nations' Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). In January 2007 we submitted a further report providing supplementary information to the formal request.

We would like to draw your attention to these two documents, and the detailed information within, here attached. Additionally, we would draw your attention to the pending World Bank Inspection Panel investigation into serious concerns raised about the detrimental impact of World Bank supported initiatives on the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples in the DRC, and highlight the Bank's stated commitment to ensuring that the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent be upheld.

In the light of the serious concerns highlighted in the attached submissions, we request that the UK Government continue its record of strong support for human rights by urging the World Bank to carefully consider the information provided regarding the impact of its initiatives in the DRC. The CERD will meet in August this year to consider the situation in the DRC, and we would additionally urge the UK Government to promote and support any recommendations it may issue regarding indigenous peoples in that country.

We are happy to provide any further information that may be required,

Sincerely,

Dr. Tom Griffiths
Forest Peoples Programme, UK