



**PSG Statement: Peru Amazon Discussion in Parliament
June 24th 2009**

Over 90 people attended a public meeting organised jointly by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Peru, the Peru Support Group (PSG) and Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). The meeting was held at the Houses of Parliament on Monday June 22nd 2009 and it was convened to give participants an opportunity to discuss the broad issues at play in the Peruvian Amazon and in particular the consequences of the Peruvian government's propagation of the 'Law of the Jungle'.

There were discussions on the violent clashes which took place on Friday June 5th in Bagua in the Peruvian Amazon that resulted in an official death toll of 33 victims, including 23 police officers and 10 indigenous protesters (www.defensoria.gob.pe). The meeting heard eyewitness testimony from two Belgian volunteers, Marijke Deleu and Thomas Quiryneen, whose personal experiences were reinforced by hard-hitting photographic documentation. The other speakers included Patricia Oliart (Latin American Studies, Newcastle University), Amnesty International, Survival International, CAFOD and the PSG.

Patricia Oliart believes that the division of the Amazon under the negotiation of free trade agreements does not conform to the needs of the people living there and the development model does not meet the aspirations of local people.

Amnesty International's Lucile Robinson reiterated that at the heart of this matter is the right of Indigenous Peoples to be consulted on any piece of legislation that affects them and their way of life. Amnesty International would like to see all legislation reviewed to take into account impacts on Indigenous Peoples. The organisation will also closely monitor the progress and development of talks between groups to establish whether adequate consultation is taking place.

Jonathan Mazower of Survival International underlined that it is important to acknowledge that what has happened has broad and deep ramifications, not just in Peru but for Indigenous Peoples everywhere.

For a full summary of the discussions at the meeting refer to the PSG at:
www.perusupportgroup.org.uk

The PSG reiterates its commitment to defend and promote human rights in Peru without distinction of any kind, while fully supporting democratic accountability. Following the tragic events in Bagua, the PSG believes it is extremely important to rebuild trust and mutual understanding between the government, political parties and civil society organisations in order to achieve a development policy for the Peruvian Amazon that recognises the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the complex ecology of the region and the need to eliminate poverty in Peru.

In order to serve justice, the PSG fully supports calls to carry out an independent investigation on the issues that resulted in the deaths of the police and indigenous protesters in Bagua. In this respect, we welcome the efforts to date made by international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights.

The meeting raised a number of important issues which the PSG will continue to monitor as part of its on-going work on the role played by extractives industries operating in Peru, including:

- The importance of consulting communities, not only negotiating but actively listening to and respecting the different view points of communities on decisions affecting their livelihoods;
- The responsibility of the international community, including the European Union, particularly within the framework of free trade agreements and the global economic model, to ensure that multinational companies operating in Peru maintain good environmental and social standards, and respect universal human rights;
- Investigations by the Government of Peru and the provision of safeguards related to community concerns and allegations of the disproportionate use of force by police and private security firms in protests and disputes with mining and energy companies;
- A further strengthening of the effective role of Peru's Human Rights Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) in mitigating social and environmental conflicts.