



# CLIMATE ALLIANCE

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## Supporting indigenous peoples in fighting for their rights and territories

### Indigenous realities on border between Colombia and Peru



Photo: Climate Alliance

***"We are not afraid. We face the conflicts. This is the resistance of indigenous peoples."***

Although the voices of indigenous peoples around the world are becoming louder and more influential in climate policy negotiations such as the UN Climate Change Conference, this year's "International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples" on 9 August does not bring cause for celebration.

The rainforest is not only the livelihood of many indigenous peoples, it also plays an important role in maintaining biodiversity and as a carbon sink. Yet these areas are under increasing pressure – both from government measures as well as illegal activities such as logging and drug crop cultivation. An exclusive interview with Luís, an indigenous representative from the border region of Colombia and Peru (we have changed his first name for the sake of his safety), illustrates just how dramatic the situation is on the ground.

"Well, we have experienced many ups and downs in our region," Luís begins, referring to the rubber boom around 100 years ago, which cost 100,000 indigenous people their lives and left a strong mark on the entire region. "Today, the planned roads across our territory, the areas that the government has blocked off as nature preserves and that we are no longer allowed to enter, as well as the increasing conflicts with drug traffickers pose a great threat to us."

Drug trafficking in particular brings grave danger both to the people and to the land itself. "The Colombians came and wanted us to work for them and pick coca leaves. We sometimes had to walk for two hours carrying 30 kilos, and that at the age of 12. [...] We can live with the fear. We know that we are not safe anywhere

and cannot trust anyone. But without water and without our forest, which is our livelihood, we cannot live. People from the drug cartels are cutting down more and more trees to grow coca fields. And they pollute our rivers and lakes with the chemicals they need to produce cocaine," explains Luís.

Luís sees a possible solution to this challenge by strengthening indigenous institutions, supporting indigenous leaders and mobilising the youth along with the rest of the population. "We need international allies [...]. There are always new threats. At the moment, more and more companies are approaching me to carry out carbon offset projects in our territory. So far we have refused all requests. They want to buy our land and then keep us from entering it. But what are we supposed to live on if we don't have jobs to earn enough money and need the forest to survive?"



Photo: Climate Alliance

***"We need people to give us a voice. In business, in politics, in society. Alone we can only reach a limited number of people. Be advocates for us indigenous peoples. Show solidarity. Speak out about the abuses in our habitat, support petitions, question companies' plans involving indigenous territories!"***

The solidarity of which Luís speaks is exactly what the Climate Alliance network has shown for over three decades, giving its indigenous partners a voice at the international and European levels. Climate Alliance also offers cities and towns concrete opportunities to support indigenous peoples of Amazonia. The recently established Climate Alliance Climate Fund is a case in point. With the help of this fund and together with the indigenous territory of the Wampís, various rainforest protection projects have gotten off the ground. Investing in the fund is an opportunity to make a concrete contribution to global climate action, to assume real climate responsibility and to support indigenous peoples in the fight for their rights and territories.

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