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### CALL FOR PROTECTION FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ISOLATION IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

This week, the Federation of Indigenous Cacataibo Communities (FENACOCA), the Peruvian NGO *Instituto del Bien Común*, and the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL); with the support of the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESEP), have requested precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to protect the lives, health and physical integrity of Cacataibo indigenous peoples living in isolation in the Peruvian Amazon. The Cacataibo peoples in isolation are threatened by oil and gas exploration in their traditionally occupied territories.

The Cacataibo Indigenous peoples in isolation live in the areas superimposed by the Block 107 oil and gas exploration concession in the Cordillera Azul region in the central Peruvian Amazon. Over the years there have been myriad sightings of Cacataibo peoples in isolation by settled indigenous communities, migrants, loggers and local authorities, over 100 of which have been recorded in a 2002 technical study carried out by *Instituto del Bien Común*. Indigenous federations, including FENACOCA and AIDSESEP, the primary Amazonian indigenous federation in Peru, have sought the creation of territorial reserves for the protection of the Cacataibo peoples in isolation through numerous requests before different national and regional government agencies for much of the last decade, to no avail.

There is overwhelming historical evidence that shows that forced contact with indigenous peoples in isolation results in serious illnesses and numerous deaths. Yet, despite the high risk of forced contact and life-threatening diseases, the Peruvian government approved oil and gas exploration in the traditional territories of the indigenous Cacataibo peoples in August 2007.

The Canadian company, Petrolífera Petroleum Del Peru S.A.C., has recently begun laying down lines of explosives to conduct seismic testing, as part of its exploration for oil and gas in Block 107. The influx of workers into the traditional territories of the Cacataibo indigenous peoples carries the risk of forced contact. The oil and gas exploration also results in pollution of watercourses and other environmental interference that harm the indigenous peoples in isolation that are wholly dependent on the forest and its biodiversity. Furthermore, the opening of Amazonian forest brings increased numbers of illegal loggers and higher rates of deforestation, again aggravating the risks imposed on the Cacataibo indigenous peoples in isolation.

In light of the serious and imminent threats to the lives and physical integrity of the Cacataibo indigenous peoples in isolation that result from oil and gas exploration in their traditional territories, indigenous federations and NGOs are looking to the IACHR to request that the government of Peru take



precautionary measures to protect the lives and safety of these indigenous peoples. In particular, the government from Peru and the company Petrolífera Petroleum Del Peru S.A.C. should refrain from conducting seismic testing in the traditional territories of the Cacataibo indigenous peoples.

Available for interview:

Marcos Orellana is a Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). He is the program director of the Human Rights and Environment program at CIEL, which addresses the growing connection between threats to the global environment and basic human rights. Mr. Orellana has worked extensively on cases before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, providing legal assistance to local groups as they prepare and submit cases before the IACHR.

Carlos Soria Ph. D. is a Lawyer with the Instituto del Bien Común. He heads the Incidence and Legal Counsel Area. He advises indigenous organizations, rural organizations, regional and local governments on building governance through environmental management and indigenous peoples rights. He has researched the activities of extractive industries in Chile, Ecuador, Peru and USA, advising indigenous and environmental organizations since the 1990s.