

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Commissioner Ferrero Waldner
DG External Relations
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

April 27th 2009

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you regarding the possible extinction of a Nomadic tribe due to a EU funded project on the Awá Guajá land in the Amazon state of Maranhao, Brazil. I would like to make you aware, if you are not so already, of the negative impacts of this project on the Awá land and its indigenous population.

In the 1980s, the EU and the World Bank funded the Carajas iron ore mine and railway, which were an integral part of a huge industrial development scheme known as the Great Carajas Project. As a result, large numbers of settlers, ranchers and loggers moved in to Awá area, pressurising both the land and people who live there.

A number of NGOs in Brazil have campaigned for the recognition and protection of Awá's land and in 1993, the European Parliament appealed to the Brazilian government to 'demarcate, protect and ratify the land'. Although the Awá's lands were eventually mapped out and legally recognised by the Brazilian government, much of the land was excluded in the process. Furthermore, although FUNAI (the Brazilian government's Indian affairs department) made contact with the Awá tribe in order to protect them from the impacts of the Great Carajas project, more than two thirds of the Awa people contacted during this period died - in other words the FUNAI strategy failed.

Due to the land being continuously invaded and occupied by loggers, ranchers and settlers, the Awá people continue to be exposed to disease transmitted by outsiders. The risk of violence at the hands of the invaders is high, and they must also contend with their animals (vital food for the Awá people) being hunted and scared away. Additionally, loggers have illegally built roads deep into the Awá land, some operating just three kilometres away from the Awá community.

There are also concerns about the uncontacted Awá; several groups are known to be living in the Arariboia territory which is being heavily devastated by loggers. Indeed some reports suggest that 80% of the forest in the reserve has been destroyed.

The EU's Country Strategy Paper has earmarked €61 million for Brazil in the period of 2007 - 2013 for development cooperation including the 'promotion of the environmental dimension of sustainable development', as the issue of deforestation in the Amazon is of growing global concern. In addition, all EU member states voted to approve the UN Declaration on indigenous peoples' rights.

Yet, although the European Community Board of Auditors has carried out investigations at the request of the European Parliament, the Awá's situation is still greatly deteriorating. As a funder

of the original Great Carajas project and of ongoing projects in Brazil, the EU has a responsibility to put pressure on the Brazilian government, which has so far failed to protect the borders of Awá land and remove the invaders. Failure to act urgently could mean that one of Brazil's last remaining nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes will simply disappear as people. I trust you will give this your attention, as ever.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.