



COORDINADORA REGIONAL DE PUEBLOS INDIOS

CORPI

Madame Chair

Distinguished representatives of the International Indigenous Movements, Brothers and Sisters, from BELIZE:

The golden gate to the great Mayan Empire, I bring you warm greetings and solidarity in our common struggle. From the depths of the unknown, my Mayan ancestors came and in mystery my remarkable culture faded. Contemporary historians called us Mayas, but we know ourselves by other names, many of which are now almost lost and forgotten. Our great grandfather taught us that we were already in Central America by 1700 b.C. This was almost a thousand years before the founding of Rome. Modern men are indeed right by referring to us as Maya children of time.

During the dark ages in Europe my Mayan ancestors in Central America knew astronomy so well. While the present day Mayas are not known to be astronomers, nor mathematicians. We are a thriving and proud people. We are well known for our agricultural contributions to the economic growth and development of the nation states where in, we dwell. It is with deep admiration I am here today before this physical evidence of the determination of our people in finally taking control of their own affairs. It is high time in fact long overdue that we contribute positively to the task of creating a just society. Too often in government related transactions, we are always short changed and abused. There is no doubt the time is right for us to unite and join hands in order to express to the whole world one unsevering truth.

Madame chair, as the legitimate sons of Belize, we have presented a proposal to the government of Belize for a 500,000 acres of inviolable

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CORPI cultural homeland. Where in we may continue to live in peace with mother earth. It is our desire to be left alone to develop culturally and economically at our own pace. This has not been possible to achieve yet, considering that this proposal was presented to the government on the 10 th February 1986. On the other hand, there is an attempt from unknown sources to divide and conquer. At the moment when our people are experiencing a state of confusion, government now threatens to hold a plebiscite, the result of which will be final. If this works in favour of the wishes of government. Our people will be without land in the very near future. It will be a free for all situation. For us land is as precious as the air we breathe. Our culture is tied to the earth, we can not give it up easily, not at the stroke of a pen.

Madame Chair: America rests in an explosive situation. We hear of violence in all corners. We can only imagine who are the victims. We need only close our eyes to see the haunted eyes, the frail bodies and terrible illness amidst this poverty stricken region. The events taking place today demonstrate to us that even as we are here this very moment the violence continues.

The real problem in Central America is not communism but the decades long suffering of the indians by a handful, taking advantage of the masses condemning us to political and economic domination, hunger, illiteracy, sickness and early death. Central America's troubles challenge the governments of the day to have the courage to concede to the indians what they demand for themselves. Freedom, self-determination and justice.

On the other hand, however our rights are being made the subject of political offensives only when it can be used against a targeted government, as in the case of the attention focused on the conflicts of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.





CORPI It is close to 500 years since Columbus found that. The natives were peaceful, loyal and without greed. It is almost 500 years when the conquistadores and colonizers arrived to take the gold, the land and freedom from the natives of America. The violation of these rights continues to this day. For example, the jailing of indian leaders in the community of Cerro Blanco, municipality of Apatzingan Michoacan in Mexico for defense of the right to land. The massacre of indian refugees who attempts to return to their homeland in Guatemala continues. There is no security or ensurance of the same provided for these brothers by the government of Guatemala.

Therefore, Madame Chair, 1992 is no year of celebration. It will be a day marking the 500 years of exploitation and cultural destruction without paralel in the history of humanity. Such an occasion is a celebration of death to us. It ignores the magnitude of our problems, it ignores our dignity as a people and as human beings. Therefore, Madame Chair, CORPI - the legitimate organization representative of the indians of Central America - energetically rejects all celebrations that ignores our position. We also condemn the program called "The encounter of two worlds", for its insensibility to "indian dignity".

The world is witness to our presence here today after many years. We are back and better organized than ever to defend our rights to land and to win the right of self-determination.

Madame Chair, there are elemental urges for freedom and food and security which are moving vast masses of people - the indigenous peoples - and history is being made by them. History will record that in the hour of trial the governments of Central America failed because they could not adopt themselves to a changing wolrd. If the governments of Central America believe they can

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CORPI continue to exploit and persecute my people as they have done for so long in the past, then they are extremely mistaken. They have misjudged us and read history in vain.

Madame - Chair.

Brothers and Sisters... Together we struggle, together we win. Our history, our destiny and our future unite us.

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Thank you.

The United Nations
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
5th Session - item 4
Geneve - 3-7 Aug. 1987

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