

The Rio Branco Declaration

Statement issued by the International Conference of Community Forest Management and Community Forest Enterprises

**Rio Branco
Acre, Brazil**

20 July 2007

WE, the managers and representatives of the communities and community-based forest enterprises from 40 countries, gathered together for six days in this conference, during which we have been able to exchange our experiences and community forest management models, sharing our needs and our potentials, dialoging with governmental representatives and organizations of cooperation, and analyzing global problems of community forestry, based on conclusions that our working groups have made, declare that:

- government policies and international agreements about forests should be based on the principle that we the local communities and the Indigenous peoples are the principal actors in the sustainable management of forest ecosystems. Communities and forests can and should live in harmony;
- governments should recognize the rights of local communities, and push for legal mechanisms that guarantee land tenure and the sustainable management of forests;
- it is necessary to create a global fund to support community forestry, since it has been demonstrated that the sustainable production of goods and services of forest ecosystems managed by communities contributes in a vital way to the mitigation of climate change and to human development;
- the incipient interchange of experiences and models of conservation and production of goods and services of the forest has proven to generate a human development potential through mutual learning and development of local capacities. We demand that governments, international organizations and NGOs support these processes of interchange and implementation of local solutions;

- the applied research and cutting-edge technology related to products and services of forest ecosystems should become a social technology, strengthening capacity transfers and a constant flow of knowledge from universities and research centres towards communities and community forest enterprises; and
- currently the costs of the processes of certification are very high, which makes them inaccessible to the majority of communities. Mechanisms of access should be created for forest-use certification for both timber and non-timber products, in conditions that permit sustainability over time.

We delegate to the Global Alliance of Community Forestry and to the Rights and Resources Initiative as well as local, national and regional organizations represented here, to follow up on the recommendations stemming from the community groups gathered together in this conference, and to act to ensure their fulfillment at their corresponding levels.

We thank the people and the government of Acre, as well as the Federal Government of Brazil, for their hospitality and invaluable support for the successful execution of this event, which provided great lessons and expectations to benefit the communities in all of our countries.

We also thank the International Tropical Timber Organization for its vital financial contribution to this conference, and for its support of the participation of community groups, including in their office spaces. Finally we thank RRI, GACF and CSAG for their financial and logistical contributions, and for the efforts of their members to achieve the foreseen objectives of this conference.

Presentations, summaries of working group discussions, press releases, the background report, detailed case studies and other materials related to the conference can be found at http://rightsandresources.org/news/events/CFE_conference.html or via www.itto.or.jp.

