

Doctor Oscar Arias Sánchez
Presidente de la República
Costa Rica

[CITY & DATE]

Excelentísimo señor Presidente:

We would like to express our concern about the government decision to grant the concession of the Costa Rican ports to private companies. We are aware ports are at the moment managed by a public institution which develops a very important social task for all the region.

JAPDEVA (Port Administration and Economic Development Board for the Atlantic Coast) is a profitable, self sufficient and efficient institution. It would however need immediate investment to grow stronger and modernise itself.

We have been informed by SINTRAJAP - JAPDEVA Union, that in 2006 they submitted a proposal with 26 measures to be taken in order to modernise both ports. The total investment required would be around 80 USD – to build two new berths, deeper dredges, new machinery for container operations and some legal changes to leave more freedom of management to the institution, the only way it could compete with private companies in the concession of the ports.

JAPDEVA workers do not oppose to the development of the communities or to new investments to improve the port infrastructure, they only defend the institution as an icon for the region and the work that JAPDEVA has been carrying out for the local communities through the port benefits – social and economic help for the whole province, one of the poorest in the country.

Government plans are not accepted by JAPDEVA workers, by Limon workers or many other sectors of Costa Rica – social organisations, the political opposition, many employers and intellectuals. There are many examples of joint statements signed by all these forces in the country. The first ones to oppose are the port workers who have been rejecting the government proposals for a long time now. Workers and organisations are supporting Lic. Ronaldo Blear, legitimate leader of the union who has also been a victim of a boycott organised by the government and widely condemned by all the media.

We have also been informed about the violations of the ILO international agreements with regards to union freedom and other legal rights in articles 121, the concession laws (in article 2), the Costa Rican codes of labour and labour laws, the Collective agreement the SINTRAJAP statutes and other Human Rights at the International convention based on democracy, ethics and values.

It does seem to us that 'buying' workers by blackmailing them into accepting layoff compensations that make up a total of 137 USD - pressuring workers to resign from their jobs, is a very praiseworthy measure to be taken. We also reject direct government

interventions into the internal matters of SINTRAJAP. The creation of other groups of non-democratically elected unions in replacement of the truly elected union is not ethical.

It is hard for us to think that Costa Rica is facing this reality. It is a country well-known for its democracy, social policies and respect for human rights. We condemn all the government actions and we offer full solidarity to SINTRAJAP, the Limon community and the Social State of rights. Our countries and governments should defend employment, social benefits and democracy. Institutions like JAPDEVA should be an example to be followed all around the world.

We would kindly urge the government to reconsider their concession plans and invest this money in improving the port infrastructures and invest the money in the modernisation of the ports.

We cannot avoid mentioning our big concern. The image of Costa Rica as a model of democracy supported by a Nobel Prize does not match the internal reality which Costa Rican workers and organisations are facing.

Lastly, we would like to inform you that our solidarity call with SINTRAJAP and the Limon communities goes beyond a simple call to reconsider privatisation plans. We will coordinate any necessary actions around the world to support SINTRAJAP in their struggle to convince the government that the best option for the country is to modernise the ports through JAPDEVA.

We would like to thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

[NAME & SURNAMES]

[SIGNATURE]

CC. SINTRAJAP