



The year 1993 (Gregorian year) is behind us. In different ways and for different reasons, great expectations were created because it was said that this year would be beneficial for Indigenous people.

In the first place, the United Nations declared 1993 the "Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples". The year was conceived to provide a platform so that consciousness, sensibility, and human rights to favor Indigenous Peoples would be created throughout the world.

Nation-states reacted positively to this call, but concrete repairs to oppression and discrimination have seldom benefited our peoples. In truth, we can affirm that no significant fact of historic reparation is concrete. If this would be true, there would have been some advances in Indigenous legislation, commitments to establish dialogues, and further respect for ecological conservation and economic implementation on Indigenous Territories.

The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, after sponsoring decades of environmental destruction, accompanied by genocide and ethnocide, have only recently decided to invite Indigenous representatives in recent dialogues. These banks have offered some economic support and technical assistance but there is no guarantee that they will stop funding destructive projects on Indian areas. The United Nations Development Program promised to support projects and defend our notion of biodiversity and intellectual rights of Indigenous peoples' knowledge.

Indeed, all of these can be considered positive. However, there is no guarantee that these agreements, proposals, and projects will be implemented under conditions of equality and mutual respect, i.e. with the full participation of Indigenous peoples in the decision making or implementation process. There is also no guarantee that Indigenous Territories and natural resources within those territories will be respected.

The Indigenous Fund, created by the governments of Bolivia and Mexico has only been ratified by five or six governments even though it has been widely publicized. What is even worse, is the lack of full participation by autonomous organizations in the decision-making process and not one Indigenous women's organization has been invited even though there are many.

Recently, the United Nations has declared the Decade of Indigenous Peoples, from 1994-2004 to help, among other things, to disseminate information (education) regarding Indigenous Peoples. This resolution, however, does not reflect the full participation of the Indigenous Peoples in the activities of the Decade. It seems that, the so-called "New Partnership" that had theoretically begun in 1992 has already ended, for it has not been mentioned anywhere.

Despite current processes of democratization in Latin America, massacres, repression, assassinations of Indigenous representatives, and endless waiting for territorial demarcation bylaws, continued to the end of the Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. We must print for the record, the massacre of the Yanomami in Brazil, the Ashaninka massacre in the Peruvian Amazon, the assassination of a Macuxi leader in Brazil and several Indigenous peoples of the 22 cultures found in Guatemala. Assassinations have also taken place in Colombia and repression in Ecuador and Panama does not escape our concern. In Chile, 144 Mapuche people were imprisoned and continue to be prosecuted. Similarly, when it comes to Territorial Demarcation, we must point out the Macuxi (Brazil) of the Area Raposa-Serra do Sol and the military strategies used to intimidate them, as well as, the recent mobilization of 125 Mocovi Indigenous communities against the "Law of Indigenous Communities" approved by the governor of Santa Fe, Argentina. The list of countries that have violated, intimidated and refuted the rights of Indigenous peoples continues to grow. All this demonstrates that, in practice, there continues to be violations and denial of ancestral Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The publicized World Conference on Human Rights of the United Nations in Vienna (1993), had no significant attainments.

It is important to emphasize, as a positive outcome of this continuous continental and world struggle of Indigenous Peoples, that we have advanced nationally, regionally, continentally, and globally. The Second Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples organized by CONIC, the "Coordinadora de Naciones, Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas del Continente", last October, marked a historical milestone in the consolidation of continental unity, organization, self-criticism, and a propositional political position.

The hopes and yearning for a true year of justice, peace, and harmony for our people is the wish of the entire Continental Indigenous Community. With these goals in mind, we are building community, looking to the future, and taking firm steps to voice our continental demands.

Peace, Justice, and Harmony with Mother Earth
SAIIC Board of Directors