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DECLARATION OF INDIGENOUS LEADERS
REGARDING THE RIGHTS OF THE
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NATIONS
OF NICARAGUA'S ATLANTIC COAST REGION

WHEREAS:

- 1. the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama are indigenous peoples and nations of the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua;
- 2. the Miskito, Sumo and Rama are currently engaged in a struggle to protect their rights to self-determination, their aboriginal lands, and their traditional ways of life;
- 3. MISURASATA, the Coalition of Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations, has initiated a process of negotiations with the government of Nicaragua in order to achieve peace in the Atlantic Coast region and recognition of the basic rights of the indigenous peoples and nations;
- 4. MISURASATA in the negotiations is asserting the land rights of the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast and their right to self-determination through political and administrative autonomy claims which are fundamental to the survival of indigenous peoples and nations throughout the Americas;
- 5. governments throughout the Americas have failed repeatedly to accord indigenous peoples and nations their rights to their aboriginal lands and self determination which arise from their status as pre-existing sovereigns;
- 6. the Nicaraguan government has professed its commitment to advance the interests of indigenous people within its revolutionary process, and therefore interested observers are focusing on the Nicaraguan government to see whether it will incorporate within its ideology full recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and nations, or whether it will follow the path of other governments which have pursued ethnocidal policies against indigenous peoples and nations;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT WE THE UNDERSIGNED:

1. support MISURASATA's position that the Miskito, Sumo and Rama, as with all indigenous nations and peoples, are sovereign indigenous nations who possess natural rights of self-determination and the right to determine their economic, social and cultural development in accordance with their own values and traditions;

- 2. Support MISURASATA's position that the Miskito, Sumo and Rama, as with all indigenous nations and peoples, possess the right to their lands and waters, including all natural resources within the territories where they traditionally have lived and worked, and which they have not ceded freely by treaty or other manner, and that these rights preclude the Nicaraguan state from claiming or retaining any part of the unceded territories of the Atlantic Coast indigenous peoples and nations;
- 3. support MISURASATA's position that the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama, as with all indigenous nations and peoples, have the right to be free from external jurisdictional control, unless pursuant to valid treaty or other agreement voluntarily made by the legitimate representatives of these indigenous peoples and nations;
- 4. urge the government of Nicaragua to end all military activity and repression against the indigenous people of the Atlantic Coast region;
- 5. urge the government of Nicaragua to make a commitment to return to their traditional villages and chosen way of life the indigenous people who have been relocated against their will to government camps and settlements or who otherwise have been forced to abandon their chosen ways;
- 6. urge the government of Nicaragua to accept the proposal of MISURASATA to guarantee self-determination for the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama peoples through an autonomous regional government;
- 7. urge the government of Nicaragua to negotiate in good faith with MISURASATA, recognizing that the form of autonomy by which the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast will realize self-determination cannot be achieved by unilateral action of the Nicaraguan state, but rather must arise from joint efforts and dialogue with the indigenous peoples exercising the powers and responsibilities of sovereigns;
- 8. urge all interested parties to support the efforts of MISURASATA to negotiate peacefully with the government of Nicaragua in order to achieve recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples and nations of the Atlantic Coast region, as described herein.

This declaration, signed by Indian leaders from nine North and South American Nations, is now being circulated for additional signatures.

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Originating at the Center for World Indigenous Studies, Olympia, Washington USA www.cwis.org http://www.cwis.org

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