



Statement on the Critical Situation Facing Mr. Benki Piyãko and the Apiwtxa Community

We are issuing this statement out of grave concern for Mr. Benki Piyãko, a spiritual leader of the Asháninka people and recipient of the 43rd Niwano Peace Prize, as well as for his family and the people of the Apiwtxa community. We have learned that they are facing serious threats to their lives from groups involved in illegal logging and drug trafficking.

The Niwano Peace Prize was established to honour individuals and organizations whose work for peace is inspired by religious and spiritual principles. The first Prize was awarded in 1983, and this year we selected Mr. Benki Piyãko of Brazil as the recipient of the 43rd Niwano Peace Prize

(https://www.npf.or.jp/english/peace_prize/43rd.html) .

In May, we welcomed Mr. Piyãko to Japan and held the award ceremony in the presence of representatives of the Government of Japan, leaders of diverse religious traditions, members of civil society, and many others.

Mr. Benki Piyãko and the people of Apiwtxa, his Asháninka community, have defended the culture and human rights of Indigenous Peoples and protected the forests, natural environment, and living beings of the Brazilian Amazon and neighbouring areas of Peru. They have done so without resorting to violence, drawing instead upon Indigenous traditional wisdom and the collective strength of their community.

Their spirit and work have become a source of wisdom and hope for people around the world who seek environmental protection, respect for human rights, and harmony between humanity and nature. The recognition of Mr. Piyãko through the Niwano Peace Prize was widely reported in Japan and abroad, bringing profound inspiration and hope to many people.

To us, Mr. Benki Piyãko is not only an irreplaceable friend, but also a deeply respected guide. He shares with the contemporary world an Indigenous wisdom that understands the relationship between humanity and nature as a profound bond of life and spirit.

Today, that wisdom, that work, and the lives of those who carry them forward are under threat.

We therefore seek to bring this situation to the attention of religious leaders, peacebuilders, civil society organizations, public institutions, and people of conscience in Japan and throughout the world. We hope that sustained international attention will help deter violence and prevent harm.

Mr. Benki Piyãko and representatives of the Asháninka people are seeking an opportunity to appeal directly to the President of Brazil concerning the crisis they face and the measures urgently needed. We sincerely hope that the Government of Brazil and all relevant authorities will take immediate and effective action to protect them.

The forests of the Amazon and the wisdom passed down through generations by the Indigenous Peoples who live there are an irreplaceable heritage for the well-being and sustainable future of all life on Earth.

This sacred inheritance cannot be measured by money or exchanged as material property. It is a spiritual treasure for all of us living through the difficulties of the present age, and for every one of our sons and daughters, and for the generations who will follow them.

We ask people everywhere to join us in prayer.

Our prayer is also for those whose hardship has led them to believe that they can survive only by taking part in illegal logging, and for those who seek to live through the trafficking of drugs that destroy their own bodies and spirits and those of others.

Even amid hardship, may every person who still carries within their heart the hope of finding a just and peaceful path be given the strength to follow it.

July 24, 2026



Hirosh Niwano

Chairperson
Niwano Peace Foundation

※ This statement will also be published on the official website of the Niwano Peace Foundation
<https://www.npf.or.jp/english/>