



CRLN



May 18, 2007

Dear Member of U.S. Congress,

Our Afro-Colombian partners have asked that we forward you the attached letter concerning the Communal Council meeting that will take place in early June. As organizations and individuals who closely follow the situation of Afro-Colombian communities we are happy that Members of the U.S. Congress are considering participating in this meeting and that you are interested in ensuring that the human and territorial rights of Afro-Colombians are respected. With this in mind, we encourage you to ensure that the recommendations made in the attached letter are implemented.

Sincerely,

Marino Cordoba and Charo Mina Rojas
Association of Internally Displaced Afro-Colombians USA

Nicole Lee
TransAfrica Forum

Joseph Jordan
TransAfrica Forum Scholars' Council

Monica Rizo and Humberto Garces
Manuel Zapata Olivella Center

Danielle Wegman and Gary Cozette
Chicago Religious Leadership Network

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli
Washington Office on Latin America

Heather Hanson
U.S. Office on Colombia

Martha Pierce
Chicago Metropolitan Sanctuary Alliance

John Garces
Organización Un Día de Esperanza

Afrokolumbia, May 16, 2007

Dear Member of Congress,

We would like to thank you for your interest in the human rights situation of Afro-Colombian communities and, in particular, for your decision to participate in the Communal Council meeting that the Colombian government has scheduled to take place in early June 2007. Regarding this upcoming meeting, we respectfully ask that you take into account the following:

1. **The Communal Council format.** Although the establishment of the Cali Communal Council in December of 2006 and the proposal for the creation of another such Council represent important steps forward, there is a general consensus among the Afro-Colombian communities that the participation of our communities, organizations, and leaders in these meetings has been very limited so far. It is our opinion that these meetings neither offer a true dialogue nor bring about solutions to the many problems plaguing our communities. In Colombia, within the framework of the implementation of Law 70 of 1993, there exists a High Level Advisory Commission that allows for the participation of the national government, as well as that of representatives from our communities. In the last session of the High Level Advisory Commission held in Cartagena in March 2007, the community representatives proposed, and approved, an expanded High Level Advisory Commission which is more favorable and adequate for the discussion of policies that will benefit Afro-Colombians. We support this decision.

2. **The agenda.** Some of the rights of the Afro-Colombians have been recognized in the present Colombian legislation; but steps towards the implementation of those rights have not been supported by the state. We believe that the agenda of an expanded High Level Commission should center on the ethnic rights of the Afro-Colombians, so that the meeting between our communities, the President of the Republic, and his cabinet can be successful in developing the groundwork and the conditions for the development of policies that are effective in protecting the rights of Afro-Colombians. In order to have a productive dialogue, the points on the agenda as well as the methodology for its development should be determined by the spokespersons of our communities together with those of the government.

3. **Participation and participants.** In order to ensure that we have adequate and effective participation in this meeting with the President of the Republic and his representatives, we, the organized groups and representatives of the Afro-Colombian communities, should decide autonomously the topics to be discussed by our spokespersons and the time of their participation. The list of the attendees should be jointly selected by the government and our representatives. Additionally, the government should adhere to its commitments regarding guarantees, in order to avoid situations such as the one that occurred with the Cali Communal Council, where the government promised to finance the participation of members of the Community Councils of Tumaco, Timbiquí, and delegates of the Council of Bogotá, among others, and at the last minute it sent notice that it lacked the financial resources to mobilize their representatives.

Finally, it is very important for us to be able to have a dialogue with members of the congressional delegation who will participate in the Communal Council Meeting (Broader

Consultation Commission) and request that they meet with representatives of our communities prior to this meeting.

In the spirit of our ancestors,

Sincerely,

Comisión Consultiva Distrital de Comunidades Negras de Bogotá
Asociación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas AMUAFROC
Asociación de Parteras Unidas del Pacifico ASOPARUPA, Buenaventura, Valle
Asociación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas, AMAFROCOL, Cali, Valle
Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Mujer de Buenaventura y la Costa del Pacifico, FUNDEMUJER, Buenaventura
Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer, la Juventud y la Infancia - ASOMUJER Y TRABAJO
La Asociación Municipal de Mujeres – ASOM, Buenos Aires, Cauca
Asociación de Afro-Colombianos Desplazados AFRODES
Asociación de Municipios con Población Afrocolombiana AMUNAFRO
Conferencia Nacional de Organizaciones Afrocolombianas CNOA
Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos de los Afrocolombianos CIMARRON
Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia PCN
Organización de Comunidades Negras ORCONE
Federación de Organizaciones del San Juan FOSAN, Chocó
Organización de Barrios Populares OBAPO, Chocó
Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó
Asómanos Negras, Costa caucana
Palenque Regional, Kusuto, Costa Caribe
Palenque Regional el Congal, Buenaventura, Valle
Palenque Regional Kurrulao, Tumaco, Nariño
Palenque Regional Alto Cauca, Santander de Quilichao, Cauca
Corporación Jorge Artel, Cartagena, Bolívar
Consejo Comunitario San Basilio de Palenque, Palenque, Bolívar
Fundación para la Formación de Líderes Afrocolombianos AFROLIDER, Cali
Consejo Comunitario Mayor del Río Anchicayá, Buenaventura
Consejo Comunitario del Río Raposo, Buenaventura
Consejo Comunitario del Río Calima, Buenaventura
Consejo Comunitario del Río Mayorquín, Buenaventura
Consejo Comunitario del Río Yurumanguí Buenaventura
Asociación Juvenil Juventud 500, Buenaventura
Ku Mahana, Cali
Colectivo de Jóvenes Kasimba, Cali
Patrona y Sebastiana Cardenas, Cerrito
Consejo Comunitario del Bajo Mira y Frontera, Tumaco, Nariño
Consejo Comunitario del Río Patia ACAPA, Francisco Pizarro, Nariño
Consejo Comunitario de la Cordillera Norte de Nariño, Cordicon
La Fundación Etnia Verde, Tumaco, Nariño

Cooperativa de Profesionales y Estudiantes Afrocolombianos, Cooproafro, Tumaco
Movimiento Gente Unida, Tumaco
Consejo Comunitario de la Alsacia, Buenos Aires, Cauca
Concejo Comunitario Cerro Teta, Buenos Aires, Cauca
Consejo Comunitario de Pilamo, Guachene, Cauca
Asociación Consejos Comunitarios del Municipio de Timbiqui, Cauca
Consejo Mayor Palenque el Castigo. Timbiqui, Cauca
La Asociación Juvenil Comunitaria, Buenos Aires, Cauca
Corporación Ancestros, Popayán, Cauca
Movimiento Cultural Sinecio Mina, Puerto Tejada, Cauca
Linval Association for the Development of the Raizal People, San Andres Islas
Native Afroanglo Foundation for Vindication, San Andres Islas
Corporacion Conalpabi
Asociacion Afrocolombiana de Desarrollo AFROCODES ASINPACIFICO
Afrolibertarios, Barrancabermeja, Santander
Dionisio Miranda, Representante a la Comisión Consultiva de Alto Nivel
Bayron Sinisterra, Representante a la Comisión Consultiva de Alto Nivel
Javier Pardo, Representante a la Comisión Consultiva de Alto Nivel