

IN SUPPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEFENSE OF THE AMAZON TO ENSURE LIFE ON THE PLANET

The Society for the Anthropology of the Lowlands of South America (SALSA), an international academic organization made up of professors, students, professionals, activists, and holders of traditional knowledge joins the voices of the traditional communities of the Amazon to insist on the need for effective participation of their organizations, leaders and representative leaders in the Summit of Amazonian Presidents that will take place on August 8 and 9 in the city of Belém do Pará.

For traditional Amazonian communities (Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities and riverside communities), this Summit is a great opportunity to place their concerns for the present and future of the Amazon on the debate agenda, as well as to present their alternatives for a better life. The meeting of the presidents of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela, will seek to “rescue” the principles contained in the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACTO). However, it is time to rethink and evaluate institutional forms and strategies with a view to implementing more effective and participatory mechanisms. It is a unique opportunity to promote the construction of consensus for the region with the participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples, at a decisive moment for the planet’s future.

As specialists and professionals committed to promoting public knowledge through research, we are not oblivious to the conditions of injustice, violence and discrimination in which many Indigenous Amazonians live. We recognize that the traditional communities themselves have been building and showing new paths of government and governance, resistance and political action that are essential for the defense strategies of the Amazon.

For this reason, SALSA encourages the presidents of the Amazon region to engage traditional communities in the elaboration of policies, documents, and in setting priority actions and strategies within the framework of the Summit of Presidents of the Amazon, taking note that you must:

- Have effective participation of the Indigenous, native, and traditional communities in the care of the territory;
- Recognize that the Amazon has been facing initiatives that weaken and threaten it both from the States, private actors, but also from multiple illegal actors, such as illegal economies and illegal armed actors;
- Work for a social, environmental and cultural governance of the Amazon;

- Regulate the sale of carbon credits, as a new way of marketing the territories;
- Guarantee Human Rights in the communities that inhabit the territory;
- Protect and stop polluting extractivism in the Amazon, such as mining and hydrocarbons;
- It is essential to ensure the protection of environmental and Indigenous defenders, and promote the application of the Escazú Agreement;
- Promote a broad and participatory discussion on the implications of the Bioeconomy. Prevent this from becoming a new form of colonialism and mercantilism that only benefits international financial institutions and the private sector.

Based on these proposals, we call on all Amazon presidents and states to:

- Let's avoid the point of no return that condemns us to the complete destruction of the Amazon;
- The fate of the Amazon is the fate of its peoples and of the entire planet;
- Let's save the Amazon from polluting substances such as mercury and others that sustain legal and illegal extractive activities;
- Let's secure and protect the sources of water for life in the Amazon;
- Security for the defenders of life and territory in the Amazon;
- Let us defend the bodies and territories of Amazonian women in their diversity;
- Fight head-on against illicit economies in the Amazon.

Hoping that the process towards the Summit of Presidents of the Amazon does not follow the same route as the meeting of presidents of the Amazon in Leticia in 2019, where there was no participation of civil society, we are ready at your disposal to attend all the meetings face-to-face and virtual meetings that you call us to be able to discuss these and other proposals that you are considering.

Leticia, Colombia, July 29, 2023.