



# AMAZON ALLIANCE

September 16, 2008

Robert B. Zoellick  
Office of the President  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20433

**EXECUTIVE CO-DIRECTOR**  
*Juan Carlos Jintiach*

**EXECUTIVE CO-DIRECTOR**  
*Trevor Stevenson*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**  
*Juanita Cabrera-Lopez*

## **STEERING COUNCIL**

### **Indigenous Steering Council:**

*GOICA, Amazonia*  
*AIDSESP, Peru*  
*APA, Guyana*  
*CIDOB, Bolivia*  
*COIAB, Brazil*  
*CONFENIAE, Ecuador*  
*CONIVE, Venezuela*  
*FOAG, French Guiana*  
*OIS, Suriname*  
*OPIAC, Colombia*

### **NGO Steering Council:**

*Amazon Watch, USA*  
*Bank Información Center, USA*  
*Centro de Derechos*  
*Económicos y Sociales,*  
*Ecuador*  
*Centro para el Desarrollo de*  
*Pueblos Indígenas*  
*Amazónicas, Perú*  
*Forest Peoples Programme, UK*  
*Frente de Defensa de la*  
*Amazonía, Ecuador*  
*Fundación Gaia, Colombia*  
*Fundación Pachamama, Ecuador*  
*Grupo de Trabalho Amazônico,*  
*Brazil*  
*Oxfam America, Peru*  
*Seventh Generation Fund, USA*

1350 Connecticut Ave NW  
Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel 1-202-785-3334  
Fax 1-202-785-8701  
amazon@amazonalliance.org  
www.amazonalliance.org

Dear President Zoellick,

The Amazon Alliance appreciates the opportunity to address this meeting of "Global Forest Leaders," and we are pleased that the World Bank understands the importance of tropical forests in mitigating global climate change. The Amazon Alliance is an international network of indigenous organizations and NGOs that safeguard the ecological and cultural vitality of Amazonia. Working in direct partnership with the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), we are governed by a Steering Council that consists of representative indigenous organizations from each of the nine countries in the Amazon region and allied NGOs. Because we bring together the leaders of the Amazonian indigenous and environmental movements to work as equal partners, we have a unique perspective on the best means to ensure forest ecosystem resilience.

The Amazon plays a vital role in stabilizing global weather patterns and restraining climate change, while supporting the greatest biodiversity on the planet. However, climate change pertains directly to all indigenous peoples living in forested regions of the world because we are the guardians of the forests and therefore the guardians of the earth's climate. We are also the first to suffer as our ecosystems unravel due to the impacts of the climactic changes that industrial societies have created.

The right of indigenous peoples to be fully involved in decisions affecting the future of our forests is mandated by numerous international standards, backed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and even required by World Bank policy. International law requires that indigenous peoples give our free prior informed consent to any plans that will affect our lands. Yet, countless declarations and reports by indigenous leaders from around the world have expressed deep concern about the World Bank's systematic exclusion of indigenous leaders from climate change policy-making and planning.

We ask you to consider the imbalance of participation in this "Global Forest Leaders Dialogue." Only a handful of indigenous peoples--the true Global Forest Leaders--are invited to this meeting. The Amazon is home to hundreds of indigenous ethnic groups and includes the majority of the world's remaining tropical rainforest, encompassing 1.4 billion acres. Yet only one elected indigenous leader from the Amazon was invited to this forum, and the World Bank failed to ensure that he received the support necessary to attend the entirety of this meeting.



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In addition to excluding representative indigenous leaders from important international meetings, the World Bank has repeatedly failed to engage in valid consultation with legitimate indigenous organizations at the regional level. For example, the World Bank deemed a closed meeting with a government foundation as sufficient consultation for all indigenous peoples of Latin America, although not a single representative Amazonian indigenous organization was present. The World Bank then misrepresented its consultative process—and the lack of consent from indigenous peoples—during recent G8 discussions. Worse still, recent World Bank agreements with Guyana and Bolivia, through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, pay the national governments to restrict access to forests without the knowledge or consent of the indigenous peoples who own and manage them.

In response to the failure of the World Bank to properly include legitimate elected indigenous leaders in plans affecting the future of their forests, the Amazon Alliance and the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) organized a meeting of indigenous leaders in August 2008 to discuss climate change initiatives, including the work of the World Bank. Along with this letter, we are providing you with the declaration of the indigenous organizations of the Amazon that emerged from that meeting.

We demand that the World Bank cease its exclusion of indigenous peoples and the violation of our rights. We insist that the World Bank submit a public report detailing exactly how it will comply with international standards, and ensure independent monitoring of its activities. Furthermore, the World Bank must guarantee and finance the full participation of the legitimate indigenous leaders of the world in the design and implementation of its climate change and forest management efforts. It must create a mechanism to ensure that indigenous peoples' organizations can be effectively involved in policy-making and planning at every stage and at every level. Clearly this work must fully engage indigenous leaders to renegotiate the World Bank's policies on indigenous peoples so that these policies meet current international standards.

Although the World Bank is not the only institution that is violating indigenous rights within its work on climate change, the high visibility of the World Bank provides it with a unique opportunity to raise the standards on this key issue. To ensure greater transparency and accountability in the World Bank's work, we are circulating this letter to the public, and we hope that this will encourage the World Bank to cease marginalizing indigenous peoples within our own homelands.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Trevor Stevenson  
Executive Co-Director

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