

Rt Hon William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

17 May 2012

Re: Plea for the UK government to ratify International Labour Organization Convention 169 for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169)

Dear Mr Hague,

We, the undersigned tribal and indigenous representatives from around the world write to you today urging you to take action on a matter of grave importance that profoundly affects our survival.

We write on the basis of our understanding of ILO Convention 169 and the principles it enshrines, convinced that: i) only through widespread ratification will they be recognised as an issue of global importance; ii) they represent the most effective way to guarantee our survival.

By way of this letter, we respectfully encourage you to urge the UK government to ratify ILO 169, to show support for the most vulnerable tribal peoples. We note that Britain voted for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and remind you that, unlike ILO 169, UNDRIP is not a legally binding instrument.

Those of us hailing from ratifying nations recognise the need for more countries to ratify in order to strengthen the authority of the law. Those of us from non-compliant countries are desperate for them to enshrine its principles in law.

We are aware that there are no tribal or indigenous peoples in the United Kingdom, however, we respectfully remind you that British companies operate on indigenous land, British aid money funds projects on tribal territories and Britain funds World Bank and IMF development schemes planned for tribal land. Most importantly, we are certain that ratification by the United Kingdom would provide extremely strong motivation for other states to ratify the Convention. Let the United Kingdom be an example to other governments, so that they may ratify.

As the only major binding international convention concerning tribal peoples, ILO 169 is our best hope for survival. Mr Hague, we feel it is time for Britain to stand up for indigenous and tribal peoples' rights.

We, the undersigned, urge you to advise your government to ratify ILO 169 as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

Smith Moeti, Bushman, Botswana
Jumanda Gakelebone, Bushman, Botswana
Benny Wenda, Lani tribal leader, West Papua
Lal Amlai, Bawm, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh
Socratez Sofyan Yoman, Baptist Church leader, West Papua
Rodion Sulyandziga, Udege, Russia
Dmitry Berezhkov, Itelmen tribe, Kamchatka, Russia
Alexey Limanzo, Nivckh tribe, Sakhalin, Russia
Polina Shulbaeva, Selkup, Tomsk, Russia
Tatiana Degai, Itelmen, Kamchatka, Russia
Kumar Sivasish Roy, Jumma Peoples Network UK
Bambino Chakma, Jumma Peoples Network UK
Nantu Chakma, Jumma Peoples Network UK
Tónico Benites, Guarani anthropologist, Brazil
Eliseu Lopes, Guarani, Brazil
Otoniel Ricardo, Guarani, Brazil
Davi Yanomami, Yanomami shaman and spokesman, Brazil
Almir Narayamoga Surui, Surui, Brasil
Daniel M. Kobei, Executive Director OPDP, Vice-Chairmen HUGAFO, Ogiek,
Kenya
Richard Leiyagu, Samburu, Kenya
Sheyla Yakarepi, Juruna, Brazil
Sônia Guajajara, Vice Coordinator, Coordination of Indigenous Organisations of the
Brazilian Amazon- COIAB, Guajajara, Brazil
Julio Macuxi, Macuxi Indian and activist, Brazil