

DECLARATION OF THE NATION "FOR THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR COLLECTIVE

The delegates representing indigenous peoples, gathered together at the National Indigenous Congress, carried out from the 2nd to the 4th March 2001, in the Purépecha community of Nurío, municipality of Paracho, Michoacán, solemnly proclaim the following declaration:

CONSIDERING that for 509 years of history we have suffered in our flesh and in our hearts the exploitation and the discrimination that comes from the powerful, and since then, attempts have been made to deny our peoples our capacity for guiding our own destinies with wisdom and dignity.

REAFFIRMING the intelligence and resistance that our people have demonstrated with dignity before multiple attempts of governmental extermination, immobilisation or cooptation.

OBSERVING that while there are still sectors of society that maintain their attitudes of racism and exclusion towards our peoples, there are other sectors, ever increasing, that are becoming aware of the just nature of our proposals and offer growing solidarity with our causes and our struggles.

DENOUNCING that the response of the different governments to our legitimate demands has been to maintain the militarisation of our regions and the persecution of our organisations, as well as to promote the realisation of programmes, plans and projects, that lead to the privatisation of the natural resources, goods and services, and as a consequence, to the exclusion of our peoples in the decisions that affect us.

WE DECLARE:

That we are still alive and we continue to honour our peoples, the dignified memory of those that gave birth to us in this world, who, with wisdom and love taught us to be the indians that we are: those of us that come from the earth; those of us that come from the corn; those of us that dress in the colour of hope; those

of us that are truly brothers and sisters. We are the indians that we are.

That from the name and the word, the true word, sown from old in the deepness of our brown heart, with dignity and respect we say that we are Peoples.

That when we say that we are Peoples, it is because we carry in our blood, in our flesh and in our skin all of the history, all of the hope, the culture, the language the identity, all of the roots, the vitality, the stem, the flower and the seed that our fathers and mothers entrusted us with, and in our minds and hearts they wanted to sow these so that they may never be forgotten or lost.

That we are not a sum of individuals who are spread throughout the world, but rather a harmony of colours and voices, a constant beat of wishes and thoughts that are born, that grow and are fertilised lovingly in one heart and will, a fabric of hope. And it is this existence and form of thinking in harmony and collectively that we call community.

That we will not renounce what we are. That we will continue to defend our harmony, and while defending it we are also defending all of those that like us want to live their difference with dignity, their colour, song, vision of life and liberty. That for these reasons:

WE DEMAND:

FIRST. The constitutional recognition our Rights of Indian Peoples, in accordance with the constitutional reform initiative drafted by the Commission of Concordance and Pacification (Cocopa), that we adopt as our own initiative, because it enshrines the spirit and letter of the San Andrés agreements signed by the federal government and the EZLN on the 16 February 1996 regarding Indigenous Rights and Culture.

SECOND. The constitutional recognition of our full existence as indigenous peoples, so that we can enjoy in this way our right to establish freely our political condition and take care of, protect and promote, our social and cultural developments.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONGRESS FOR THE INTEGRAL RECOGNITION OF OUR COLLECTIVE RIGHTS"

THIRD. The constitutional recognition of our inalienable right to free determination, expressed as autonomy within the framework of the Mexican state, and to thereby exercise our capacity to decide our own destiny in all areas of daily life, such as economy, politics, the administration of justice, territorial issues, culture and education and all social aspects that contribute to our identity and conscience and will sufficient capacity for opening to relate to the other citizens of the country and the world.

FOURTH. The constitutional recognition of our territories and ancestral lands that represent the totality of our habitat, where we reproduce our material and spiritual existence as peoples, to conserve them integrally and maintain communal ownership of our lands, as only thus will it be possible to preserve our social cohesion, conserve our ways of working freely and collectively for the benefit of the whole community and safeguarding the patrimony and future of the next generations.

For us, indian peoples, true peoples, our mother earth is sacred, as all the peoples that inhabit her, the animals, the plants, the rivers, the mountains, the caves, the valleys, as are the biological resources and the knowledge of our peoples of them. They are not merchandise that can be bought or sold.

That is why we cannot accept the destruction of our territories by the imposition of projects and megaprojects that the federal and state governments are trying to impose on various indigenous regions of the country.

We cannot accept the development plans promoted by state and federal governments if they do not include the effective participation of indigenous peoples, nor can we accept legislation that is being passed on state or federal level that affects indigenous peoples without being approved by the people.

We demand a moratorium on all prospecting (exploration) projects connected with biodiversity (biological reserves), mining, water, etc. all those biopirate activities that are being carried out in our territories and country that affect indigenous territories, without first consulting the indigenous peoples in their own time and conditions.

FIFTH. The recognition of our normative indigenous systems in the construction of a pluralist legal regime that harmonises the diverse conceptions and practices of the regulation of social order that conforms Mexican society.

SIXTH. The demilitarisation of all indigenous regions of the country.

SEVENTH. The liberation of all indigenous prisoners in the country who are being deprived of their freedom for fighting in defence of indigenous autonomy and the respect for our individual and collective rights.

In order to achieve these big objectives, we call on our brothers and sisters of the country, to all peoples, communities and organisations and all the national indigenous movements, to unite our hearts and voices in one single heart and one single voice:

For the constitutional recognition of our collective rights. First the constitutional reform and then, the reform of the laws and institutions. We call on organisations that work in indigenous regions to commence the reconstitution of our indigenous peoples, revising those practices that, rather than uniting us, divide us and disperse us, and creating lines of joint work that are coherent with the historical moment we are living. We call for the creation of regional and state spaces that lead us to truly strengthen the National Indigenous Congress as a meeting space for all.

We call on all our brothers and sisters of civil society to protest for the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, accompanying the march for indigenous dignity led by the Zapatista delegation that is travelling to Mexico City to talk with the National Congress.

To your hearts and thoughts, brothers all, we turn.

**NEVER MORE A MEXICO WITHOUT US
FOR THE INTEGRAL RECONSTITUTION OF OUR PEOPLES
FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION
OF OUR COLLECTIVE RIGHTS**

Nurió Michoacán, Mexico
4th March 2001