

**Statement of the Klima-Buendnis / Alianza del Clima (Climate Alliance)
to the Fourth Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC**

Buenos Aires, 11 November 1998

Honourable President, distinguished Ministers, other delegates and representatives of the various countries of the world and NGOs, good evening.

My name is José Luis González. I belong to the Pemon people from the South Eastern part of Venezuela.

Madame President, as Vice-Co-ordinator of the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA), and as President of the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples, I would like to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to make this statement in this important Convention.

COICA is the umbrella organisation of the national indigenous organisations of nine countries in the Amazon region.

The Climate Alliance is an association of 750 cities and towns in 10 European countries who, together with COICA, have identified common objectives: the protection of the Earth's atmosphere, of the tropical forests and their population. The Member Municipalities have committed themselves to a 50% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions within the next two decades.

I want to emphasise that within the Climate Alliance, the ones that are responsible for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions, and the indigenous peoples who own the forests, but suffer most from climate change, work together as partners for common goals.

We welcome the efforts each of you has undertaken in seeking alternatives to face the threat of climate change. There is no doubt that the circumstances imposed by a model of development that implicates to dominate nature, are now asking for a new relationship to the planet. This must be based upon a new vision of the land and the natural resources, respect, valuation and acknowledgement of cultural diversity.

Our history as Indigenous Peoples bears the imprints of invasion, genocide and ethnocide, deprivation, expropriation and degradation of our territories for

economic reasons. Now, with governments taking over responsibilities and defining mechanisms for the fulfilment of their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we feel deeply concerned. It is our already reduced territories, land and forests, where the implementation of their projects aims at, in the framework of Kyoto Protocol and the Clean Development Mechanism. This clearly is a threat to our own existence as peoples, ***unless it goes hand in hand with the acknowledgement of our traditional rights, interests and points of view, and those of other local communities living in, and depending of, the land and the forests.***

We have been and still are witnessing how exploration and exploitation of mines and oil fields have been intensified, how hydro power projects have been build, flooding huge forest areas and providing so-called clean energy for industrial projects, how forestry industries have been established in national parks, forest reserves, and other protected areas. All this happened without prior information and consultation, thus violating our human rights. When we begin to manifest our discontent and demand that our human rights be acknowledged, these development areas get militarised and we are accused of being separatists, provocateurs, drug dealers, and of destabilising the social order and the rule of law.

Will the Clean Development Mechanism really lead to an improvement of this situation?

Madame President, representatives of our governments, with our participation in fora such as the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, the UNCED, the Declaration of Rio and the Agenda 21, the CSD, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the Biodiversity Convention and other UN treaties, bodies and agencies, we could make substantial contributions regarding our human rights and the protection of the environment. It is my concern that for this Conference of the Parties, the indigenous peoples have not been invited to participate.

Madame President, on behalf of our organisation and, furthermore, in consideration of the declaration of Albuquerque by the indigenous people of North America, with much respect ***I propose for the next Conference of the Parties, that an effective participation of the Indigenous Peoples will be guaranteed. We must get the opportunity to discuss the issues at stake and to bring forward our proposals.***

Thank you very much.