
[Victory of local peoples against corporate plantations](#)

“The city of Vitoria in Brazil, owes its name to the “victory” of the colonialist Portuguese against the original indigenous inhabitants of the land. Today, the same name has a totally different meaning. The indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani peoples have retaken the lands that were stolen from them by the giant pulp mill corporation Aracruz Cellulose. They have been joined in the struggle against the company and its plants by other local communities and organizations from civil society who, through uniting in the struggle, have weakened the company’s power. They have thus become a symbol of victory for peoples all over the world who are fighting against similar corporations.”

The above is the opening paragraph of the “Vitoria Declaration” (see full text in this bulletin), issued on 24 November by representatives of organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the United States attending an International Meeting on Plantations organized by WRM, FASE-Espirito Santo and Global Justice Ecology Project.

The symbolic significance of the victory of two “weak” indigenous communities against a “powerful” company was decisive in choosing the city of Vitoria for holding this meeting, which brought together people fighting for the rights of local communities throughout the world against the power of similar corporations.

More importantly, the meeting aimed at identifying the reasons for this and other victories as a means of strengthening the worldwide campaign against large-scale tree monocultures.

Apart from learning from the experience of the struggle in Brazil, participants shared the findings of a number of case studies on different types of plantations in South Africa, Uganda, Ecuador, Chile, Cambodia and Indonesia (summarized in the relevant articles below).

The meeting also discussed extensively on strategies to confront the new threat posed by genetically engineered trees, which could eventually result in the use of those trees in industrial plantations (see relevant article). Further issues such as carbon sink plantations, northern campaigns on paper consumption, certification and alternative approaches to community forest use were also addressed.

Even more importantly, participants were able to interact directly with the local people fighting against plantations, including a field trip to visit the Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous peoples in their recovered lands and to a camp of the Landless Rural Workers Movement struggling to access land currently occupied by Aracruz Cellulose (see article on Brazil). After suffering the horrible stink from the huge Aracruz Cellulose pulp mill, those visits provided real hope –as the World Social Forum states- that another world is possible. That new possible world is actually growing in the less expected place: behind the unending and monotonous rows of eucalyptus plantations.

Victory of local peoples against corporate plantations is of course not easy, but the Vitoria example proves that it is possible. It may take years –as it did in this case- but if people are sufficiently determined, victory can be theirs –as it was in this case.

