

**NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION OF COLOMBIA  
(ORGANIZACIÓN NACIONAL INDÍGENA DE COLOMBIA, ONIC)**

**\*\*UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION\*\***

**Invitation to President Iván Duque Márquez, to speak to the Indigenous peoples and nations of Colombia.**

**In Bakatá, on September 1,** The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (*Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia*, ONIC)—the national authority for Indigenous governance, which recognizes 115 Indigenous Peoples and Nations of Colombia, is both indignant and regretful of the President of Colombia’s disgraceful media incident at the launch of the PreCOP Convention of Biodiversity on Monday, August 30. This event was held at the ancestral longhouse of the Jusy Monilla Amilla Indigenous Community of the Colombian Amazon. This community promotes tourism and is not a political representative or a representative organization of the 10,026 inhabitants of the 11 legally constituted Indigenous territories and communities of the Amazonian trapezoid. It is not one of ONIC’s affiliated organizations.

The Presidential Palace hired a tourist services operator who was intended to create an image of inclusion and dialogue with Indigenous communities and peoples, a manipulative spectacle that many public figures, the national community, and the international community have expressed they were angered and offended by. This imitation is a mockery of our beliefs and customs, it disrespects intercultural dialogue, and was done solely as a media spectacle.

The pandemic, which we have all suffered, has brought about a massive loss of biodiversity. It is imperative that the government is serious in engaging in dialogue with Indigenous organizations and authorities, who are the legitimate representatives of Indigenous people. Addressing the climate crisis, as well as advancing a political agenda that guarantees the conservation and protection of biodiversity by maintaining the generational sharing of traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples and nations, are essential to preservation and should be regarded with the utmost seriousness. The national government, headed by President Iván Duque Márquez, should address these issues with the respect and extreme dedication that is required.

In some Amazonian cultures, the use of the “Thought Bank” (*banco de pensamiento*) is a part of the formation of a man. When the government summons Indigenous Peoples, we gladly sit at their tables. In the Amazonas department of Colombia, there is a table created by the Associations of Indigenous Traditional Authorities, among its many other functions, it serves as a place to dialogue with the government; leaders elected by the collective, administrative and political processes for this purpose. The images revealed by the media showed how the Indigenous people were not there as community representatives, which alluded to the fact that the government did not intend to discuss the issue of biodiversity conservation with the inhabitants. Those same residents who reside on the most biodiverse territory on the planet, the largest virgin rainforest on the planet. The national government receives substantial resources from international entities and is urged by many European and other countries to participate in

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real and effective engagement with the Indigenous Peoples and Nations, which is why this situation is particularly sad and unfortunate.

The Indigenous Communities, Nations and Peoples of Colombia live, suffer and resist the impacts of the armed conflict in our territories. The impacts of the armed conflict in our territories, as well as the persistence of extractive megaprojects, single-crop farming, agro-industrial, mining and hydroelectric projects cause the constant physical, cultural, and spiritual extermination of peoples and ecosystems.

Our constant calls to "Return to the Origin" (*Volver al Origen*) fall on the deaf ears of those in big economic associations. The interests of big capital are harmful to us. The inaction, omission, and complicity of the national government in failing to protect the lives of Indigenous and environmentalists inflicts harm on us. In Colombia, in 2019, 65 environmental leaders were assassinated, between July 2020 - 2021, more than 40 have been assassinated. The Observatory of the Council for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Human Rights and Peace at the ONIC, has registered, in 2021 alone, 56 threats and 33 homicides against Indigenous communities and leaders by armed actors throughout the nation.

The following decade is essential for the future of the climate crisis and the massive loss of biodiversity: humanity must change the predatory development models that led to these catastrophes. The propriety, ambition and implementation mechanisms of the 2030 and 2050 biodiversity goals, which are being discussed by all states at the current PreCOP and at this year's COP in October in China, will define the future of biodiversity.

The Constitutional Court ruled that the national government and ONIC must sit down at the Permanent Roundtable for Consultation with Indigenous Peoples (*Mesa Permanente de Concertación, MPC*), to discuss the National Development Plan 2018-2022. Government ministers and vice ministers have met there with the representative organizations of the Indigenous Peoples. We invite you, with the respect and seriousness that the matter requires, to visit this legitimate space for dialogue and let us succeed in convening and creating the necessary social transformations that will stop the massive loss of biodiversity. Biodiversity is one of the most serious issues facing the nation today and it is irreversible. This joint collaboration may be able to reconnect society to "Good Living" (*Buen Vivir*), an integral notion that integrates nature as a source of life.

Finally, we call on President Iván Duque Márquez, to sit down and talk with the Indigenous authorities and not with tour operators, so that we can have a direct dialogue about biodiversity, "Good Living" and our mandate to "Return to the Origin". We ask President Iván Duque to convene the MPC to engage in dialogue and consensus according to the regulatory mandate of Decree 1397 of 1996, in which the Ministers of the Interior, the Environment and Sustainable Development are all part of.

We await your response and attendance.