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OUR VIEWPOINT

- **Doublespeak: The language of climate negotiations**

One of the consequences of climate change is the increase and aggravation of natural phenomena such as droughts, floods and storms. To make matters worse, the consequences of the current human-induced climate change are further aggravated by a number of destructive activities, among which we will focus on two: deforestation and monoculture tree plantations.

Although heavy rains are natural occurrences in the tropics, current flooding in the Malaysian state of Sarawak can be attributed to higher rainfall resulting from climate change. However, it must be stressed that the Sarawak government has for over two decades been promoting the destruction of Sarawak's forests by supporting industrial logging. In spite of the strong organized local opposition with international NGO

support to oppose logging –the “Sarawak Campaign”- corporate interests prevailed and most of Sarawak’s primary forests disappeared. As a result, forests ceased to play their role as rainfall regulators, soil erosion increased, river beds rose due to siltation, and the resulting floods have devastated local peoples lives and livelihoods (see details in relevant article in this bulletin).

Similarly, droughts are a natural phenomenon in Uruguay, and some put the blame for the length of the current drought on climate change. However, government forestry policies promoting the establishment of monoculture eucalyptus and pine plantations have undoubtedly played a major role in the current water crisis. Vast expanses of fast-growing tree plantations are now sucking up huge amounts of already scarce water resources, thus aggravating the drought’s impacts (see more details in relevant article in this bulletin). As in the case of Sarawak, the Uruguayan government has chosen to ignore national opposition –in this case, to plantations- and has instead supported the establishment of plantations by foreign companies such as the Finnish Botnia, the US Weyerhaeuser, the Spanish Ence and Finnish-Swedish Stora Enso.

The above two examples are by no means exceptions and similar cases can be easily found in most countries facing either the impacts of deforestation or those linked to the expansion of fast wood plantations -or both.

Linking situations such as those to the international climate change negotiations, the sad conclusion is that these are being carried out in a very cynical language that can only be termed as doublespeak.

Governments unanimously agree that climate change is a fact and that it needs to be addressed, both internationally and locally. They also agree that fossil fuels and deforestation are the two major causes of climate change. They talk about mitigation, compensation and adaptation. And then their either do nothing or do the opposite of what needs to be done.

Instead of declaring fossil fuel extraction a criminal activity, they continue extracting the existing sources and exploring for new oil and gas deposits. Instead of declaring large scale deforestation illegal, they discuss complex ways of making business out of forest conservation while continuing to destroy forests. Instead of seeking to prepare their peoples for better coping with climate change –that will impact disproportionately on the poor, on women and other disadvantaged sectors of society- they engage in activities like deforestation and tree plantations that deplete precious resources needed for future adaptation –such as water.

Seven years ago, during the Climate Change Conference held in Delhi, an Indian religious leader --Swami Agnivesh- confronted governmental doublespeak with the plain truth: "Whom do you think you are cheating? You are cheating your children; you are cheating your grandchildren."

Those words remain today as true as they were then.

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Colombia: Militarized mining tramples ancestral rights of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the Chocó

The Chocó is a biogeographical region that forms part of the neotropics (meaning that it contains the largest area of tropical rainforest). Its high rainfall levels, tropical temperatures and isolation have helped make it one of the world's most biologically diverse regions as well. In Colombia it encompasses the Pacific Coast region and, among others, the department of Chocó, located between the jungles of Darién and the basins of the Atrato and San Juan Rivers.

For centuries, this region has been inhabited by Embera indigenous communities and the Afro-Colombian communities of the Jiguamiandó River basin, who are now threatened by a mining project. In 2005, the Colombian government granted U.S.-based Muriel Mining Corporation a 30-year concession for the mining of copper, gold, molybdenum and other minerals (the Mandé Norte mining project) in an area encompassing 11,000 hectares of indigenous and Afro-Colombian territory in the municipalities of Murindó (Antioquía) and Carmen del Darién (Chocó). This area has already been hit by the violence of numerous Colombian army operations backed by paramilitary groups, which resulted in repeated displacement of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

In 2008, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal tried and condemned Muriel Mining for "the violation of the self-determination, culture and cosmovision of indigenous, African-descendant and mestizo communities, and for the profits derived from the systematic execution of crimes committed over the last ten years by the military and paramilitary structures in the Bajo Atrato and Urabá regions to permit the exploitation and sale of copper reserves and gold and molybdenum by-products" (<http://www.sicsal.net/articulos/node/631>).

Since late 2004, Muriel Mining has been encroaching into the region with no prior consultation with local communities but with the consent of the Colombian state and government, a fact that has been systematically denounced by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

In early January of this year, workers from the mining company entered Cerro Cara Perro, also known as Ellausakirandarra, a sacred site used for traditional spiritual practices by the area's ancestral peoples and local communities, who reported that the company had not duly consulted with the local population before entering their territory, in clear violation of the 1991 Colombian Constitution, ILO Convention 169 and Colombia's Law 70 of 1993.

The implementation of the mining project endangers the very survival of the local communities, because mining operations entail the contamination of the Jiguamiandó and Murindó Rivers, the destruction of native flora and fauna, and the prohibition of the use of natural resources by the region's ancestral inhabitants.

The area has been heavily militarized by Colombian army units, who have been sent

in to control the region and protect the mining company's operations, overriding the rights of the area's traditional and legitimate inhabitants. The government justifies this move on the grounds of six meetings held with supposed indigenous representatives.

For their part, the communities of Alto Guayabal, Bachidubi, Bella Flor, Cañaveral, Caño Seco, Koredó, Coredocito, Guaguay, Isla, Lobo, Nueva Esperanza, Pueblo Nuevo, Puerto Lleras and Urada have taken action to stop the mining company, with the support of human rights organizations. The communities affected by the Mandé Norte project do not recognize the legitimacy of the meetings that the Colombian government puts forth as "consultation", since they were held through the Department of Ethnic Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice. Only a few of the region's communities participated in these meetings, which means they do not fulfil the principles of representativity or full and informed consent established in ILO Convention 169.

As a result, local indigenous leaders report that "with the power of Mother Earth and our spirits, since the middle of January more than 700 indigenous people have been carrying out a reconnaissance and territorial monitoring exercise in the community of Coredocito, the site where a camp is being built at a distance of three hours from the community." (1)

On February 24 to 28, the communities will be holding a consultation for the defence of their territory, an internal decision-making process in which men, women, the elderly and young people over the age of 14 will be able to voice their opinions and decide whether or not to allow the mining company onto their land. The consultation will take place with the oversight of national and international social, human rights, environmental and civil society organizations, who will participate as observers and guarantors.

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) declares: "We do not need gold to live, but we do need corn and plantains, so let's drink chicha (corn liquor) and plant corn. MULTINATIONALS OUT OF COLOMBIA! Muriel Mining Corporation out of indigenous and Afro-Colombian territory!"

To support the protest of the Embera indigenous people and other communities affected by Muriel Mining, Rainforest Rescue has organized a campaign that you can join through its Spanish language website at: <http://www.salvalaselva.org/protestaktion.php?id=346>

(1) "La Muriel Mining Coporation, atropella y desconoce las autoridades indígenas en la mina Cerro Carra de Perro", statement by ONIC, in Noticias de Censat, Agua Viva, <http://www.censat.org/noticias/2009/2/6/La-Muriel-Mining-Coporation-atropella-y-desconoce-las-autoridades-indigenas-en-la-mina-Cerro-Carra-de-Perro/>

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- India: A human chain to defend Niyamgiri Hill from mining

The Niyamgiri Hill, in Orissa, an outstanding natural beauty place rising more than one thousand meters, has some of the most pristine and dense humid forests in the region

and is the source of Vamshadhara river and of major tributaries of Nagaveli river. It is also the most sacred site of the Dongria - literally 'hill people'-, a dwindling sub-section of the Kondh peoples, who have inhabited the forests of eastern India for several thousand years.

The Dongria Kondh depend on the forest hill for their livelihood: they farm its slopes growing crops in among the forest. Their fruit gardens high up on the hillside require hard work; a man may spend 10 days there protecting precious crops from elephants, wild boars and light-fingered monkeys, warning them off with tribal songs and the banging of drums. They obtain cash from the sale in the local market of wild fruit, flowers and leaves gathered in the forest.

The Niyamgiri forest is ecologically vital to the entire ecosystem of the hills as it enables the numerous streams and lush forests which sustain the Dongrias to continue to thrive. The mountain has also rich deposits of aluminium ore. This has become a curse for the hill and the peoples that depend on it since their future is at stake by mining interests.

Reporter Peter Foster (1), who visited a Dongria village and heard their complaints, wrote that “digging up the Niyamgiris will be a social and environmental catastrophe, they say, destroying rivers and streams on which tens of thousands of people depend to irrigate their crops, polluting rivers with the toxic 'red mud' that is a by-product of aluminium manufacture and - most importantly, according to the anthropologists - wiping out the Dongria Kondh, who worship the sacred hills named after their god, Niyamraja.”

Mining the Niyamgiri Hills may represent a genocide for the Dongria. According to anthropologist Felix Padel, quoted by Peter Foster, “The Dongria are hill people, resettling them on the plains is a form of ethnicide. They live in the hills, they worship the hills, they survive off the hills. The Niyamgiri Hills are not simply where the Dongria live, but the very essence of who they are. To resettle them is to destroy them.’ An elder of the village visited by the reporter said: 'We can't go. The hills are who we are.’

The fate of a resettled Dongria village –Sakata- looms as a sad premonition. Foster tells that the people received concrete houses and land to grow crops “but have since done nothing with the government’s gift. Almost all the men of the village are dead from taking too much of the potent local liquor, which is far stronger than the sago-wine of their tradition. 'With the connection to the forest gone,' a local social worker says, 'the men of the village simply earned enough as day labourers to drink themselves to death.’”

Although India’s Supreme Court has forbidden Vedanta –a firm majority owned by London-based Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal- from mining the mountain, the hunger for raw materials has led it to welcome Vedanta’s Indian subsidiary, Sterlite Industries. In August 2008, Sterlite was given the green light to mine on Dongria land upon following certain guidelines.

The company has tried to build roads for the mine. However, the Dongria and other

Kondh tribes have marched through the dense forest to create a 17-km-long human wall across at the base of Niyamgiri Hill on the 27th January to blockade the roads and keep the British company off their sacred mountain.

According to Survival International, some reports put the number of men and women from Orissa's Niyamgiri area taking part in the protest at over 10,000. Placards carried by the protesters bore slogans including 'Vedanta, go back' and 'Stop mining in Niyamgiri'.

It was the second large-scale demonstration in ten days: on 17 January up to 7,000 protesters marched to the gates of Vedanta's aluminium refinery in the nearby town of Lanjigarh.(2)

If the mine succeeds, a whole ancient world may be destroyed. As Bijaya Kumar Baboo, who has worked with the tribes of Orissa since the rice famines in the 1980s, was quoted by Foster: "The Dongria people have lived on so little for so long without destroying their world. And yet we are destroying our world at an unsustainable rate. Before the Dongria cease to exist, shouldn't we be asking if we have anything to learn from them?"

A campaign has been organized by Survival International to support the Dongria Kondh by either writing to the Prime Minister of India, your MPs, your Indian embassy and/or donating to their campaign (see <http://www.survival-international.org/news/4152>)

(1) Mining in Orissa threatens Dongria Kondh tribe, Peter Foster, Telegraph Media Group, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/3340194/Mining-in-Orissa-threatens-Dongria-Kondh-tribe.html>

(2) Tribe forms human chain to keep British company off sacred mountain, 29 January 2009, Survival International, <http://www.survival-international.org/news/4152>

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- Liberia: Country Heading for Disaster -timber industry set to reopen despite widespread concerns and evidence pointing high potential for illegal logging

Liberia's forests hold great promise for its people, but that promise is quickly evaporating as the Liberian government mismanages this valuable resource. The government is awarding flawed logging contracts, community rights are being trampled underfoot, and civil society organizations are under threat of censorship (1) for speaking out.

Fumbling towards Disaster

In an effort to break with the country's bloody history linked to natural resources exploitation, the Liberian government passed a new forestry law in 2006. The law promised a new, participatory process for identifying potential areas for new concessions, and transparent processes for pre-qualifying logging companies, and tendering new concessions. Unfortunately, in the words of the UN Panel of Experts, the Liberian Forestry Development Authority (FDA) "is often either not aware of the legal requirements or is unable to follow them."(2)

A series of logging contracts have been awarded in violation of the laws (3); to logging companies with unproven technical and financial capacities and financial backers about whom far too little is known. When qualifying companies to bid, the government failed to establish proper standards and thus failed to weed out companies with tax arrears and others that could not fulfill their obligations were they awarded contracts.

The three companies that have been awarded the three largest contracts should not have been awarded contracts had the forestry authorities applied the law. For example, Liberia Tree and Trading Company (LTTC) had tax arrears at the time they were pre-qualified. The company still had arrears when they bided for contracts (4); again in violation of the law. During the bid evaluation the company contacted the bid evaluation panel *“requesting the Panel to hold on to its final report on evaluation for one week to allow them settle their tax arrears with the Ministry of Finance”*(5); the Chairman of the Bid Evaluation Panel informed the panel that this was a violation of the law (6).

Ownership of the second company, Alpha Logging and Wood processing, significantly changed between the time it pre-qualified to bid and when it bided on one of the three contracts (7). This significant change in ownership automatically nullified their pre-qualification certificate (9). Like LTTC the forestry authorities awarded them a contract even though they were not qualified to bid. The third company, E J and J, failed to demonstrate sufficient technical and financial capacity during the due diligence process; a major precondition for the award of contracts.

The due diligence demonstrated how little is known about these companies: how leadership has changed hands, how funders remain in the shadows, or how required start-up capital fails to materialize. Certainly more worrying, the contracts that were awarded to them enjoyed a quiet, late change to their payment obligations, reducing by 96 percent the amount they would pay in land rent to the government. While this change was corrected after questions were raised, it is demonstrative of the uncertain and potentially dangerous future promised by Liberia's confused FDA.

Trampling over Communities Rights

The government appears intent to ignore also those aspects of the law that protect the limited rights of forests communities. The government cannot unilaterally take forestland from communities without due process, consultation, agreement, and contractual obligations to provide benefits. Yet it has – sometimes through incompetence, sometimes willfully – violated these requirements.

While Liberian law unfortunately does not recognize the property rights of traditional communities to their trees the FDA is required to request permission from communities to be affected by logging, when zoning areas as suitable for logging. This process is designed to coordinate or prevent wholesale taking of forestland by a runaway agency. The FDA did not fulfill these requirements.

Additionally, the people who are to be affected by logging are being pushed around. The government is required to help communities form local representative bodies and ask those bodies for permission to log the land. Of the ten current or potential logging concessions, the author has spoken with individuals who live in eight and has found

no evidence that permission to log was granted by those who live on the land. And while representative bodies are being formed, this is being done only after the government has already decided what forests will be logged.

This violation notwithstanding, the FDA rolls on. Before being allowed to start logging, a company is required to sign a contract, a Social Agreement, with those affected by the operation. This Agreement is supposed to contain the benefits the community will receive in exchange for logging. Six Agreements have been signed and there are widespread reports of the abuses that characterized the process.

For example, in one region the FDA arrived and called a meeting. At the meeting they announced the need for representatives or a Community Forestry Development Committee (CFDC) to be elected. On the day of the meeting the community's representatives meet those from the FDA and the logging company. A FDA-drafted Agreement is read, but that Agreement provides only a minimum of benefits required under law, is plagued by typos, and contains numerous legally disingenuous promises. FDA, the logging companies and local government officials collude to threaten and lie to the community representatives. The Agreement is signed without revision within 24 hours. Reports suggest that the process by which other Social Agreements have been signed were similarly characterized by coercion and a massive deficit of informed consent.

The FDA is required to void such Agreements and has an opportunity to ensure that future Agreements are signed voluntarily and knowingly. If it does not do so then little opportunity exists for the people whose everyday lives will be severely affected by logging to gain from the cutting of their trees.

Deaf to the World

Rather than addressing these difficulties the FDA has opted to bury its head in the sand. The Authority is mandated to follow certain transparency requirements, including a requirement that it produce documents on its treatment of community rights. However, repeated requests from NGOs and community groups go ignored leaving great uncertainty as to whether those violations already witnessed represent the extent of the damage done.

As an alternative, the FDA has misguidedly produced Guidelines from how it considers civil society actors should behave. The Guidelines state that all NGO actions pertaining to the forests must be first vetted by the Authority. If an NGO acts without FDA approval then the FDA would recommend the NGO be stripped of its accreditation. The Constitution of Liberia and the forestry law make such Guidelines illegal and unenforceable, but calls for their revocation have remained unanswered. The FDA remains an agency unprepared to focus on righting Liberia's forestry process, choosing instead to shut its ears to concerned calls.

It is not too late. While the FDA has signed contracts for six logging contracts to date, the three largest are not yet operational as they await legislative ratification. There is time for the qualification, bidding, and Social Agreement processes to be corrected. There is time for communities to be consulted and for logging to benefit the people of Liberia. Perhaps more importantly, there is time for alternatives to logging to be

discussed; alternatives that may provide the capital the government needs, the rights the communities deserve, and the environmental protection the country requires. There is still time for Liberia to enjoy the promise held by its forests.

- (1) Draft FDA Policy Guidelines of January 2009
- (2) UN Panel of Experts Report(S/2008/785), 12 December 2008, p19
- (3) These contracts have been signed by the executive and forwarded to the Legislature for ratification.
- (4) Report of Due Diligence on Liberia Tree and Trading Company dated July 10, 2008
- (5) Minutes of Bid Evaluation Panel Meeting Held on July 2, 2008. The panel in its report to the FDA confirmed that the delay in completing its evaluation was due in part to this situation.
- (6) *ibid.*
- (7) Report of due diligence on Alpha Logging and Wood Processing dated July 10, 2008
- (8) FDA Regulation No. 103-07 Regulation on Bidder's Qualification

By Jonathan Gant, Legal Fellow (from Columbia University, US) with the SDI in Monrovia, and Silas Kpanan'Ayoung Siakor, Director of the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), February 20, 2009

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- Malaysia: River siltation due to deforestation underlying severe floods in Sarawak

Heavy rains started pouring on January 14 and continued for almost one month in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, hitting especially the central and northern region.

Thousands of evacuees, essential foodstuff airlifted to longhouses, tons of relief aid, closure of primary schools, landslides, crops destroyed have been the toll of an unprecedented devastating flood that has mainly hit rural Sarawak. Paddy fields were ripening when the rain started. Eventually the crops were completely destroyed by the flood. According to a report in The Borneo Post on 11 February 2009, indigenous communities from a number of longhouses in the Baram river region have lost almost their complete harvest.(1)

While changing climate patterns may be conveniently blamed for the devastation (everybody's fault - no one's fault) more than twenty years of forestry policies favouring large-scale depletion of the fragile tropical rainforest ecosystems for short-term (rather short-sighted) profit are a major underlying cause that some are highlighting now.

As the organization Bruno Manser Fonds recalls "Despite warnings from environmentalists and international scientists, less than ten percent of Sarawak's primary forests have been spared from logging without due importance being attached to the long-term environmental, social and economic consequences of logging."

A lawyer from Kuching, one of the provinces hit by the floods, wrote in his blog (<http://voonleeshan.blogspot.com/2009/01/2009-floods-in-kuching.html>) that many of the causes of floods in Kuching and other adjacent areas had been created through

policies of the government of the day. And he asks them: “Why fell the trees and cleared the forests, when trees could help mitigate floods by soaking the water during heavy rain? Why fell trees and clearing of forests be allowed for purpose of profit of the few, yet, without proper replanting and forest management? Were not these contributed to erosions and siltation of the river beds of the Sarawak River? Had not this siltation then caused the riverbeds to be shallow? Had not the shallow waterbeds cause rain water to rise up very quickly to flood riverbanks and into the farms, shops and houses?”

Siltation linked to deforestation has also resulted in massive death of fish. In this respect, the Digest on Malaysian News reported that “hundreds of fish surfaced in the Batang Rajang [river] as they struggled for air, some already dead. There also have been several reports of such incidents in Belaga and Kapit since late last year which was cause for much worry for the people there. Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) had found that the fish had practically suffocated to death and not poisoned. The cause of the incident is very simple. Rajang River became too shallow due to heavy siltation. Siltation was caused by heavy and uncontrolled deforestation in upriver areas.”

According to the same source, “We all know that the erosion is due to uncontrolled logging in upper Batang Rajang. The culprits (who happen to be associate of Taib Mahmud, the Chief Minister of Sarawak) are the timber companies. They rape the virgin jungle of Sarawak which resulted in massive deforestation and erosion and siltation which eventually make the Batang Rajang prone to flooding (which severely affected Sibul town) and hindering water navigation due to shallow river. And now, the fishes are dying.”

The huge profits from logging have gone to a handful of corporations and to the pockets of few and powerful people, but its devastating effects are now being suffered by thousands of people, many of whom have actively opposed logging in their territories.

- (1) “Rural Sarawak suffers flood consequences”, media release of Bruno Manser Fonds, 17 February 2009, www.bmf.ch, info@bmf.ch
- (2) “Siltation killed fish at Batang Rajang”, Digest on Malaysian News (<http://malaysiadigest.blogspot.com/2009/02/siltation-killed-fish-at-batang-rajang.html>)

Other sources: several news features from the Malaysian website The Star Online, <http://thestar.com.my>

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COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- Brazil: Veracel plantations, certified land seizure

In 1991, the Veracel Celulose company, then known as Veracruz Florestal, first arrived in the extreme south region of the state of Bahia.

Originally, this hot, humid region was covered with various types of Atlantic Forest, which has since been destroyed and replaced with crops, pastureland and monoculture eucalyptus tree plantations.

The implementation of a “model of development” based on deforestation, violence and the expulsion of local communities paved the way for the large-scale installation of eucalyptus plantations and pulp mills in the region.

In mid-1991, Veracruz Florestal purchased 47,140 hectares of land from a company called Vale do Rio Doce. In November 1992, civil society organizations began receiving reports that Veracruz Florestal had hundreds of trucks removing native wood species from the land in order to plant eucalyptus trees.

On June 17, 2008, after 15 years of legal action, the Federal Court of Eunápolis finally declared Veracel Celulose guilty of the environmental destruction committed during its first years of operations in the area, up until 1993. It sentenced the corporation to a fine of BRL 20 million (close to USD 8.7 million), in addition to revoking the environmental permits issued for the establishment of the eucalyptus plantation. This decision meant that Veracel will have to cut down the eucalyptus trees planted under these permits and reforest the land with native Atlantic Forest tree species.

In 1997, the Swedish corporation Stora became one of the principal owners of Veracel. Subsequently, in 2000, Aracruz Celulose formed a joint venture with Stora Enso (formed through a merger between Stora and Finnish company Enso), under which each controlled 50% of shares. Through the expansion of their eucalyptus plantations, both Veracel and Aracruz have been gradually coming closer to the region’s national parks, traditionally inhabited by the Pataxó indigenous people.

Within the lands identified by the national indigenous agency FUNAI as Pataxó territory, there are 1,645 hectares of Veracel Celulose eucalyptus plantations. For its part, the Pataxó Resistance Front states that there are roughly 30,000 hectares of Veracel Celulose plantations on the 120,000 hectares of land that rightfully belong to the Pataxó people.

The Pataxó say that the land in question had been illegally seized by large landholders through false ownership deeds, and then sold to Veracel, which cut down the native vegetation and poisoned the area’s water sources with the toxic agrochemicals it uses, killing off animals and plants.

“We call this a green desert because the eucalyptus plantation has brought us a lot of pollution, it has brought us a lot of problems for us and for our children. This green desert doesn’t bring us health, it doesn’t bring us education, it doesn’t bring us food. Not even the birds are free to live on the plantation. The only thing it brings is wealth for people from the outside, but it brings us nothing. And it angers me to be in a green desert inside indigenous territory.”

(Interview with Chief Jurandir, village of Jataí, 09/04/2008)

Throughout the years, the Pataxó have fought for the legal demarcation of their territory and protested the establishment of eucalyptus plantations.

There is, however, a major obstacle when it comes to the inspection of the operations of a company like Veracel by the government authorities: a total lack of the necessary structure and staff, at both the national and state government levels.

At a seminar held in Porto Seguro in November 2007, the director of the Environmental Resources Centre at the Bahia Environmental Institute admitted that the agency has only 20 technicians to assess all of the projects undertaken in the state of Bahia, which is made up of 418 municipalities. In the extreme south region of the state, there is just one agency inspector to cover an area in which the companies occupy no less than 400,000 hectares of land.

In the face of this situation, a number of organizations in the extreme south of Bahia have called for a moratorium on the planting of eucalyptus in the region until an economic-environmental zoning process has been completed and the state has the necessary technical and human resource requirements to authorize and monitor company operations, in addition to establishing zones reserved for other activities, such as family agriculture.

Nevertheless, although it still lacks the power to properly fulfil its functions, the CRA continues to grant authorization for the conversion of more land to tree plantations. This can only lead to the conclusion that Bahia's environmental policy favours the economic interests of Veracel and other companies over the common good.

Veracel eucalyptus plantations currently cover 15.1% of the total land area and 40% of the arable land in the municipality of Eunápolis.

When it comes to employment, it is well known that eucalyptus plantations and pulp production contribute very little to job creation. This is a highly mechanized sector that requires only a small number of workers to monitor and manage the production process in order to ensure high productivity.

While the building of the pulp mill created a relatively large number of jobs (around 9,000), once the mill was fully operating the number of workers employed by the company on its plantations and in the mill combined dropped to 741, most of them highly skilled labourers. Relative to the amount of land covered by eucalyptus by Veracel, this works out to one direct job per 103 hectares of plantations.

The fact that the company did not create thousands and thousands of jobs as expected provoked a major backlash from the region's population.

Yet in spite of all this, Veracel continues to be backed by the FSC's "green" label, meaning that the FSC has served as an important tool for the expansion of big pulp corporations that can operate with an environmentally sound and socially just image, a factor that also helps to boost sales.

According to the inhabitants of local rural communities and members of peasant movements, the company has done nothing but to promote the concentration of land ownership, the establishment of monoculture plantations and the expulsion of the rural

population, who are left with only two choices: to leave the countryside, or to fight back.

Extracted and adapted from “Violações socioambientais promovidas pela Veracel Celulose, propriedade da Stora Enso e Aracruz Celulose: Uma história de ilegalidades, descaso e ganância”. CEPEDES (Study and Research Centre for the Development of the Extreme South of Bahia), Eunápolis, Bahia, 2008. The full study in Portuguese is available at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Brasil/CEPEDES_2008.pdf

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- Brazil: A private sector rationale in forestry training at Viçosa Federal University

Concern over the destruction of forests was already documented at the end of the seventeenth century. Since then, some studies argued that it was necessary to develop knowledge regarding forest use adapted to the situation of tropical forests considering that the way it was being carried out –as well as the slavery-based approach- were destructive and degenerated national morale. However, these remained as references of historic possibilities that were initiated but never had any effective long-term continuity as Brazilian aristocratic and patriarchal society chose extensive monoculture plantations and an agro-exporting, large landowning and slavery-based economy. This social and economic way of life imposed a utilitarian, immediate and predatory type of relationship between society and nature.

Regarding forestry matters, this rationale was promoted particularly through public bodies seized by a private rationale, such as the Forestry Service which in 1911 became a major producer and disseminator of *Eucalyptus* to the detriment of research endeavouring to establish other species for the most diverse purposes. One of the consequences was that in 1935, the forest cover of Sao Paulo had already shrunk to 26.2%.

Following the same rationale as the *Green Revolution*, as from the seventies the “forestry sector” ceased being solely the object of specific actions and, in addition to medium and long-term planning, became the object of political actions and programmes involving massive public non-recoverable investments and *tax incentives*. This reveals that Brazilian private “forestry” companies were in fact set up with public money, in return leaving a scourge for thousands of families, in particular for the so-called *traditional peoples*.

As a result of this policy, Fanzeres stresses that: “As from that time, a series of conflicts and disputes started, now considered as having a socio-environmental nature. However, until the return and consolidation of political freedom in Brazil which started in 1985, disputes were maintained of a local and isolated nature. The memory of those who lived through those times reconstructs the action of the companies or of their intermediaries as being clad in moral or physical violence, even causing the death of many people. Today’s so-called social disputes basically happen because of land appropriation at no cost or at a symbolic price. Indigenous and Quilombola* groups, even less empowered than the rural workers who also occupied these lands without ownership deeds, were also evicted or enclosed by vast expanses of tree plantations. Environmental problems started almost immediately due to felling to

replace the native forest, unsuitable for the industrial purposes aimed at, and to the use of chemicals to fight ants and other creatures that attack monoculture tree plantations. The impacts related to water resources clearly showing the socio-environmental combination of damage to human survival and to the native biodiversity, only appeared following the establishment of these plantations. Presently this is one of the most important issues to be discussed and solved regarding these vast tree plantations.”

It is within an international “cold war” climate, an hegemonic conception of the country with a clearly developmental approach - of a technical nature in the case of agrarian sciences - and within the great agitation of the political disputes that subsequently ended in the military, pro-capitalist coup in Brazil, that came recognition of the need for professional training aimed at forestry production issues in the country.

In their works, Ladeira and Ehlers tell us that: “The research institutes and agronomy schools established at the beginning of the twentieth century suffered from the influence of various agreements, for instance, MEC/USAID. Other examples are agreements such as those with the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the US-led Alliance for Progress. These agreements resulted in the donation of scientific equipment, literature, human resources [there were many exchanges between US and Brazilian academics] and financial resources. The main Brazilian schools of agronomy (ENA, ESALQ, UFP, UFRGS and UFV), under the influence of the North American Purdue, Ohio, Wisconsin and North Carolina schools, reformulated their curricula, structures and teaching, extension and research methodologies and started favouring areas and disciplines directly and indirectly related with the adaptation and validation of the emerging agricultural model, already conventional in the US and Europe. The professional forestry study programme, set up in 1960, is placed in this context.”

This description reaffirms what is being set out here and what a professional forester, trained in 1976, and interviewed by France Coelho states on depicting the conception of forestry study programmes: “At that time, there was what was known as a silviculturist-agronomist. That is to say forestry was pure silviculture. Forest management was completely out of the question. It means that they did not work on forests, they worked on reforestation. Silviculture as “THE ART OF MAKING FORESTS,” but they didn’t work with the forest itself, they did not work with native, natural forests.”

From the start and given the intrinsic and growing relationship with the private sector, the Forestry study programme at Viçosa Federal University has inherited even today all the concepts set out above. In order to have an idea of what goes on with research at the Department of Forestry at UFV, we have analyzed the participation of each sector in the funding of research recorded by the Department. Out of the almost twelve million reais [Brazilian currency] invested over the period, 83% originated from some public body and the remaining 17% from private institutions, which is very significant. However, the private companies also appropriated 53% of the public money allocated to research in the Department. And it should be remembered that what is most expensive is the infrastructure, the payment of salaries and all the investment in training up to a degree, which is not accounted for and is paid out from

public money.

Among the lines of research in the areas of knowledge, we find that that of the environment as a whole, is the only one that does not have most of its resources geared mainly to the private needs of corporate groups. It is not by chance that the smallest amount of resources is allocated to this area, a scant 13% of all the funds entering the Department for research.

Regarding the subject of research, although Brazil is a tropical country, 44% of the research projects gather 55% of the resources entering the Department for science and technology development and are allocated to the study of a single species: *Eucalyptus sp.* It may also be affirmed that there is a direct relationship between investigating technology related to eucalyptus and mainly benefiting private initiative, because out of the 213 research works on the above-mentioned species, 76% of them, that is to say 80% of the resources allocated to this research, give primacy to the private sector's productive progress.

Within such context, much confrontation, willpower and courage is necessary, as is being shown by the student movement and other peoples' social movements, which carry out activist work day by day in the building up and strengthening of their representative bodies at all levels, through assemblies, congresses and various other actions, such as marches, cultural demonstrations adopting the most diverse forms such as occupation of the dean's office, struggles around the extinction of foundations in universities and attempts to prevent agreements between the universities and these corporations. Furthermore, in a positive struggle, demanding research that effectively benefits traditional and peasant peoples.

These clashes are inevitable. According to sociologist Francisco de Oliveira this process of privatizing what is public involves the destitution of speech through the demoralization of discourse and disqualification of opponents with the aim of annulling political discussion, "*the imposition of a consensus in the way of dictatorships.*" And this is easy to be seen within the Department and within the UFV as a whole, when groups opposing this privatizing policy or the hegemonic production model are pejoratively stigmatized as the "eco-bores" or "neo-hippies." And, when this is not sufficient, with guardianship – through the creation of means to lessen student autonomy – and/or psychological and often physical violence entering on the scene.

Even so, the struggle for a Democratic and Peoples' University still continues, particularly in the hearts and minds of combative students organized in their several representative organizations.

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NOTE: The complete text (in Portuguese) with graphics, tables, bibliographic references and sources may be downloaded from the WRM webpage:
http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Brasil/ThesisVladimir_2008.pdf

*Quilombo = Remote places of difficult access where runaway slaves sought refuge. Quilombola people are their descendents.

- Indonesia: Criminalization of social leader for the benefit of oil palm corporation

As exposed in previous WRM Bulletin issues, criminalization is part of a strategy aimed at silencing any protest generally against the extractive activities of transnational corporations (see WRM Bulletin N° 125). It is happening all over Southern countries. And it is happening right now in Indonesia, where it has victimized another fighter of social resistance to land-grabbing by palm oil-companies in the country.

The powerful agribusiness transnational group PT Sinar Mas, apart from wide investments including chemicals, finance, banking, hotels, telecommunications, pig-breeding, shares the world's largest holdings of oil palm lands and is Indonesia's largest palm oil company.

Operations of its subsidiary PR Kresna Duta Agroindo (KDA) in Jambi province, on the east coast of central Sumatra, have raised conflict among villagers of Karang Mendapo. The company aggressively expanded its oil palm plantations grabbing forest and rubber plantations of Karang Mendapo farmers. Some 600 hectares were illegally cut down to integrate the land to a larger oil palm plantation, for which KDA distributed a monthly fee of 58.000 rp (3,50 €) to each registered farmer without clearly stating the purpose of such payment.

According to Watch Indonesia! (1) "in August 2008, the villagers seized the land - that in fact is their own - and harvested the yields of the oil palms there. Ever since, they have been subject to intimidation and maltreatment by unknown persons presumably acting on behalf of KDA. These incidents were reported to the police but to no avail."

"As part of the protest, the citizens of Karang Mendapo decided to return the fee they had received from KDA in August. However, KDA refused to take back this money". The villagers decided then to entrust the money on resistance leader Muhammad Rusdi -who is also the village's mayor- until KDA would receive it.

Rusdi was arrested on 28 January 2009 and still remains in detention at the district police facilities. He was interrogated and there are reports that he was maltreated. It seems that Rusdi was arrested under the alleged charge of misappropriation of the money entrusted to him by his fellow villagers.

The communiqué of Watch Indonesia! says that "local activists and the population of Karang Mendapo fear that Rusdi is being framed by local law-enforcement authorities acting on behalf of KDA. Local activists fear that Rusdi is being criminalized to suppress the protest of victims of abusive land-grabbing practices that palm oil-companies apply Indonesia-wide."

With 7.1 million hectares planted with oil palm, Indonesia is positioned as the world's leading palm oil producer. The urge to plant oil palm has not ceased. On the contrary, on 18 February this year, Indonesia acknowledged it had quietly lifted a ban established since December 2007 on the use of peat land for palm oil plantations (2).

This implies that around 2 million hectares of peat land eligible for palm oil plantation will be cleared and drained, thus releasing millions of tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere that will add to global warming.

Mounting criminalization, deforestation, destruction, land-grabbing, global warming: the fruit of oil palm tastes bitter than ever.

A campaign has been organized to demand Rusdi's immediate release and a thorough investigation of how he came to be detained at all. You are invited to take action and send letters –a suggested sample is available- to Indonesian authorities through Watch Indonesia!'s website at <http://www.watchindonesia.org/Index-engl.htm>, or Salva la Selva campaign at <http://www.regenwald.org/international/englisch/protestaktion.php?id=359>

(1) "Urgent Appeal: Resistance against Palm Oil - Unlawful Arrest of farmers' resistance leader in Jambi, Indonesia", Watch Indonesia!, Berlin, 5 February 2009,

(2) "Indonesia reopens peatland to palm oil plantation", Ian MacKinnon, The Guardian, 18 February 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/feb/18/indonesia-peat-palm-oil>

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- Paraguay: Peasants can better confront eucalyptus advancing on their lands thanks to the experience of their Brazilian peers

The Paraguayan Federation of Wood Industries (Federación Paraguaya de Madereros - FEPAMA) is talking of "collaborating with the Agrarian Reform Project promoted by the Government, through a proposal for comprehensive rural development and generation of wealth by introducing tree plantations on idle lands." (1) FEPAMA alleges that "with this work special support could be provided to small and medium-sized rural landowners, to enable them to help organize the promotion of tree plantations ... in the farms of small and medium-sized landowners." (2)

The "idle lands" referred to by FEPAMA are part of the peasants' productive system, which is generally diversified. The proposal is to plant fast-growing trees on these lands. This business, that will mainly benefit the forestry sector, providing the necessary raw material to develop an industry, will be implemented by using national funds. The FEPAMA proposal is to set up a fund to activate Law 536 which established subsidies to tree plantations with "an initial input of between five and ten million dollars from the MERCOSUR Structural Funds and/or the social contributions from Itaipu [a large hydroelectric dam shared between Brazil and Paraguay] and/or the World Bank, IDB, JICA and others."

The 1994 Law 536 set out the bases for the development of a large scale forestation model – although due to special circumstances in Paraguay it came to a halt – which is suspiciously similar to the legal frameworks of other countries, such as Chile and Uruguay that have promoted tree plantations.

Thus, in Paraguay the process is being launched of imposing large-scale monoculture

plantation of fast-growing trees. This is an opportunity for Paraguayan peasants to benefit from the experience of their Brazilian brothers and sisters regarding the plantation of eucalyptus on peasant farmland.

In this respect, a document prepared recently by the Brazilian Movement of Small Farmers (Movimiento de Pequeños Agricultores - MPA) (which can be accessed at the WRM website at http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Brasil/Fomento_Florestal.pdf) analyzes the impacts of the “forestry promotion” programme fostered by the Government in the State of Espírito Santo, which promotes monoculture eucalyptus plantations by small farmers.

Behind the discourse of “benefitting” the peasants is concealed a new strategy for the expansion of agribusiness companies (the pulp company, Aracruz, in the concrete case of Brazil). This strategy ensures them the supply of raw material without the responsibility of producing it and allows them to avoid any type of restriction on land ownership. Furthermore, the companies are able to obtain timber from trees planted on lands that would not be profitable for industrialized company management, such as hilly areas.

Small landowners entering the programme become captive to the company as it has a monopoly over the purchase of wood. Furthermore, they sign a contract with the company in which they take on numerous obligations such as the application of agrochemicals, technical assistance defined by the company, delivering of the timber to the company and achieving an estimated production. If this goal is not reached the farmer may even have to make up the difference himself.

“We almost had to sell coffee to pay the freight to transport the eucalyptus. I went to the Aracruz office and told them I was not going to do that, but they insisted that I had to pay.”

The experience of these farmers tells us among other things, of the dangerous and unprotected work in the monoculture tree plantations, the drop in water courses caused by these trees and the obligatory use of poisons in the plantation.

Using a practical approach, the document compares the economic and socio-environmental returns from a eucalyptus plantation (in the worst and best scenarios) with those of corn and bean plantations. The results leave no doubts, even in the best of the scenarios for eucalyptus it is more profitable for the peasants to invest in growing food-crops and even to diversify their production with the plantation of native trees.

It is important to transmit this experience to other countries where the intention is to impose the expansion of industrial tree plantations using the same arguments. The Paraguayan peasants and people can back themselves on the experience of their regional peers to avoid being misled. They are still in time to resist.

- (1) “Paraguay: FEPAMA plantea apoyo a reforma agraria mediante forestación”, ForestalWeb, <http://www.forestalweb.com/Noticias-internacionales/paraguay-fepama-plantea-apoyo-a-reforma-agraria-mediante-forestacion/>

- Uruguay: A new land redistribution...in favour of forestry companies

In Uruguay at the end of the forties, the State promoted an exemplary initiative, the creation of the National Settlement Institute (Instituto Nacional de Colonización - INC), that arose from the need for a "suitable instrument to promote a rational subdivision of land and its appropriate exploitation in order to achieve the settlement and welfare of rural workers, thus promoting an increase and improvement in farm production."

"Settlement is a productive socio-economic process, whereby the State acquires lands or receives them as property or for administration, re-dimensions them and then allocates them to farmers so that they can settle there with their families and work them appropriately." (1) Thus, within these settlements it is common to find land subdivisions that maintain the name of the cattle ranch that was subdivided for settlement. Such is the case of Santa Kilda and Santa Blanca, in the Colonia (settlement) Baltasar Brum in the Department of Paysandú.

Invited by farmers of Santa Kilda and Santa Blanca – concerned over the advance of pine and eucalyptus plantations in the vicinity of their lands – we had the opportunity to visit part of the Colonia Baltasar Brum. The area was originally used for agriculture but later cattle-raising was also introduced.

The Colonia is being surrounded by monoculture tree plantations and while these grow in height and in extension, the negative impacts on the farmers become more notorious: lack of water, pest proliferation, among others.

"The forestry companies have killed our settlement and our water resources and wells are disappearing," said one of the farmers. "Streams that had never dried up today have no water in them" and "this has nothing to do with the drought." They are quick to say that at times of longstanding droughts the streams only dwindled down at some point along their route, but since tree plantations were established in the area they have dried up completely. The settlers see how in wells 40 m deep the water level has become dangerously low and in some areas has even disappeared, implying that the farmer has to invest in another well where an attempt will be made to reach the water table at a depth of 100 m. This is an extra cost that not all the families are able to cover.

On passing by some land belonging to one of the forestry companies, we noticed a considerably large area with no plantation on it. "Those low-lying lands were wetlands and that is why they could not plant trees on them. They could not enter with the machines. You see now, some years after they planted the rest of the land, the wetlands no longer exist, now it is land ready for planting trees." A similar process occurred in lands belonging to the settlers, the wet lowlands – where it was impossible to pass even on horseback and where even in the worst droughts ever in

the country these locations enabled the settlers to save the cattle – now they have been dry for the past five years.

"You plant a crop and the birds eat it all, there are millions of pigeons, although the companies' foresters say that pigeons do not live in those woods [they refer to the tree plantations], but hey, do they live there!!"

Another settler whose lands are on the other side of the "tree curtain" affirms that "when one plants sorghum along come the wild boars and they eat it, and nobody sees this, it is full [the plantation] of wild boar and deer." "This was a wonderful settlement, then they spoilt it with tree plantations. You breed animals and the wild boars eat them, both the calves and the cows."

Among the arguments used to promote tree plantations, they say that they generate jobs, they talk about biodiversity, sustainable management. Slogans such as "Forests give life and work. Protect them" may be seen along the roadside. Those "forests" are in fact the companies' tree plantations.

The inhabitants of the settlement have another view on this. "Have you noticed how under the trees nothing grows?" while he points to the 1000 ha of tree plantations surrounding his 40 ha piece of land. That land was like this [referring to his own land where he grows crops and breeds cattle] and they came along and killed everything, there is no more grass, there is no life in that place."

These families, that have lived all their lives in rural areas, say that "to us who know the land, they can't tell us about work in plantations; there is work when they plant and then, nothing." "The harvest doesn't provide jobs either, it is a lie; one woman is in charge of the harvesting machine, one man manipulates another machine that loads the logs on the truck which, once full, leaves and bye-bye, no more labour."

"The forestry companies have moved strongly into our settlements. They arrive with their promises and offer materials and kitchen equipment for the schools to promote a good image and to get accepted." "For us, who are confronted with the negative impacts we suffer from these plantations, those things are of no importance."

"You work the land, make your home and its surroundings nice, for this to happen to us now..." Today, not only these good agricultural lands need to compete against the advancing plantations, but the permanence of the settlers' families is in jeopardy. They see with sadness how a new redistribution of their lands is taking place, except that now the process is the reverse: land that could be allocated to other settlers is being given to foreign forestry companies. Not only is land concentration taking place once again but it is also being 'foreignized,' and as if this were not enough, these same plantations are certified by the FSC.

(1) National Settlement Institution <http://www.colonizacion.com.uy>

By Elizabeth Díaz, Guayubira Group, <http://www.guayubira.org.uy/>

CARBON TRADE

- Bath tubs, forests, carbon trading and climate change

In 2008, the value of the carbon market increased by 84 per cent, with total transactions increasing from US\$64 billion in 2007 to US\$118 billion in 2008. Surely, with all that money changing hands, there must be some good news to report about the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?

Unfortunately not. The US government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that in 2008 global concentrations of carbon dioxide increased by 2.28 parts per million.

Carbon traders are now looking at trading the carbon stored in the world's forests. They hope that reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) will generate large quantities of carbon to be traded. But there are three major problems with this.

First it would drive down the price of carbon, perhaps even making the carbon market crash. Recently, carbon prices have fallen dramatically, making investments in renewable energy less attractive. As the Financial Times notes, "The price of carbon dioxide in the European Union has fallen so low it no longer provides an incentive to low-carbon development, and seems unlikely to do so in the near future."

The second problem with trading the carbon stored in forests is that it would create an enormous loophole for the world's worst greenhouse gas polluters. We need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This means that we need to dramatically reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, not find new ways of allowing continued emissions.

Underlying this is a common misunderstanding about climate change. In order to prevent runaway climate change, we need to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This means cutting emissions radically – it is not enough to stabilise emissions.

Currently the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is 386 parts per million. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report states that to prevent global warming exceeding 2°C, emissions need to be reduced globally by 85 per cent (compared to 2000) by 2050. The IPCC's target is 450 ppm, but according to James Hansen of NASA the target has to be 350 ppm.

Perhaps the best way of understanding the difference between concentrations and emissions is the "bathtub analogy" put forward by John Sterman, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Linda Booth Sweeney at Harvard Graduate School of Education. They explain that the atmosphere is like a bathtub: the running tap represents greenhouse gas emissions; the plughole represents absorption by plants and the ocean; and the water in the bath represents the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. With the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, the

amount of water coming out of the tap is more than double that going down the plughole. So, the level of water in the bath is increasing. To make matters worse, we keep turning the tap a bit further, increasing the amount of water going in. To prevent the bath from overflowing, it is not enough just to leave the tap alone (the equivalent of stabilising emissions), we have to turn it right down, so that less water is going into the bath than is going out through the plughole.

Reducing deforestation is the equivalent of unblocking the plughole. But trading the carbon stored in forests is the equivalent of cranking open the tap at the same time.

The third problem with trading carbon stored in forests is that in terms of the climate, the carbon stored in forests is not the same as the carbon stored in fossil fuels. The carbon stored in fossil fuels is stable and will not enter the atmosphere unless it is dug out and burned. Carbon stored in forests is unstable and can easily be released back to the atmosphere. The recent fires in Australia illustrate the point well. Such fires are likely to increase with climate change. To quote the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: "An increase in fire danger in Australia is likely to be associated with a reduced interval between fires, increased fire intensity, a decrease in fire extinguishments and faster fire spread."

The fires in Australia were a tragedy, killing more than 200 people and destroying 1,800 homes. They also resulted in the release of millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere – more than one-third of Australia's annual CO₂ emissions.

But what would have happened if the carbon that had been stored in Australia's burnt forests had been traded? By allowing emissions elsewhere to continue, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted to the atmosphere would have been doubled.

Certainly, deforestation needs to be stopped. But trading the carbon stored in forests guarantees that greenhouse gas emissions continue elsewhere. Carbon trading does not reduce emissions. Trading the carbon that is stored in forests will only make matters worse.

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