

# Forest Cover

A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy

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## About Forest Cover

Welcome to the twenty-first issue of *Forest Cover*, the newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC), a world-wide coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs). GFC promotes rights-based, socially just and effective forest policies at the international and national level, including through building the capacity of NGOs and IPOs in all regions to influence global forest policy. *Forest Cover* is published four times a year. It features reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its donors or the editors.

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## ***Ex Silvis: The Inconvenient Truth Is...We Need Another World***

*By Miguel Lovera, Chairperson, Global Forest Coalition*

Last January saw civil society representatives from around the world joining forces at the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. It was an inspirational event with folks from all walks of life putting forward interesting, efficient and viable solutions to a wide range of crucial global problems, from eradicating hunger through to halting climate change. The crowds that gathered in Nairobi demanded 'another world': this could mean that we need to change the way we manage the Earth, or that we need to move away from a development model that is taking us to the brink of environmental collapse. Or it could mean, quite literally, that we need to find another planet to take refuge on, because there's nothing else we can do to save this one!

Despite its success, however, the WSF still failed to attract the attention of world leaders and the global media. As Mark Twain affirmed some 100 years ago, "*the man with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds*". Instead, global leaders continue to extol the value of the World Economic Forum, with the establishment praising business-as-usual and planning the further exploitation of the world's human, animal, vegetable and mineral resources. Similarly, mainstream media continue to shower attention and praise. After seeing the media reports on Davos one thing is really clear to me: we desperately need to find this other world (preferably in another galaxy) and then send these guys and gals on their way, preferably with a one way ticket!

Another character in the news recently is Al Gore, former US Vice-president – you know, the gentleman who beat Bush in the 2000 US elections but didn't really want it enough to ram his case home. He just won an Oscar, putting him in the good company of intellectual giants such as

Sylvester Stallone and Marilyn Monroe<sup>1</sup>. He's an optimist, isn't he? Someone who believes that things are going to be OK in the end and there's not too much to worry about. Still, his documentary openly ridicules the so-called 'skeptics', correctly labeling them stupid and dishonest. Unfortunately, Gore is not ambitious enough. He's not looking for another world along with the sixty thousand plus WSF participants. No, he's looking for a world just like this one, just a bit nicer and cleaner. I don't think he realizes that that's impossible, there are some things you can't fix that easily.

Take biofuels, for example. Industry and a powerful consumerist minority see it as a way of keeping cars on the road: simply replace oil with biofuel. This confirms Nietzsche's affirmation that *'the Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad.'* But do we really believe we will be better off with a few reforms and some nice-sounding standards in the fuel market? Do we really think that the problems of global development, environmental degradation, climate change and social injustice are so simple that they can be solved with reforms and sweet standards? Do we truly believe that large-scale manufacturers are going to produce biofuel in an equitable and sustainable manner, without destroying the world's remaining forests, wetlands, Indigenous Peoples' territories and peasant communities? No, we don't. What Eduardo Galeano proposed sounds more realistic to me than the illusionism proposed by the affluent technocrats of the big screen: *'Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer, it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking.'* So let's keep on walking towards a more dramatic shift in the way we run our economies, a prerequisite for fair and sustainable societies in the future.

### **UNFCCC Fiddles While the Earth Burns**

*By Anne Petermann, Global Justice Ecology Project, USA*

During the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Nairobi in November 2006, the European Union hosted a side event on avoiding deforestation. Representatives spoke at length about the

importance of ending logging in native forests as a means of limiting the impacts of global warming. The solution, they concluded, was to create a huge fund to give developing countries an incentive to protect their forests. This would be facilitated by assigning standing forests a dollar value for their so-called 'ecosystem services'.

However, whilst information on the importance of standing forests was widely available, there was a glaring lack of information on the forces driving deforestation. Presenters ignored the financial pressures forcing countries to log their forests, giving the impression that poor countries cut their trees because they have nothing better to do. There was no mention of the adjustment conditions imposed by the World Bank and IMF, which force poor countries to sell off their natural resources at rock-bottom prices to repay development loans. Similarly, nothing was said about the ever-increasing demand for wood products in Northern countries, much of which winds up in landfills as disposable packaging, junk mail or advertising.

This side event was emblematic of the UNFCCC's current operations: it focused on the use of funds and market mechanisms such as carbon trading, which promise billions in profit to the companies involved but may do little to address the problem of global warming. In fact, the idea that people might reduce their levels of consumption or change their lifestyles would have been completely lacking were it not for inputs from NGOs and Southern countries. Grace Akumu of Climate Network Africa likened the North-centric emphasis of the talks to the widely challenged negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO): *"Just like the WTO, rich countries are skewing negotiations in their favor."*

### **Disaster Capitalism**

In addition to emphasizing the role of the market in climate strategies, corporate capitalists are taking advantage of the growing concern over climate change to sell previously controversial projects as "solutions" to global warming. In this way, huge monoculture tree plantations, biofuels, genetically engineered trees and crops, massive hydroelectric projects and nuclear power may all be sold to a Northern audience as a way of maintaining their over-consuming lifestyles while supposedly making a positive contribution to the fight against global warming.

The unfortunate truth about these projects, however, is that they do little to mitigate climate change, while causing tremendous environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, he beats the Californian Governor, who only won a Bambi Award and several MTV awards.

and social impacts. This fact inspired the Global Forest Coalition and the Indigenous Information Network to organize an Indigenous Peoples' Seminar on Carbon Trade in Namanga, Kenya during the Climate COP. Several indigenous representatives gave presentations on the impacts their communities have experienced as a result of carbon trading schemes, in an effort to alert other indigenous representatives about the hidden dangers of carbon offset proposals (many of which are geared toward the lands of indigenous peoples).

### **False Solutions**

Back at the UNFCCC COP, the World Rainforest Movement, the Global Justice Ecology Project, the Gaia Foundation, the STOP Genetically Engineered Trees Campaign, the Global Forest Coalition and the Large Scale Biofuels Action Network held a press conference to condemn the promotion of 'false solutions' to global warming.

These groups highlighted the fact that biofuels are driving an expansion of sugar cane, palm oil, soy and eucalyptus plantations in Latin America and Indonesia. These are in turn pushing hundreds of thousands of farmers and indigenous peoples off their lands, driving deforestation and biodiversity destruction and accelerating climate change. In 1997, fires in Indonesian forests released more carbon emissions than the entire European Union. Moreover, the amount of grain needed to produce enough biofuel to fill a single SUV tank could feed a person for a year. In 2005, competition for grain led to a 60% increase in grain prices, favoring the use of grain for biofuels and increasing the numbers of people going hungry.

Other false solutions include genetically engineered trees and crops, which are being promoted as carbon sinks and biofuel sources. There are many arguments against genetically engineered plants and trees, including the contamination of native forests and conventional agricultural crops with potentially destructive engineered traits. GE trees have the potential to devastate forest ecosystems by contaminating native trees with pollen or seeds engineered to kill insects, resist toxic herbicides or grow faster. The escape of pollen or seeds from GE trees into native forests would cause severe and totally unpredictable ecological impacts that could impact the ability of forests to store carbon with potential negative impacts on global warming.

In a joint letter written by the Global Justice Ecology Project and the World Rainforest Movement, a large number of NGOs demanded that the UNFCCC rescind its decision legalizing the use of GE trees, in order to bring its policies into line with the March 2006 decision of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which warned of the dangers of genetically engineered trees. The CBD urged countries to use a precautionary approach with regard to this technology.

Perhaps the most contentious climate change abatement strategy of all is carbon trading. Modeled on the pollution trading system allowed under the US Clean Air Act and championed by Al Gore during his vice presidency, carbon trading enables corporations and governments to avoid reducing greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing carbon credits. These carbon credits can come either from carbon offsetting projects like tree plantations, which are established under the guise of 'development' in poor countries, or from countries such as Russia, which have excess carbon credits to sell. But the temporary storage of carbon by monoculture tree plantations is no more than a short-term temporary 'fix'. Furthermore, this false climate solution has tremendous social and environmental impacts: in particular it displaces indigenous and rural communities, who must be evicted from the land to protect the carbon storage of the trees<sup>2</sup>, and it exhausts soils and ground water.

Relying on the market to cure climate change (as championed by the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases) signifies a refusal to take any real, meaningful action to reduce the future impacts of climate change. When examined in the context of other global campaigns - such as the wars undertaken to control oil reserves in the Middle East - the entire effort comes across as a farce. It is as though the powers-that-be have decided that maintaining the luxurious lifestyle of the world's richest people is more important than averting the oncoming climatic disaster.

*For more information please visit: <http://globaljusticeecology.org> or <http://unfccc.int>. This article is a short version of a longer article that has appeared in Z-magazine, please visit <http://zmag.org/curTOC.htm> for the full version*

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<sup>2</sup> For an excellent critique of carbon trading, read Lohmann, L. ed., *Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatisation and Power*, published by the Dag Hammerskjold Foundation, <http://www.dhf.uu.se>

## Joint Implementation: The New 'Carbon Market' Market?

By Sandy Gauntlett, *Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, Aotearoa/New Zealand*

'Joint implementation'? The words are reminiscent of some kind of painful and immobilizing swelling of the knees or elbows! And believe me, the last meeting of the so-called experts that constitute the Joint Implementation Group (in Bonn, in February) was no less painful. I say 'so-called' because the way in which this meeting was conducted was shocking. Interest in this meeting was so high that the numbers of participants permitted to attend was limited to start off with. One would have hoped that such a high level of enthusiasm would have set the scene for a wide-ranging in-depth debate, with the various factions able to present their arguments and listen to opposing ones. Sadly, many people never even got a chance to intervene. Others, curiously, seemed to have multiple opportunities to present their views, with some being included on two or even three expert panels (far be it from me to imply that the steering committee was disproportionately represented here).

The opportunity for a reasoned discussion of the issues was lost: this meeting quickly turned into a hard sell for carbon markets. One senior member of the committee even seemed to be encouraging others to stretch the terms of reference for joint implementation laid down by the Parties to the Climate Change Convention. Several other participants were also heard to complain that the rules were unfair to industry and anti-competitive. I also heard people discussing the fact that it wasn't really necessary to have formal agreements with other nations (letters would do), complaining about how long it took to sign Memorandums of Understanding and vilifying the EU for appearing to oppose double counting and double dipping (ie asking to be reimbursed twice for each carbon absorption project or counting projects, since this is permissible under current rules). For some strange reason the EU seemed to be opposed to this particular form of cheating: for others, however, ethics didn't seem to get a look in.

What I didn't hear was people talking about ways of reducing dependency on fossil fuels, or sharing resources more equitably, or ensuring that the costs of climate change were spread more fairly. No-one seemed to be concerned about ensuring that Indigenous land rights were honoured, or that the economic future of women in marginalized communities was secured. The problem of climate

refugees in our lifetime didn't seem to warrant a mention either.

Nevertheless, some valuable information did come out of the meeting. Biomass and biofuels are also creeping up the JI list of priorities: we will need to keep a close eye on them in the future.

It also emerged that the most productive projects (in terms of reducing emissions) are not the highly touted carbon sinks projects, but those that focus on energy efficiency. Still, even the energy efficiency projects lacked a certain something. They were not about long life light bulbs to reduce the need for massive carbon-emitting hydro schemes. No, they were about ensuring that leaky oil and gas pipelines in the old Eastern European countries are fixed. True, that will reduce emissions. But won't it also reward industry for allowing the lines to deteriorate to this extent, thus serving as a disincentive for proper maintenance in the future? And wouldn't there be even more profit for companies allowed to double dip or double count their credits?

For more information, please visit: <http://unfccc.int>

## Regaining Control of the Commons: New Alliance Springs into Life at WSF 2007

By Ronnie Hall, *Friends of the Earth International*

The World Social Forum has often been criticized for being little more than a chaotic global talking shop, but this year's WSF (held in Nairobi in January) saw a step change in its activities and potential: the WSF seems to be maturing into a political space capable of breathing new life and energy into civil society struggles. In 2007, this included the emergence of a new global alliance on Regaining Control of the Commons<sup>3</sup>.

Social movements and civil society organizations everywhere are struggling to hold back an unprecedented tide of natural resource destruction and land expropriation. Multiple campaigns focus on different natural resources, work in different geographical spaces and have a wealth of different

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<sup>3</sup> *The members of the Regaining Control of the Commons Alliance are the Action Group on Erosion, Technology & Concentration (ETC); the Center for International Environmental Law; the Council of Canadians Blue Planet Project; Focus on the Global South; Food First Information and Action Network; Friends of the Earth International; the Global Forest Coalition; the Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity; Kilusang Mangingisda from the Philippines; the National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers from India; Oilwatch Africa; Via Campesina; the World Forum of Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters and the World Rainforest Movement.*

perspectives and experiences. But the sheer scale of this global assault, and the complex web of underlying causes driving it, has so far prevented an effective, coordinated civil society response. Despite our best efforts the global biodiversity clock continues to tick ominously.

The planet's oceans, forests and biodiversity are rapidly being transformed into mere commodities to be bought and sold on global markets. Natural resource rights and access are being taken away from local communities and handed over to transnational corporations, as governments strive to build or maintain robust national economies able to compete in today's cut-throat global markets. These governments appear to be deaf to the dire warnings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment - which clearly states that we are living beyond our means, and that the poorest people in the world are the ones most severely affected by the loss of natural resources.

If we coordinate our activities, exchange information and learn from each others' experiences, if we share campaign tools and develop a common understanding of the problems we face and their potential solutions, we can create more effective and synergistic campaigns. We need to do so urgently.

WSF 2007 offered us a first opportunity to bring together a tantalisingly interesting range of organisations from all continents, for a first, broad exchange of information and ideas on this theme. The remarkable levels of enthusiasm and motivation shown by all participants were inspiring, and a packed two-day programme seemed to emerge almost spontaneously. Kicking off with a deliberately broad-based approach, we packed as much as we could into what seemed like a fleeting ten hours.

We considered the impacts on and underlying causes of the commodification of various natural resources including land and seeds, fisheries, forests, biodiversity, energy, minerals and water, and looked at ways of maintaining and restoring community and indigenous management of natural resources and related knowledge.

We exchanged initial ideas about effective campaign solutions, strategies and tools, focusing on the definition and promotion of new concepts and approaches, such as food and energy sovereignty; and the pros and cons of making, changing and using the law to help regain access to or prevent the destruction of natural resources

and the environment. We even found time to touch on the pros and cons of nationalizing natural resources (as is happening now in some countries in Latin America), carbon markets, biofuels and nanotechnology. All in all it was a whirlwind tour of campaigns underway around the world, illuminating the synergies we could create together.

The Global Forest Coalition played a key role, working closely with Friends of the Earth International (who coordinated the event). GFC participants were involved in shaping the agenda, suggesting key participants (especially from Indigenous Peoples' organizations), facilitating sessions and speaking on forests and Indigenous Peoples' concerns and forests and biofuels. Also speaking on forests were the National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers from India who have campaigned successfully for a Tribal Forest Rights Bill; and the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee<sup>4</sup>.

The co-hosting organizations met for a final brief strategy session at which they agreed to establish this new alliance, which will focus on sharing and developing effective campaign tools for use worldwide by communities seeking to regain control of the commons. A report of the event will be published shortly, and a further gathering is planned in Montreal in October 2007 (parallel to a meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity).

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### **UNFF: Planning for the Next Eight Years**

*By Andrey Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia and Hubertus Samangun, Ikatan Cendekiawan Tanimbar Indonesia*

The Country-Led Initiative (CLI) in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was held 13-16 February in Bali, Indonesia to consider the new Multi Year Program of Work (MYPOW) of UNFF, which will run until 2015. The meeting

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<sup>4</sup> Other organizations giving presentations during the WSF 2007 event included speakers from ANAP (Cuba); the Assembly of the Poor (Thailand); the Durban Group/Cornerhouse; the Egi National Coalition (Nigeria), ERA/FoE-Nigeria; FoE-Australia; FoE-England, Wales and N Ireland; FoE-Ghana; groundWork-FoE-South Africa; the Indigenous Information Network (Kenya); the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee; the International Forum on Globalization (China); the Landless Workers' Movement (Brazil); LEAT (Tanzania); LRC-KSK/FoE Philippines; NBS (Norway); Radio Mundo Real; REDES/FoE-Uruguay; and Sobrevivencia/FoE-Paraguay.

attracted over 150 participants from all regions, although only seven of them were representatives of the Major Groups. The new MYPOW is supposed to reflect the overall purpose, function and strategy of the International Arrangement on Forests. It is foreseen that the Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests, if adopted by the Forum in its 7th session, will become the centerpiece of the next MYPOW.

The event started with presentations by the Indonesian government, the head of the UNFF Secretariat and representatives from the Centre for International Forestry Research, the World Bank and the Program on Forests (PROFOR). Short presentations by each of the major group participants followed. Both NGOs and IPOs expressed concern about UNFF members' lack of activity and called for immediate action to stop the alarming destruction of forests world-wide: such actions must recognize, respect and support the implementation of the customary rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities living in and dependent upon forests and promote genuine community forest governance that empowers forest peoples. Moreover, NGOs emphasized that such actions should be consistent with international human rights and address the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including the need for readjustment of financial flows and reduction of consumption. Indigenous Peoples lamented the fact that the draft NLBI text was weak on Indigenous Peoples' Rights. They proposed the establishment of Indigenous Peoples criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.

Subsequently, the themes of the UNFF biennial sessions, the modalities of the MYPOW and possible approaches to enhance regional and sub-regional dimensions in the MYPOW were discussed in three parallel working groups.

During the discussion on themes and frameworks for the UNFF biennial meetings in the first working group participants suggested that themes should be limited and clustered into groups to be discussed at the various biennial sessions. However, several overarching themes including means of implementation and the achievement of the four Global Objectives on forests could be discussed at all sessions. It was also suggested that clusters should be easy to understand for stakeholders outside the UNFF process.

Three different options evolved. Under the option proposed by the UNFF Secretariat, UNFF-8 in

2009 would discuss forests for development, UNFF-9 in 2011 forests for livelihoods, and UNFF-10 in 2013 forests for growth. A second option, put forward by Australia as Co-Chair of the working group, proposed that UNFF-8 consider achieving Sustainable Forest Management, UNFF-9 forests, people and livelihoods, and UNFF-10 forests and delivering environmental sustainability. Each of the sessions would also address means of implementation. (As this option highlighted the cultural and spiritual values of the forests, the NGOs and IPOs attending the meeting favoured it). Lastly, a few experts proposed a third option in which UNFF-9 would focus on means of implementing Sustainable Forest Management, UNFF-10 on forests for development and growth, and UNFF-11 on Sustainable Forest Management and global environmental issues. Under all the above options, UNFF-11 in 2015 would also review the outcomes of previous sessions.

The second working group, on modalities, concluded that effective modalities for future UNFF sessions can be developed through reconsidering the agenda at UNFF sessions and through linking the regional and international processes through the use of Intergovernmental Preparatory Meetings (IPMs). It also concluded that Ad Hoc Expert Groups and Country- and Organization-led Initiatives have been and remain important contributors to the Forum's processes. These meetings should address specific topical and thematic issues and attract member states and major groups.

As the UNFF will probably be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the NLBI, the MYPOW must be flexible enough to accommodate this. It was recommended that stakeholder involvement be enhanced and options for broadening the participation of Major Groups be explored. The group also concluded that there is a need to streamline and simplify reporting requirements and build developing countries' reporting capacity; and that reporting could be based on the seven thematic elements or on the four agreed Global Objectives. Lastly, the group emphasized the need to enhance monitoring, assessment and review, including through the use of a feedback mechanism. Options for the timing of the monitoring and review process included a mid-term review in 2011, a review every two years, or performing reviews through other fora, such as the CLIs.

A third working group on regional and sub-regional dimensions emphasized the importance of using existing forest-related regional and sub-regional mechanisms and stressed that UNFF should strengthen its support to these. For example, future high level segments of the UNFF and regional mechanisms could focus on raising political commitment to regional and sub-regional cooperation on forests. The group also concluded that some regional and sub-regional mechanisms need guidance from UNFF to support the development of their forest-related agendas and activities. However, there is no need for additional mechanisms or meetings in the regions or for new and additional forest-related regional expert meetings. Instead, existing, forest-related regional and sub-regional mechanisms should be used to address UNFF matters. Regional and sub-regional discussions should all consider means of implementation and the implementation of the Global Objectives on Forests.

Many participants felt this was a well-organized meeting, conducted in a constructive spirit, resulting in outcomes that are expected to contribute considerably to discussions during UNFF-7 in April 2007 in New York.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>

## Reports on Other Forest-related Events

### UNEP: Finally Selling Out?

One of the greatest misunderstandings in contemporary environmental politics is that integrating trade and environment is necessarily beneficial for the environment. Of course, integrating environmental and social concerns into trade policy can be important in preventing environmental and social damage. On the other hand, integrating trade into environmental policy can be hugely counterproductive, preventing the effective protection of the environment by introducing the idea that short-term economic concerns are as important as long-term environmental imperatives.

Was it really helpful to invite Pascal Lamy, the Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum (5-9 February, Nairobi, Kenya)? Of course, the fact that he accepted the invitation can be seen as a positive sign that he takes environmental concerns seriously. But it also gave him a great opportunity to convince the world's environmental ministers that supporting

the WTO's Doha negotiations is of the utmost importance to the environment as "*it would liberalize trade in environmental goods and services*". The latter was presented as something that would be beneficial to the environment, without any form of evidence that environmental services markets have ever contributed positively to sustainable development.

All examples of so-called environmental services markets that have been put forward as models for sustainable development until now have, without exception, been the result of governmental or other non-commercial interference, not free trade<sup>5</sup>. Some are ordinary development projects almost completely financed by conservation organizations and/or official development aid. Other 'markets' are a combination of traditional taxes and even more traditional subsidies. The famous Costa Rican Payments for Environmental Services scheme is nothing more than a subsidy for sustainable management financed through a gasoline tax. Not necessarily bad for the environment, if strictly regulated. But, here comes the bad news: if this 'market in environmental services' were to be liberalized within the framework of the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) or regional trade agreements like the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), such government interference could be discouraged or even banned. After all, trade liberalization means minimal regulation, and fewer subsidies and other incentives for environmentally and socially beneficial practices.

Of course, Pascal Lamy did not explain this. Nor did the UNEP Secretariat. Instead, with the fresh (if not cold) breeze that is blowing through UNEP these days, they took a more business-like approach to the environment. Not only is UNEP actively promoting any kind of mechanism to put life up for sale, it seems that UNEP itself is also for sale now. Any large corporation is welcome to join in a voluntary private-sector partnership with this UN agency. Chemicals, water, you name it. Forget about corporate regulation, let's seize the opportunities that corporations offer! The environment has become Big Business and Big Business wants to rule the environment.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example the analysis of 287 so-called markets in environmental services by the International Institute for Environment and Development in Landell-Mills, N. and Porras, I.T., "*Silver Bullets or Fool's Gold? A global review of markets for environmental services and their impacts on the poor*", IIED, March 2002

In this light, the most positive outcome of this meeting was probably that no progress was made regarding the proposal to change UNEP into a UN Environment Organization. The High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence might have given a subtle hint in this direction and the French Government might have organized a pretentious conference supporting this idea, but a large number of developing countries and the US government are not convinced that pouring a lot of money into this organization and strengthening its presence at the country level would necessarily be a positive thing. And frankly, with UNEP morphing into yet another environmental trader, many NGOs are not convinced either.

*For more information, please visit <http://www.unep.org>*

### **ITTO: Doomed to Extinction?**

The 41st meeting of the International Tropical Timber Council (6-11 November 2006, Yokohama, Japan) took place in a relatively positive spirit, free from the pressures of negotiation, now that a renewed International Tropical Timber Agreement has been adopted (in 2006). True, familiar controversies arose when the meeting discussed the involvement of the ITTO in negotiations to reduce deforestation under the Climate Convention. Still, the meeting succeeded in approving 11 projects and 7 pre-projects.

However, despite this relatively productive outcome, the representative of Gabon was probably not alone in thinking that the ITTO would have to adapt to a changing world or "*be doomed to extinction*". His pessimism reflects the fact that the ITTO has lost 87% of its financial support for project work over the last ten years. Lack of funding even led to uncertainty about whether the next meeting of the ITTC would be held in Papua New Guinea, in May 2007, as planned. As usual, however, Japan came to the rescue and the meeting was confirmed at the very last moment. Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that the ITTO can no longer survive on the basis of one generous donor alone. On the other hand, finding additional donors may be extremely difficult considering the ITTO's track-record: by 2006 it had only achieved 5% of the target it set for itself in 2000. According to its own records, although it aimed to ensure that 100% of tropical timber would be produced sustainably by 2000, 95% is still produced unsustainably.

*For more information, please visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>*

### **Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings**

*More information on these and other intergovernmental meetings can be found at: [www.iisd.ca/linkages](http://www.iisd.ca/linkages)*

The eighteenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry will take place 12-16 March in Rome, Italy. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/cofo/en/>*

The seventh session of the UN Forum on Forests will take place 16-27 April in New York, USA. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>*

The fifteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development will take place 30 April-11 May in New York, USA. It will discuss, along with other issues, biofuels and other energy policies. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/>*

The twenty-sixth session of the Subsidiary Bodies Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place from 7-18 May, in Bonn, Germany. *For more information, please visit: <http://unfccc.int/meetings/sb26/items/3919.php>*

The forty-second session of the International Tropical Timber Council will be held 7-12 May in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>*

The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Forests of the Convention on Biological Diversity will meet 28 May-1 June, in Rome, Italy. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.biodiv.org>*

The twelfth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity will take place 2-6 July, in Paris, France. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/sbstta-12.shtml>*

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