

## DELEGATION PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

### **Ruth Buendia Mestoquiari, President of Central Asháninka del Rio Ene, Peru**

Ruth Buendia Mestoquiari is an Asháninka woman and indigenous leader from the indigenous community of Cutivireni in the Ene Valley in Peru. After the period of social violence suffered in the Selva Central under the Shining Path movement, Ruth was displaced from her community to the city of Satipo, where she began her work with the indigenous organisations CARE (Central Asháninka of the Rio Ene) and ARPI SC (Regional Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Central Forest). Under these organisations, she had the opportunity to return to her community to do work with indigenous women and community leaders. In 2005 Ruth was elected as a member of CARE's management team, and in 2006 was elected as President of the organisation, and re-elected again in 2009. Ruth has become an important leader for the Asháninka communities of the Ene River, and a key spokesperson for the Asháninka people in their struggles to resist the planned hydroelectric Pakitzapango dam, which will have immense social and environmental impacts on the communities in the Ene Valley.

### **Sheyla Yakarepi Juruna, representative of the Juruna tribe of the Xingu River Basin, Brazil**

Sheyla Yakarepi Juruna, 36, is an indigenous leader of the Juruna, from the Boa Vista community in the municipality of Vitória do Xingu, Pará, Brazil. She has been active in the struggle to defend the Xingu River since the landmark victory in 1989 that stopped the Kararaô Dam Complex. Since participating in a national indigenous conference marking the 500 year anniversary of Brazil in the year 2000, Sheyla has become an important local leader in the indigenous peoples' rights movement, working to ensure "health, culturally appropriate education, land demarcation, and respect for indigenous rights" for her people. Her strong involvement in the movement was inspired in particular by the need for indigenous peoples to resist the

destructive forces that endanger their survival, such as the Brazilian Government's plans to dam the Xingu River. As such, Sheyla has become an unwavering opponent to the Belo Monte Dam Complex, a key spokesperson for the indigenous peoples resisting the project, and a leader within the Movimento Xingu Vivo Para Sempre (MXVPS). Located adjacent to the planned reservoir of Belo Monte, the Boa Vista community will be gravely impacted by the dam.

### **Chief Almir Narayamoga Surui, leader of the Suruí tribe of the Madeira River Basin, Brazil**

Almir Narayamoga Surui, 36, of the Paiter Surui people, was born in the Lapetanha community of the Sete de Setembro indigenous territory, Cacoal, Rondônia, Brazil. Having observed the destruction of his people's ancestral lands by settlers flooding into the region as part of the World Bank-funded POLONOROESTE programme, Almir was determined to halt this process and defend the territorial and human rights of the Paiter Surui. At the age of 14 he began to study Portuguese and was soon able to articulate the demands of his people to Brazilian and international decision-makers. In 1994 he was elected the General Coordinator of the indigenous federation of Rondônia (CUNPIR). During his tenure several indigenous territories were demarcated in Rondônia, including a territory that contained isolated indigenous peoples, and was a tireless opponent of illegal land invaders. Almir is among the best-known Brazilian indigenous leaders, having worked closely with international governments and leaders, including England's Prince Charles, to call attention to indigenous rights and environmental protection in the Amazon. He has also worked extensively in defence of isolated indigenous groups through the group CIPIACI (International Committee for the Protection of Isolated Indigenous Peoples) and has spoken out against the dangers posed by major infrastructure projects to these peoples.