Dear Minister,

I would like to bring your attention to the situation that occurred at the end of last month in the province of Pastaza. In that province leaves the community of Sarayacu, and two of its members, Franco Viteri and Jose Gualinga. On February 21, a local radio station received the information that Franco Viteri and Jose Gualinga had died in a car accident. That information proved to be wrong and two days later they were able to talk to the delegation of an independent human rights organization, Amnesty International. This could be seen as a misunderstanding or a bad joke, if the two men had not been threaten earlier. On January 16 Franco Viteri received a threatening phone call in which the caller stated “te vamos a volar la cabeza”, while Jose Gualinga reported that he has also been threatened with death on the streets. This situation arises as an Argentine oil company, Compañía General de Combustibles, which is vainly trying to negotiate a deal with the community of Sarayacu over the access to the community’s territory for oil extraction, has also increased its security arrangements, meaning a greater presence of armed security guards in the area. This, according to the leaders interviewed by Amnesty International, has created a strong sense of fear within the community.

For these reasons, I fear for the safety of Franco Viteri and Jose Gualinga and the community of Sarayacu, and I urge you to take all measure to guarantee their safety in line with their international obligations. It is also important that you conduct an immediate investigation into the alleged death threats so that these threats stop.

Thanking you in advance for your time on this important and urgent matter, I am respectfully,

Cc: H.E. Carlos A. Jativa