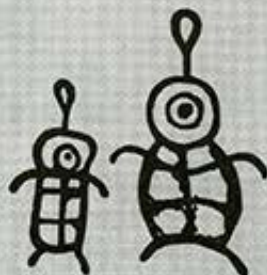


SUMO LEADERS DENOUNCE TIMBER CONCESSIONS



(Nicaragua) The following letter, denouncing the concessions was written by Sumo leaders and sent to Mark Plotkin of Conservation International.

Managua, September 4, 1991

Dear Friend:

We form part of a Sumo commission that is making inquiries to learn the terms of the contract signed by the government of Nicaragua and the Taiwanese company Equipe Enterprise, Ltd. We understand that the concession is of 375,000 hectares.

Our forest is being sold off and we have not been consulted on the utilization and destruction of the forest.

Throughout history, Sumo people have struggled to preserve their traditions and their dignity. Our traditions - cultural, ecological and religious - have not been respected. All the past governments utilized our natural resources without regard for the well-being of our communities.

It would be important to reflect upon the true situation of the indigenous people, about the role of human rights defenders, and especially about the national laws and the role of the indigenous legislators.

With regard to the rights and the struggles of the indigenous people, what is the relationship between democracy and human rights? How do human rights fit in? Do we or don't we have any rights?

We urge the international community to lend its support. This is not just an issue of conservation, but an issue of human rights.

In the name of the Sumo People, we hope that you will continue to help us.

Ernesto Almendares

Ronas Dolores

