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His Excellency Juan Orlando Hernández
President of the Republic of Honduras
Casa Presidencial
Bulevar Juan Pablo II
Republic of Honduras

7 March 2016

Your Excellency,

I am writing on behalf of International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in relation to the recent killing of Mrs. Berta Cáceres, General Coordinator and cofounder of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) on March 3, 2016.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisation, with almost 1,300 government and NGO Members and more than 15,000 volunteer experts in 185 countries. Our work is supported by almost 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

We understand that the motive behind Mrs. Cáceres assassination will be the subject of official investigation by the competent authorities, but most respectfully allow us to express our concerns.

A leader of the Lenca Indigenous People, Berta Cáceres stood out for her tireless work in defense of indigenous rights and protection of nature in Honduras and the Central American region. This leadership earned her international recognition and solidarity, including that of the IUCN. Mrs. Cáceres was not unknown to us; much to the contrary, our vision of a just world that values and conserves nature was enriched by her efforts on behalf of natural resources conservation and the wellbeing of the most vulnerable communities.

It is public knowledge that Mrs. Cáceres had denounced that she was being threatened in connection with her actions on behalf of Lenca rivers, lands and communities, and as a consequence, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had asked for precautionary measures to protect her life.

I share with your Excellency that in IUCN Resolution number 2.37-2000 of the World Conservation Congress named "Support for Environmental Defenders," governments and nongovernmental organizations asked IUCN to raise its voice in support of environmental advocates who are suffering harassment or persecution for their peaceful actions on behalf of natural resources. All people must be free to express their opinions without having to lose their life for it. In the case of Doña Berta, we have lost a great leader.

Natural resource conservation efforts must necessarily be marked by recognition of the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples where these valuable resources are found. In this line, forums of dialogue guaranteeing free and informed participation and respect for human rights are fundamental to attain true sustainable development.

IUCN joins those people and organizations urging that this assassination not go unpunished and that the necessary investigations be made. We also make a call that Doña Berta's life not

be lost in vain and that this regrettable act serve to take measures so that environmental leaders do not fear for their lives and the rights to free and effective participation in actions that can impact on the lives of communities are strengthened.

Your Excellency, receive our expressions of solidarity with the Honduran People who today have lost a bastion of conservation.

[signed]

Inger Andersen
Director General