



VIDS

Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname

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Pierrekondre Kumbasi, Para, July 02 2022

To:
The Secretary-General of the United Nations
H.E. Antonio Guterres

Honorable Secretary-General of the United Nations,

We, the Indigenous peoples of Suriname, represented by the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname, VIDS, and the organ of the six Tribal peoples, KAMPOS, appreciate your visit to Suriname, and in particular to one of our villages Pierrekondre Kumbasi. We understand that your visit to Suriname is related to the CARICOM government leaders meeting to be held in Suriname, and that you have a strong focus on the effects of climate change affecting the Caribbean, while our climate footprint is relatively very small.

In this context, we would also like to draw your attention and the United Nations' attention to the Indigenous peoples and Tribal peoples in Suriname and worldwide. After all, our footprint is absolutely minimal, but we experience the effects of Climate Change very heavily, because of our great dependence on nature. Examples are the current heavy rainfall, for almost two years and all year round, and repeated floods, which have caused our crops and also harvests to fail. Structural support aimed at increasing food security has not yet been forthcoming.

We especially want to draw your urgent attention to the uncertain legal position of Indigenous peoples and Tribal peoples in Suriname, which is connected to our livelihood security. Suriname is the only country in the Western Hemisphere that does not have legislation to recognize and protect the internationally recognized rights of Indigenous peoples and Tribal peoples. The Republic of Suriname adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. In addition, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States issued judgments against the State of Suriname in 2005, 2007 and 2015, respectively, in which the State is ordained to legally recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples and Tribal peoples.

The deadline of the last ruling has now been passed for three years and the proposed Draft Act on Collective Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples remains unaddressed in parliament.

Secretary General and Minister Ramdin, we as Indigenous peoples and Tribal peoples would like to play our role and make our contribution in combating climate change and loss of biodiversity. But for that we need to be protected by effective legislation in accordance with international standards. Our fundamental rights, traditional authority and governance, our right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), our traditional knowledge and our right to effective participation in policies that affect us, must be recognized and protected.

We have repeatedly pointed out to successive governments that they can call upon the expertise of the UN.

Secretary General, this time we would like to request you directly to deploy your experts and the UN agencies in Suriname to speed up the process of legal recognition. We understand that political will also plays a role in this and we call on the UN and the UN organizations to exert their influence on this through diplomacy and in all projects. The UN is also required to promote and implement the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We thank you for your understanding of this urgent letter, and we look forward to the next steps we would like to take together with your institute.

Yours sincerely,

The VIDS board and KAMPOS board
On their behalf,

David Lewis,
VIDS board member
Village chief of Apoera