Answers to the Questions of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Don Francisco Calí on the situation of the Indigenous Peoples of Uruguay in the context of the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Council of the Charrúa Nation - CONACHA**

**February 17, 2021**

1. The national government of Uruguay has not carried out any economic measure for the economic recovery of the country after the Pandemic. The COVID 19 Pandemic generated the largest economic crisis in the country since the regional financial crisis of 2002[[1]](#footnote-1). The government's economic measures have focused on tax flexibilities for investors and credits for medium-sized companies. But none tends to contemplate the economic situation of the indigenous peoples of the country. The major infrastructure and industrialization project currently being developed is the construction of the UPM II pulp manufacturing plant with Finnish capitals. However, this transnational project began to take shape during the previous government and the current national government has only done it is to continue it. It should be noted that the installation of the UPM II plant in Pueblo Centenario would generate an increase in forestry activity in the region[[2]](#footnote-2), which would impact symbolic territories of importance for the Charrúa Nation, such as Salsipuedes (place of the massacre committed by the national army against the Charruas in 1831) and Batoví (the lands of the chief Sepé, the last rebel and autonomous political leadership against the State in the 19th century). The problem of the expansion of the forest industry over the territories of relevance to the indigenous Charrúa is a structural problem that goes beyond the context of the Pandemic.
2. Uruguay has a Foreign Investment Law (National Law 14,179) in which many transnational capitals linked to the forest industry take refuge in the country to settle in the country and grab land (mainly Chilean and Finnish capital in the hands of the companies Forestal Arauco-Montes del Plata and UPM). However, the country does not have a national law on indigenous lands and territories, nor has it ratified ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Moreover, according to the research by Trejo (2019), one of the arguments of opposition and denial to the ratification of ILO Convention 169 in the country is precisely the territorial issue. Both the refusal of the State to develop a policy of return and territorial demarcation and the refusal to allow the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consultation to affect foreign investment of capital[[3]](#footnote-3). It should be noted that, in the 19th century, through a series of military campaigns, the newly formed National State expropriated all community and autonomous lands from indigenous peoples. Hence, there is no recognition of community possession of the land. So far there has been no dialogue between the current government authorities and indigenous representatives on land policy.
3. The current National Budget of the government has made a cut in social policies[[4]](#footnote-4). Clearly the government is developing a policy of adjustment in the State[[5]](#footnote-5). In this way, the social gaps in Uruguay are further widened. This directly affects indigenous people since most use public services and not private ones. By making public service precarious, the living conditions of indigenous people are affected[[6]](#footnote-6). It should also be clarified that there are no specific public services for the population, they go to these like most of the popular sectors of the country. Nor have there been any social policies designed to combat social inequality in the indigenous population. Neither in previous governments, nor in the current one. Basically, the indigenous population does not have specific social protection and the general social protection for the popular sectors, from which many indigenous families benefit, are being cut back.
4. The national government has not consulted with any indigenous organization in the country on economic recovery. To date there is no dialogue between the national government and indigenous organizations.
5. To date, the national government has not obtained any vaccine against COVID 19. One of the main political scandals in the austral summer has been the fact that the government said that it had obtained vaccines and in fact it had not obtained them. The President of the Republic Luis Lacalle Pou went so far as to say that the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac had made him "a Chinese tale "[[7]](#footnote-7). To date, no real and specific date is known when vaccines will arrive, and vaccinations will begin for the country's population. Much less is it clear if a specific health policy will be implemented with the country's indigenous population. Keep in mind that the official data on infected and dead by COVID-19 does not break down by ethnic-racial descent, therefore there are no figures on the impact of COVID-19 on the Afro-descendant and indigenous population in the country. There are no specific policies for indigenous peoples.
6. As you can see in the official reports of the National Emergency System (who deals with the Pandemic) there is no breakdown by ethnic-racial descent. There is no specific data collection on the indigenous population, much less that it is at the same time disaggregated by gender, age group, sexual diversity or disability situation. The non-official recognition of the existence of indigenous peoples in the country means that the national government, as well as the municipalities, do not worry about the collection of data on indigenous peoples of the country. This both in a situation of pandemic and economic crisis as well as in periods of prosperity. There are no public reports on indigenous peoples, nor on the situation of indigenous women, youth, indigenous LGBT + people or indigenous people with disabilities.
7. It's not known how it affects our people.
8. There is no coordination between the Ministry of Public Health and the country's indigenous organizations. There is also no recognition of the forms of traditional medicine of indigenous peoples. In general, the medical corporation is quite averse to intercultural forms. There is no strategy for indigenous peoples.
9. The CONACHA began to encourage the use of traditional medicine. Furthermore, a knowledge manual was produced to help strengthen the immune system against the Pandemic. Also, a dialogue between rural and urban communities for access to medicinal plants that help strengthen the immune system. Between the months of March and October 2020, CONACHA made baskets to help indigenous families hit by the economic crisis. All these CONACHA initiatives were without the support of any institution, they were autonomous initiatives. In Uruguay, there are no examples of public or private institutions that coordinate with indigenous organizations to help exercise indigenous rights in the country. The reality of Uruguay is that of a country with neglect towards its indigenous peoples.

1. Ver: <https://ladiaria.com.uy/economia/articulo/2020/10/en-2021-no-se-recuperara-la-caida-de-la-actividad-economica-prevista-para-2020/> (Consultado 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ver: <https://www.colibri.udelar.edu.uy/jspui/bitstream/20.500.12008/24998/1/uy24-19715.pdf> (Consultado 16/2/2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ver: <https://www.colibri.udelar.edu.uy/jspui/bitstream/20.500.12008/22301/1/TS_TrejoCamilo.pdf> (Consultado 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ver: <https://ladiaria.com.uy/opinion/articulo/2020/10/presupuesto-nacional-politicas-sociales-pobres-para-pobres/> (Consultado el 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ver: <https://www.m24.com.uy/el-uruguay-de-la-pandemia-el-gobierno-eligio-el-recorte-y-el-ajuste-fiscal/> (Consultado el 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ver: <https://ladiaria.com.uy/ciencia/articulo/2021/2/hallazgo-sorpresivo-en-montevideo-se-encontro-mayor-proporcion-de-ancestria-indigena-en-la-poblacion-de-menor-nivel-socioeconomico/> (Consultado el 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ver: <https://www.carasycaretas.com.uy/anatomia-de-un-cuento-chino/> (Consultado el 16/2/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)