

**The Biodiversity Convention and monoculture tree plantations**  
**Declaration by the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations**  
**Curitiba, 2006**

The member organizations of the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations deem it advisable to transmit to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Curitiba, Brazil, their concern over the continuous substitution of ecosystems rich in biodiversity by monoculture plantations of eucalyptus, pine and other exotic species, in particular in the countries of the South.

Fourteen years have gone by since the governments committed themselves, in this same country, to implement measures to protect biodiversity. Since then hundreds of national reports have been prepared showing the advance of deforestation, the substitution of forests and grasslands by large scale monoculture tree plantations and the consequent loss of biodiversity. These documents have been analysed at numerous international meetings and national processes. However, the advance of these monoculture plantations continues with the support of many governments – from the North and from the South – that have participated in this Convention, such as in the case of the recently adopted General Forestry Law in Colombia. There are increasingly more local communities and indigenous peoples who find themselves forced to oppose the monoculture tree plantations that are attacking their environment, their resources and their biodiversity in countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia and Brazil. The recent action taken by 2,000 peasant women against the Aracruz Celulosa nursery in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), clearly shows the level of rejection that this forestry model generates and the need for governments and this Convention to adopt measures to prevent this type of socially and environmentally negative monoculture from continuing its expansion.

At previous meetings, this Convention affirmed that biodiversity continues to be destroyed and that “response has been too scarce, too little and too late.” The ministers engaged themselves to “pass from dialogue to action,” and to “the full implementation” of the Working Programme on Forests. They even admitted that agreements on trade were contradictory to the conservation of forest biodiversity and in consequence set out the need to achieve “synergies and mutual support between the CBD and international trade agreements,” in particular with the World Trade Organization.

However, none of this has been expressed by action due to the lack of political will to pass from words to deeds. Economic interest has prevailed over the commitments taken on regarding biodiversity conservation. The countries of the South destroy their forests to increase their exports aimed at paying off their foreign debt and achieving a type of “development” increasingly distant from being reached. The countries of the North benefit from this destruction by obtaining cheap raw material – timber, pulp, minerals, oil, agricultural goods – and financial benefits from their investments in the South resulting in forest destruction.

In this context, this Convention continues without making a clear determination against monoculture tree plantations and in fact, continues to assume that they are “planted forests” thus concealing the essentially destructive nature of these large scale plantations. At the same time, the Convention on Climate Change promotes monoculture tree plantations of this type even further under the false assumption that they are “carbon sinks” and therefore help to counteract climate change.

To make matters worse, the biotechnology industry has already entered into the business of transgenic trees to make them grow faster, to make them more resistant to herbicides, to lessen the lignin content in the wood and thus increase profitability of the pulp industry. In spite of the fact that the liberation of transgenic trees implies a clear threat to forest biodiversity and in spite of the fact that their use will worsen the impacts of monoculture tree plantations, this Convention continues without making a clear pronouncement against them.

Consequently, the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations appeals to this Convention to:

- 1) Clearly define forests, excluding from such definition large-scale monoculture tree plantations.
- 2) Include the substitution of natural ecosystems by monoculture tree plantations as one of the main causes of the loss of biodiversity.
- 3) Ban the transgenic trees release.