



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER LAW CENTER

November 12, 2007

Ms. Roberta Ritvo  
Ms. Elizabeth Dewey  
DLA Piper US LLP  
500 8th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Bert and Elizabeth,

The Environmental Defender Law Center (EDLC) would like to express its sincere thanks for the exceptional efforts made by the lawyers at your firm on behalf of two international non-governmental organizations: the Sierra Madre Alliance, based in Chihuahua, Mexico; and the Green Belt Movement, with offices in Kenya, England, and the U.S. For those at your firm not familiar with EDLC, we recruit top international law firms to work *pro bono* on behalf of people in developing countries fighting for environmental human rights. EDLC was delighted when your firm agreed to assist these two organizations on a number of projects, as described below.

Indigenous land claims project from Mexico's Copper Canyon

The members of the Tarahumara indigenous community of Choreachi, located near Mexico's famed Copper Canyon, have long been fighting illegal logging of their old growth pine forest lands, as well as seeking title to their lands. When the community requested legal help through the Sierra Madre Alliance (their local lawyers) and EDLC, a team at your firm generously agreed to research and write an experts' report in support of their land claims for use in a case pending before the Mexican Agrarian Tribunal.

Because Mexico's land law is largely silent on the land rights of indigenous peoples, the report focused on how international human rights law and the law of other nations in the Americas support the claim of indigenous peoples to "special protections" and to priority in the recognition of their land claims. In particular, the report pointed out that Mexican law should be interpreted to incorporate the principles recognized in international treaties into which Mexico has freely entered, including the preeminent source of indigenous peoples' land and natural resource rights, the International Labour Organization's Convention 169.

Working closely with the community's Mexican lawyers, the team (which included **Juan Alcalá, Veronica Jackson, David Nachman, Danica Ray, and Alysso Snow**) created a masterful report. We hope and expect that the report will also be used on behalf of some of the ten million other indigenous people in Mexico whose communities may bring similar claims to the Tribunal.

## Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement

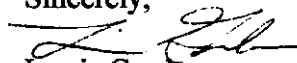
The Green Belt Movement (GBM) was founded by Kenyan environmentalist and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, and stresses the fundamental link between the environment, democracy, and peace. This tremendously successful development and community empowerment movement is comprised and led mainly by women, and uses tree planting as an entry point. The Green Belt Movement International (GBMI), directed by Wanjira Mathai, the laureate's daughter, was subsequently created to share this experience with other organizations, and to expand the scope and reach of the movement worldwide.

In 2005, EDLC was asked to obtain *pro bono* legal services to support the work of both organizations- in the U.S., and internationally. Over the past two years, a number of lawyers at DLA Piper have answered that request, providing expert help in a dazzling variety of subject matter areas:

- **Jayne Kurzman and Alexandra Rose** helped confirm the charitable status of GBMI with the IRS, and have provided assistance with tax and compliance issues related to federal and state laws;
- **Steve Shimberg** has provided review and guidance to the GBM for the development of a pilot emissions reduction contract with the World Bank's BioCarbon fund program (a project that will restore indigenous forest on about five thousand acres of land in the Aberdares and Mt. Kenya areas of Kenya), while **Thomas Reems** has helped develop an emissions reduction contract for use with voluntary market buyers;
- **James Rathvon** has overseen contractual arrangements with service providers and for cause related marketing arrangements;
- **Frank Connolly** has worked on human resources policy development and employee and consulting contracts and employee letters; and
- **Thomas Zutic** has advised on intellectual property issues.

The lawyers listed above (and any others working on these projects whose names may have inadvertently been omitted) have rendered invaluable assistance to these clients. Please convey to all of them the deepest appreciation from the individuals and groups listed above, and from EDLC.

Sincerely,



Lewis Gordon

Director