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Dr Manmohan Singh  
Prime Minister  
Prime Minister's Office  
South Block, Raisina Hill  
New Delhi  
India 110 -101

October 12, 2010

Your Excellency,

We welcome the formation of the National Council for Tribal Welfare, and note that its aim is to, 'provide broad policy guidelines to bring out improvements in the lives of the Scheduled Tribe Community in the country'. Many Scheduled Tribes will undoubtedly welcome efforts to 'improve their lives'. However, please allow us to draw your attention to our work concerning some of the associated dangers of outsiders' attempts to 'develop' the lives of tribal peoples, without their full consent or active involvement.

In this connection, please find enclosed a copy of a small booklet, a critique of how some tribal peoples are being destroyed in the name of 'development', and a report, Progress Can Kill, about the often disastrous impact of imposing 'development', however well meaning, onto self-sufficient tribal peoples.

Obviously, if tribal peoples can live in freedom on their own land, making decisions about their own lives, they will be far healthier, happier and more independent than those who have been uprooted and had 'development' or welfare forced upon them.

As you will know, Jawaharlal Nehru understood how important it is for tribal peoples to make their own decisions, on their own land, when he laid down his fundamental principles for tribal development. His words, although now half a century old, are as relevant and perceptive today as they were when first written. You will of course be familiar with them.

- 1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- 2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4) We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.

5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

These principles are especially relevant in order to protect the rights and the futures of the 'particularly vulnerable tribes', such as the Jarawa of the Andaman Islands.

We would urge the National Council for Tribal Welfare to ensure that all projects with tribal people in India adhere to Nehru's five principles.

We would also ask you to look into the ratification of ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169, which recognises tribal peoples' right to land ownership and to be consulted about projects that affect them. India of course ratified the precursor to Convention 169 (ILO Convention 107) in 1958. However, ratifying Convention 169 now would bring India's commitment to the rights of tribal peoples up-to-date.

We believe that if tribal peoples in India are allowed to make their own choices about their futures, secure in the knowledge that their land rights are protected, then India could be at the forefront of the rights of tribal peoples around the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Corry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

Stephen Corry  
Director

cc NCTW members