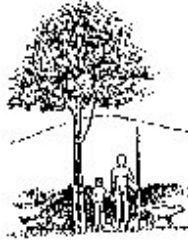


UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 12 Information Kit



**World Rainforest Movement
November 2006**

- [WRM present research findings related to problems with carbon sink plantations to the government delegates at the Climate Conference in Nairobi](#)
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Press Release
November 12, 2006

WRM present research findings related to problems with carbon sink plantations to the government delegates at the Climate Conference in Nairobi

Copies of summaries of findings on researches published by the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) are being distributed among gubernamental delegates and participants at the United Nations Climate Change Conference that is being held in Nairobi from November 6 to 17.

WRM states that it wishes to share its research findings as: “Tree plantations have been included in the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism as being capable of serving as carbon sinks and therefore eligible for carbon credits. Independently from the debate about whether that is true or not, it is important to note that in the context of this Convention tree plantations have been analysed under the perspective of the trees’ capacity to store atmospheric carbon, mostly ignoring the already proven social and environmental impacts of existing large-scale tree plantations”.

Adds that “those impacts, include the appropriation of extensive areas of local communities’ land, net losses of work opportunities at the local level, differentiated gender impacts, depletion of water and soil resources, biodiversity loss and many other”.

The document aims at raising awareness among government delegates about the social and environmental problems that the establishment of large-scale carbon sink plantations would result in, so as to enable them to adopt informed decisions in this respect. All summaries are accompanied by the web page address where the full case studies are available.

The full document is also available at:

www.wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/Nairobi/Briefing.html

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The Gaia Foundation, UK
Press Release for immediate release
from Nairobi UNFCCC COP-12 talks
13th November 2006

NGOs warn Africa on the dangers of biofuels and genetic engineering in the fight against Climate Change

A number of NGOs have written an Open letter (attached below) to the African nation delegates urging them to call for rejection of large-scale Biofuels or Genetic Modification (GM) technology as possible ways to achieve fast growth or more efficient fuel conversion under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). They point out that dependence on Biofuels and GM technology may in fact exacerbate the problems of climate change, environmental degradation, social inequality and poverty, particularly in Africa.

Key points are:

- Large scale biofuels development can put pressure of food crop stocks, threatening food security and opening commodity markets up to increased speculation.
- Biofuels are often inefficient at saving energy or carbon emissions.
- Biofuels developments threaten forests and peatlands.
- GM biofuel crops are being developed and yet African countries have not yet developed the necessary biosafety policies to regulate and monitor GM in food or fuel crops. Cross pollination and contamination of existing agriculture is under threat.

Teresa Anderson of the Gaia Foundation says “Africans risk multiple disasters in adopting GM technology. They may lose their rights to save their seed if they adopt patented GM crops. Consumers in Japan and Europe who have rejected GM are likely reject imports from Africa for fear of contamination. Planting GM trees may threaten the future of forests as the genes that affect the ability of trees to stand upright or resist insects could unpredictably cross-pollinate with native forests. Biodiversity would also be affected”.

Andrew Boswell of the Large Scale Biofuels Action Group said “In the light of the precautionary decision on GM Trees made at UN CBD COP-8 in April 2006, we urge the African nations to stay resolutely cautious about adopting these technologies that are not in their control, nor likely to be in their best interests”.

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<ENDS>

Open letter to African COP-12 delegates from a number of NGOs
13th November 2006

Dear Delegate

A warning for Africa at COP-12: Biofuels, Genetic Engineering and Climate Change

The issue of Biofuels is gaining increasing currency at the UNFCCC COP-12, and in talk of environment and development solutions for Africa. Genetic Engineering (GE) or Genetic Modification (GM) technology may also be promoted in the form of GM crops and GM trees, by those who see the technology as helping to achieve fast growth or more efficient fuel conversion.

A number of NGOs would like to urge caution, and point out some of the many flaws with these arguments, and urge UNFCCC delegations and national policy makers not to embrace unsustainable large-scale biofuel plantations and potentially risky GM technology. Dependence on Biofuels and GM technology may in fact exacerbate the problems of climate change, environmental degradation, social inequality and poverty, particularly in Africa.

DID YOU KNOW:

Large-Scale Biofuels Threat to Food Security

- Using important agricultural land and water to grow biofuels instead of food for domestic consumption will have a detrimental effect on food security in Africa.
- The amount of grain required for one tank of bioethanol in a 4x4 SUV would feed one person for a year (1).
- In 2006, an increase in the use of grain worldwide for conversion to biofuels led to a 60% increase in global grain prices and speculator interest in what had previously been a stably priced commodity. (2)
- While African countries may yet explore the possibilities of small-scale farming of biofuel crops for local household and domestic grid energy use, the consequences of growing fuel for export to the wealthy developing countries instead of food for Africans could be severe.

Energy Inefficient

- Some studies from the US found that the amount of fossil fuel energy required to produce and process biofuel crops such as soya and maize (fertilizer, farm

- machinery, processing and transport) is almost as much as the amount of energy contained in the fuel produced. (3)
- Biofuels therefore give us very little carbon saving and low energy saving.

Deforestation and Destruction of Peatlands

- Soya grown in the Brazilian Amazon is driving deforestation.
- The forested regions of Indonesia and Malaysia are being cut down for Palm Oil plantations.
- Wetlands International have shown that destruction of SE Asian peatlands for Palm Oil plantations, which cover 0.2% of the global land surface, is responsible for 8% of the global CO₂ emissions. (4)
- The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) currently allows for peatland areas that have been burned and cleared to create biofuel plantations to be eligible for CDM funding.
- On Kalangala Islands in Uganda, large areas of tropical forest are being converted into BIDICO palm oil plantations, which will be used to produce biodiesel. BIDICO are currently lobbying government to be able to further expand their plantations into other forested areas.

Genetically Engineered Biofuel Crops?

- The Genetic Engineering industry is keen to use acceptance of biofuels as a strategy to speed up GM acceptance in Africa, and the industry is working on a number of GM biofuel crops.
- Currently South Africa is the only African country that grows GM crops commercially, as the rest of Africa has been wary of integrating a potentially dangerous technology into the core of food security policy.
- Most African countries have yet to develop biosafety policies on GM crops, and are cautious of the difficulties in regulating and monitoring this novel food system, which could easily cross-pollinate and contaminate conventional agriculture.
- If the UNFCCC were to endorse GE as a technology, this would reverse years of hard-fought resistance by African governments and citizens to prevent GM contamination of agriculture.

The Dangers of GM Crops:

- GM crops are patented by the corporations that sell them, making seed saving illegal.
- Monsanto corporation (which owns 95% of global GM crops) has successfully sued farmers for patent infringement when their crops were cross-pollinated by neighbouring GM farms. (5)
- In Africa, 80% of small farmers save their seed. Food security and livelihoods in rural areas are likely to be negatively affected with the advent of patented GM seed.

- GM crops can easily cross-pollinate with local varieties and wild relatives, which means that genes from other species may accidentally and irreversibly contaminate the food chain and environment. Local varieties will be lost, and scientists do not know what the impact of these GM genes will be on ecological systems.
- GM crops have barely been tested for human or environmental safety, in spite of the large possibility of new toxins or allergens created through the insertion of new genes. The few animal tests that have been carried out have raised cause for concern. (6,7)
- Consumers in Europe and Japan have rejected GM crops for food and agriculture. Due to the risk of contamination, these countries may reject imports from countries that are growing GM crops.
- If GM crops are developed for biofuel use, new genes will be inserted for the plant to create chemicals that are not intended for human consumption. The likelihood of these biofuel crops contaminating conventional crops is, however, very high and over a hundred cases of contamination have been officially registered around the world. (8)
- If second generation ligno-cellulosic technology is commercially developed, the processing will be GM-intense involving specially produced enzymes to break down cellulosic material– the effects of accidental or intentional release of such materials into the environment is also unknown.

GM Trees

- Genetically Engineered trees, with traits for insect resistance, fast growth, increased cellulose or reduced lignin are not yet grown commercially anywhere. However, GM tree plantations have been promoted by the US as carbon sinks, which may be grown in Africa.
- Tree pollen can travel for hundreds of miles and could cross-pollinate with non-GM trees, potentially spreading the genes for low lignin (which helps trees to stand up) or insect resistance.
- Trees have such a long growth cycle that we have little or no idea of what the impact on their ecologies will be.
- Trees provide the planet's most important ecosystems for keeping climate in the balance. It seems insanity to use this untested technology as a so-called "solution" when there is a large chance that it could harm global forest systems and create even more long-term chaos.
- GM tree plantations are likely to have the same effect as many exotic tree plantations and carbon sinks in Africa, which have only replaced current forested areas and reduced biodiversity, drained water tables, and prevented local people from accessing the trees traditionally important to their livelihoods and cultures

Precautionary Decision on GM Trees at UN CBD COP-8 2006

- The social and ecological threat from GM trees was acknowledged at the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in April 2006, urged a precautionary approach.

- The decision states in part: “The Conference of the Parties, recognizing the uncertainties related to the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts, including long-term and trans-boundary impacts, of genetically modified trees on global forest biological diversity, as well as on the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities, and given the absence of reliable data and of capacity in some countries to undertake risk assessments and to evaluate those potential impacts... recommends parties to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees.”

We therefore urge delegates to oppose large-scale biofuel plantations and Genetic Engineering technology at the UNFCCC COP-12 negotiations, particularly as part of the CDM and technology transfer initiatives. While there may be a role for small-scale and local biodiesel production for domestic consumption (e.g. Jatropha), where it does not displace food crops, forest or indigenous people, the inherent damage caused by large-scale plantations must be considered. Furthermore, under no circumstances should GM technology be endorsed at the UNFCCC.

Sincerely

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 Large Scale Biofuels Action Group, UK (Andrew Boswell,
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 World Rainforest Movement, Uruguay (Ana Filippini)

- (1) Lester Brown, Earth Policy Institute, “Starving the people to feed the cars,” 10 September 2006 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/08/AR2006090801596.html?sub=AR>
- (2) “Speculators buy up drought-hit wheat crops to earn their daily bread.” <http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,1933832,00.html>
- (3) Robert Rapier, “E85: Spinning Our Wheels”, R-Squared, May 2006 – <http://tinyurl.com/yclt89>
- (4) <http://www.wetlands.org/>
- (5) Center for Food Safety report “Monsanto vs Farmers”, June 2005
- (6) New Scientist “GM pea causes allergic damage in mice” 21 November 2005 <http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn8347>
- (7) “Genetically Modified Soy Affects Posterity: Results of Russian Scientists' Studies” Regnum News Agency, Russia. 12 October 2005 <http://www.regnum.ru/english/526651.html>
- (8) <http://www.gmcontaminationregister.org/>

Open Letter to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 12

To the Delegates of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change:

At the Ninth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Milan in 2003, genetically engineered (GE) trees [also known as genetically modified, GM or transgenic trees] were approved for use in plantations created to offset carbon emissions as a part of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism. Research, however, actually shows:

- Native forests overall absorb more carbon than plantations;
- Plantations bring many additional problems that contribute to global warming and ecological destruction, including water and nutrient depletion, increased soil salinity and acidity, increased fire risk and biodiversity loss;
- GE trees (e.g. Bt and reduced lignin trees) may actually worsen global warming by exacerbating these problems and will cause novel ones, including alteration of decomposition, insect and disease patterns.

For this reason, many organizations around the world in several official and unofficial events have called on the UNFCCC to ban GE trees from the Kyoto Protocol.

In addition, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity has taken a stand against GE trees.

On Wednesday, 22 March, 2006 during the Eighth Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, representatives from non-governmental organizations, social movements, scientists, indigenous groups, farmers, foresters and others were joined by CBD delegates from ten countries in calling for a moratorium on the release of GE trees into the environment.

As a result, the UN CBD made an historic decision, acknowledging for the first time the potential dangers—both social and ecological—of genetically engineered trees and urging countries to take a very cautious approach to the technology. They further called for the initiation of a global compilation of data on the social and environmental implications of GE tree release, in a process that includes the participation of relevant organizations, including indigenous and local communities.

The fact that the CBD was able to take such a decision on GE trees indicates the high level of concern over the unique and important threats posed by genetically engineered trees. Geneticist Dr. Ricarda Steinbrecher of the Federation of German Scientists sums it up this way, “this CBD outcome, recommending a precautionary approach to GE trees, represents a first step in recognizing the dangers of GE trees. It will assist NGOs and scientists alike in sending an urgent alert to all nations that there is insufficient scientific data on the implications of GE trees, which pose a threat to forests and indigenous and local peoples globally—and therefore it is crucial to halt all releases at least until such data and assessments become available.”

It is now the responsibility of the UNFCCC to end the contradiction between its own pro-GE trees decision and the UN CBD's decision against GE trees. The UNFCCC must issue a new decision prohibiting the use of GE trees in carbon offset plantations under the CDM.

The established myth that forests drastically slow or even stop their carbon sequestration as they mature has been found to be false. Research shows that intact mature forest ecosystems have a net carbon absorption not directly related to the growth of the established forest trees. Undergrowth and natural regeneration additionally contribute to carbon absorption. Forest soils also hold carbon, which is lost into the atmosphere when the forest is logged.

A 1995 report by the World Resources Institute and the US Environmental Protection Agency found that plantations and tree farms in tropical forests at best only store 25% of the carbon absorbed by native forests.²

Replacing native forests with plantations or GE trees does not only remove the carbon stored in the forest and release it into the atmosphere, but will also decrease the overall carbon absorption rate, thus exacerbating global warming rather than mitigating it.

The use of genetically engineered trees as a techno-fix solution to global warming poses a further threat to native forests and their capacity to help balance the global climate.

Fast-growing GE tree plantations maturing in as few as three years are likely to be given higher priority than slower-growing traditional tree plantations.

However, a recent study funded by Duke University's Center on Global Change, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute for Global Environmental Change/Department of Energy, the inter-American Institute for Global Change Research, and others has found that "Growing tree plantations to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to mitigate global warming...could trigger environmental changes that outweigh some of the benefits."

These effects include water and nutrient depletion and increased soil salinity and acidity, said the researchers. "Almost all plantation trees are heavy water using evergreen species such as pines and eucalyptus," said Robert Jackson, a professor in Duke University's Department of Biology and Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences. The report continued, "Together with nutrient removal, leaf and needle fall from plantation trees can also acidify soils."⁴

Two of the trees receiving the most attention from genetic engineers are eucalyptus and pine. Expanding plantations of faster growing and low-lignin eucalyptus and Bt pines will exacerbate the problems detailed by the Duke University study.

Additional problems with GM trees include: selection pressures for pesticide-resistant insects and disruption of forest ecosystems for which insects are an integral component; damage to soils; lignin-reduction resulting in trees which more easily decompose, thus releasing carbon; and manipulation of disease-resistance causing the creation of increasingly pathogenic viruses.⁵ These and other problems inherent with genetically engineered trees will lead to forest health crises that worsen global warming rather than mitigate it.

Global warming itself could determine the effectiveness of the carbon offset plantation model. The carbon sink method could turn out to be a double-edged sword. Plantations have been found to be at high risk of catching fire. In a world of rapidly increasing temperatures and unpredictable weather, many of the proposed carbon sinks could actually worsen the situation. The Indonesian

forest fires of 1997, for example, produced more carbon emissions than did all of the European Union countries together that year.⁶

In conclusion, carbon offset forestry is designed to allow the Industrialized North to maintain their massively consumptive lifestyle at the expense of the Global South by expanding tree plantations. Genetically engineered trees are not a solution to global warming. If plantations of GE trees spread further into native forests, or if their genetic material contaminates native forests, then genetically engineered trees could damage native forests, leading to accelerated global warming and the continued devastation of the earth's biological diversity.

Genetically engineered trees do not offer a solution to global warming, rather they are a global distraction from finding real solutions to the problems of global warming. In addition, they threaten the world's forests and forest-dwelling communities.

For this reason, we the undersigned, call on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to bring its policies in line with those of the UN CBD and prohibit the use of genetically engineered trees in carbon sink plantations.

Global Justice Ecology Project

World Rainforest Movement

The problems with large-scale carbon sink plantations

Tree plantations have been included in the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism as being capable of serving as carbon sinks and therefore eligible for carbon credits. Independently from the debate about whether that is true or not, it is important to note that in the context of this Convention tree plantations have been analysed under the perspective of the trees' capacity to store atmospheric carbon, mostly ignoring the already proven social and environmental impacts of existing large-scale tree plantations.

The World Rainforest Movement therefore wishes to share its research findings about those impacts, which include the appropriation of extensive areas of local communities' land, net losses of work opportunities at the local level, differentiated gender impacts, depletion of water and soil resources, biodiversity loss and many other.

The following summaries of research findings aim at raising awareness among government delegates about the social and environmental problems that the establishment of large-scale carbon sink plantations would result in, so as to enable them to adopt informed decisions in this respect. All summaries are accompanied by the web page address where the full case studies are available.

• In the case of ECUADOR:

A research on FACE-PROFAFOR tree plantations show several impacts:

- Unspecified income for the use of community lands;
- Displacement of other productive activities;
- Introduction of pine plantations in primary ecosystems (Paramo), not in degraded soils, as FACE-PROFAFOR alleges;
- Impacts on the Paramo, that are fundamental for the hydrological regulation of the region;
- Pine tree plantations are prone to catch fire;
- Trees show a deficient growth;
- Deficient capacity to provide adequate support to the communities.

• *Carbon sink plantations in the Ecuadorian Andes. Impacts of the Dutch FACE-PROFAFOR monoculture tree plantations' project on indigenous and peasant communities.*

See: <http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Ecuador/face.html>

Another research shows the "development" model that **ECUADOR** has attempted to implement is destroying its natural ecosystems through the introduction of large-scale tree plantations.

The registered impacts are:

- Loss of biodiversity;
- Water shortages;

- Displacement of the *campesinos* who do not manage to find a work in the area;
- Migration of population to the slums of the large cities;
- Campesinos are pushed to sell their lands;
- Impoverishment of the population;
- Campesinos can't produce what their families need to survive.

• *Monoculture tree plantations in Ecuador. See:*
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Ecuador/book2.pdf>

● **In the case of BRAZIL:**

The tree plantations of Aracruz Celulose in the last 20 years, led to:

- The discharge of thousands of workers, due to mechanization and outsourcing;
- A growing precariousness of work conditions;
- The fragility of unions;
- Worrying situation of those that apply pesticides;
- Destruction of other work opportunities;
- Destruction of different traditional activities of the indigenous communities;
- Women's loss of their place in the community;
- Forced women migration, and exchange of their rural activities for those of maids.

• *Eucalyptus plantations and pulp production. Promises of job and destruction of work. The case of Aracruz Celulose in Brazil. See:* <http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Brazil/fase.html>

● **In the case of CHILE:**

Monoculture tree plantation expansion in the Commune of Lumaco have had the following economic, social and environmental impacts:

- Indicators highlight Lumaco as a commune excluded from economic growth, public freedom, equal opportunities, culture and technological development;
- The local population receives the negative impacts of the model on its productive economy systems, its environment, physical and mental health and its culture;
- The forestry model has caused the disorganization, dissolution and weakening of the local economic, environmental and cultural systems;
- Exclusion from benefits and economic damages are two of the main causes of the pauperization of the economic situation of rural population;
- The explosive expansion of areas planted with pine and eucalyptus trees is associated with processes of serious environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, reduction and contamination of surface and groundwater sources, etc.

• *The economic and social context of monoculture tree plantations in Chile. The case of the Commune of Lumaco, Araucania Region. See:*
<http://wrm.org.uy/publications/BookLumaco.html>

● **In the case of CAMBODIA:**

A significant majority of the rural population – 85 per cent of Cambodia's population – are subsistence farmers who depend on farmland, rivers and forests for their livelihoods.

In this context, monoculture tree plantations have severe impacts:

- Create limited number of jobs – particularly in light of what local people stand to lose if areas are cleared and plantations established;
- Workers are required to pay recruiters a fee for the jobs;
- Workers have to pay their own transportation to the concession area;
- Companies hire logging sub-contractors from other regions, against what the governor had specifically stipulated that the company should employ local inhabitants as a priority;
- Tree plantations companies ignore legal provisions;
- Causes environmental devastation in the plantation areas;
- Impunity and corruption characterizes the relationship between de Cambodian government and the companies;
- Large-scale exploitation of Cambodia's resources for quick profits;
- disappearance of some species and dwindling numbers of others;
- Violation of human rights such as acts of intimidation, in particular against community representatives, and prohibition to attend the community traditional ceremonies.

• *A report on Wuzhishan's and Green Rich's tree plantations. The death of the forest.*

See: <http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Cambodia/bookCambodia.html>

• In the case of URUGUAY:

In environmental, social and economic terms, monoculture tree plantations have serious impacts on:

- Surface and underground water;
- The country's main ecosystem: grasslands;
- Destruction of the area's unique landscape of low, flat-topped hills;
- Other rural economic activities such as agriculture, sheep farming and honey production;
- Local fauna such as proliferation of poisonous snakes, wild boars and foxes;
- Land concentration and ownership in corporate and foreign hands;
- Employment: precarious conditions and lost of permanent jobs;
- Depopulation of rural areas.

The companies that own the plantations have received a wide range of direct and indirect state support and externalization of environmental and social impacts has been essential for making viable an activity that would have been unviable without it.

• *Greenwash. Critical analysis of FSC certification of industrial tree monocultures in Uruguay.*

See: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Uruguay/book.html>

• In the case of SOUTH AFRICA:

This study has established that the lives and standards of living of local communities have not been improved by the monoculture tree plantation industry. The registered impacts are:

- Destruction of the natural environments, principally grasslands, which is irreversible;

- Invasion into natural areas by alien plants;
 - Associated losses of indigenous taxa (plant and animal species);
 - Irreversible change in present scenic values and possibly in environmental quality, and associated impacts on tourism;
 - A reduction in streamflow and water quality;
 - Increase safety and security concerns.
- *A Study of the Social and Economic Impacts of Industrial Tree Plantations in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. See:*
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/SouthAfrica/book.html>

Reasonable WRM proposals to the Convention on Climate Change

Everyone now seems to agree that the Earth's climate is changing as a direct result of human activities and that the social, environmental, political and economic consequences will be catastrophic if nothing is done – and fast – to address the problem.

Unfortunately, this Convention has until now shown that human greed has prevailed over human intelligence, and has been dominated by interests that care too little about the environment and people and too much about money.

It is therefore necessary to think in terms of what really needs to be done to avoid the looming climatic crisis and not about how much money there is to win or lose in different scenarios.

It is a well known fact that the main causes of climate change are related to fossil fuel consumption (coal, oil and gas) and to a lesser extent to deforestation, and that both result in the carbon emissions mainly responsible for global warming.

Those two causes are, however, totally different. The carbon stored in fossil fuels is not part of the biospheric carbon cycle. Once extracted and burnt, that carbon adds to the above-ground carbon pool and will not return back to its original underground form of oil, coal or gas for eons. Fossil fuel use is therefore, practically speaking, an irreversible cause of climate change.

This is why fossil fuel use should by now be considered an extreme environmental provocation which cannot be “compensated for” in any way. If governments had taken this approach when the Kyoto Protocol was agreed upon in 1997, we could now be moving toward a fossil fuel-free world, with a much brighter climatic future.

Carbon emissions resulting from deforestation are different, because the carbon stored in forest biomass is – and has always been – part of the above ground carbon pool. This means that if deforestation is reversed through forest restoration –which is not synonymous to monoculture tree plantations – the growing forests are likely to “suck up” some of the carbon released when the forest was destroyed or degraded.

In view of the above, if governments are serious about tackling climate change, they must commit themselves to:

- phasing out fossil fuels in a very short time

- halting and reversing deforestation in a very short time

However, not all countries are equally responsible for climate change. The industrialized North holds most of the responsibility for the problem, and is obliged to implement

solutions to the problem it created. As most experts agree, it also has the financial and technical resources to make the phase out of fossil fuels possible.

The North's responsibility is very clear in the case of fossil fuel-related carbon emissions, most of which they have released into the atmosphere since the start of the Industrial Revolution. But it is equally clear that most of the deforestation that is taking place in the South is also related to the North. Production of soya beans, meat, shrimp, palm oil, timber, pulp and paper, minerals – all of which result in forest loss – end up mostly in Northern markets, while Northern-led institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank impose policies on the South that necessarily result in further deforestation.

It is therefore necessary that Northern governments commit themselves to:

- making available any financial and technical resources required to phase out fossil fuels in a very short time – in both North and South
- introducing relevant changes to their economies and policies to make it possible to stop and reverse deforestation in a very short time
- ensuring that Southern countries and peoples benefit from and are in no way negatively impacted by those changes. Among other things, this means that no large-scale tree or biofuel monocultures are implemented on their lands

Accordingly, the Convention needs to move away from the complicated and fraudulent carbon trading schemes it has been involved in during the past nine years. As a sign of change, it should cease to consider the use of tree plantations as carbon sinks and immediately exclude the possibility of using genetically modified trees in such plantations. At the same time, it should begin to address seriously the issues of how to phase out fossil fuels and how to stop deforestation.

All this is nothing more than common sense – even though it is a far cry from the false solutions government climate negotiators will probably spend most of their time discussing in Nairobi.

Of course, many vested interests oppose common sense. But the main vested interest that should be taken into account is humanity as a whole, whose future depends on what is done – or not – by the governments involved in this process.