

## DECLARATION OF TARAPOTO

### Traditional medicine and sacred plants

(Translated by Jimmy Weiskopf)

We, diverse traditional doctors and participants from Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and a representative from Gabon, Africa, have met at the Takiwasi center in Tarapoto, Peru, from the 12th to 16th of November, 2001, for the “*International Encounter of Master Healers who are Practitioners of Ayahuasca (yagé, nepe, caapi or natem) and Iboga*”. The purpose of our encounter is to share the same spiritual dimension, which revolves around the wisdom of sacred and medicinal plants.

After realizing ceremonies with our medicinal plants, especially Ayahuasca and a ritual of Gabon, as well as reflecting on the problems which affect our traditional medicines, and with reference to the “*Declaration of Machu Picchu about democracy, the rights of indigenous peoples and the fight against poverty*”, signed by the presidents of the Andean countries in Lima on July 29, 2001, we declare the following:

**We affirm** that our traditional medicine is a fundamental value of our peoples and can contribute, in an important way, to the integral health and spirituality of humanity.

**We regard** the knowledge offered to us by the sacred plants which we have inherited from the ancestral peoples of indigenous nationalities to be the basis of the development of traditional medicine.

**We believe** that the health of mankind depends on caring for and conserving nature.

**We emphasize** that the knowledge, practices and resources characteristic of traditional medicine are the collective patrimony of the originary peoples and maintain that no one has the right to establish systems of industrial property over them.

We are concerned about the grave situation in which the originary peoples live as they lose their territories, their traditional ways of life, their culture and their traditional medicine due to the influence of the outside world.

We want Traditional Medicine to be recognized and valued in a correct form by western science.

We categorically reject the incorrect use and manipulation of the sacred and medicinal plants employed in traditional medicine. We are especially concerned about quackery, the new modalities of shamanic tourism and the trafficking of plants and cultural symbols.

We denounce those responsible for the usurpation being sought with the patent on Ayahuasca

We forcefully protest against the indiscriminate destruction of natural resources, ecosystems and the biodiversity which harbors the wealth of traditional medicine.

In the light of these reflections we who gather here commit ourselves to:

1º Denounce the injuries being done to our cultures, our traditional medicine and our sacred plants

2º Help conserve and recuperate nature, as well as care for medicinal plants.

3° Defend and ensure respect for the sound use of our sacred plants and restore the systems of control for learning and transmitting the ancestral knowledge of traditional medicine.

4° Seek suitable mechanisms to consolidate and improve the practice of traditional medicine for the benefit of mankind.

5° Promote, in each of our countries, processes for the defense and consolidation of traditional medicine.

6° Develop programs of health which allow for cultural reaffirmation and an adequate linking of traditional medicine and modern medicine.

7° Disseminate the present Declaration and our aims to governments, international organisms, mediums of social communication and our peoples and communities

8° Urge governments to formulate policies that protect and promote traditional cultural and medicine

9° Undertake specific actions before the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for the recognition of collective international property rights in the face of the private appropriation of this common patrimony.

10° Create an International Network of Traditional Doctors of Ayahuasca or Yagé for the exchange of information, knowledge and resources which will allow for the strengthening of traditional medicine, as well as form an executive committee to coordinate the activities set forth here.

Given and signed in Tarapoto, Peru, on November  
17, 2001