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OUR VIEWPOINT

- [Our support to the Haitian people](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- [Bangladesh: Campaign for full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord to help the Jumma peoples regain control over their forests, lands, and destiny](#)
- [India: Pushing “REDD plus” at the expense of forests and forest dwellers](#)
- [Malaysia: Penan demand against government for forestry licenses](#)
- [Panama: Land dispute and violation of the Naso people’s Human Rights](#)
- [Peru: Resistance to the Romero oil palm group](#)

COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- [Brazil: The negative impacts of monoculture eucalyptus plantations has lead to suspending them in various localities in the State of Sao Paulo](#)
- [Indonesia: Government proposes 21 million hectares of plantations to meet climate targets](#)
- [Mozambique: Pine and eucalyptus companies are advancing on peasant land in the north of the country](#)
- [South Africa: Threatened grasslands](#)
- [Uruguay: A place where the lies about plantations are all too obvious](#)
- [What is behind the term “Planted Forests”](#)

OUR VIEWPOINT

- Our support to the Haitian people

In tragic circumstances such as those being suffered by the Haitian people, it becomes very difficult to think and talk about anything else. But thinking –before talking- is something that is strikingly absent in the daily information we receive about the crisis in this country.

The entire world is being bombarded with “news” fed by an army of journalists competing among each other as to who disseminates the “best” horror article or video or audio about the suffering of countless people.

Each journalist appears to feel obliged to inform us that Haiti is “one of the poorest

countries of the world”, though not one seems compelled to tell us about how this happened. As with the earthquake, poverty would seem to be an “Act of God”.

At the same time, the media appears to be unaware that the “news” it feeds us about malnutrition, lack of drinking water and sanitation, homelessness, absence of adequate health services are not in fact “news”. Most Haitian people have for decades been suffering all that, and more –including dictatorships, foreign invasions, imprisonment, torture and death. The earthquake has substantially worsened what was already a very bad situation. But it was certainly bad.

And of course the media does not tell us a word about Haitian history and the role played in the country by European-led slavery, or about the successful African slave revolt against Napoleon’s France that led to the country’s independence in 1804, or about the French trade blockade after independence and the more recent (starting in 1915) direct US intervention in the country.

Journalists won’t tell us that Haiti has been pushed into poverty and environmental destruction through the historical looting of its resources and exploitation of its people for the benefit of European and US corporations. Which easily explains why the US has been imposing and bringing down governments in the country for so many years.

In short time, the media will decide that Haiti is not “news” anymore and will move into another more profitable blood-filled scenario. Everything will be “back to normal” and the US will continue imposing on Haiti –with the aid of the IMF and the World Bank– the same “development” model that has proven to be so useful ... for the US.

Within this context, we would like to express our support to the Haitian people in this moment of grief, and particularly to the many Haitians that continue carrying out a difficult, long and silent struggle for independence and social justice against all odds. As their forefathers Toussaint-Louverture, Dessalines, Christophe and others successfully did against none else than Napoleon!

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Bangladesh: Campaign for full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord to help the Jumma peoples regain control over their forests, lands, and destiny

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in southeastern Bangladesh bordering Burma is one of the last remaining forested regions in the country, and is the ancestral domain of a dozen indigenous communities collectively known as the Jumma peoples (from “jum” = shifting cultivation). These peoples have ethnic, linguistic and religious identities totally different from the Bengali Muslim majority. Under British rule, the region was autonomous, largely off-limits to outsiders and almost exclusively inhabited by indigenous peoples. This special status gradually eroded after inclusion in East Pakistan in 1947.

In the early 1960's, the USAID-funded Kaptai hydroelectric dam inundated 40% of the arable land and forced relocation of a fourth of the population. After Bangladeshi independence from Pakistan in 1971, indigenous leaders' appeals to the new government for autonomy and constitutional recognition were rejected. Subsequent governments opted for a military escalation of the area that triggered a protracted armed conflict. The government resettled more than 400,000 landless Bengalis into the region to outnumber the indigenous population and overwhelm the resistance.

A series of massacres forced around 90,000 indigenous people to flee as refugees to neighboring India and Burma, and even more to become internally displaced. Thousands were killed, vast lands were grabbed by settlers and vested interests, and the demographics changed drastically.

Even as the war raged, the Asian Development Bank funded rubber and tree plantations that removed indigenous people from their self-subsistent lifestyle, and road construction facilitating access to the more than 500 military camps in the region. Rampant illegal logging and shortened fallow cycles caused serious depletion of the forests.

International concern over massive human rights violations and the plight of the refugees led to negotiations and a cease-fire, culminating in the 1997 CHT Peace Accord between the secular Awami League regime and the PCJSS/Shanti Bahini, the indigenous peoples' political front and armed wing. The accord promised an end to hostilities, regional autonomy through devolution of powers to indigenous-controlled councils, return of occupied lands, withdrawal of most army facilities, and rehabilitation of indigenous refugees, internally displaced people and former combatants.

But few of these promises were fulfilled in subsequent years, particularly under the alliance government (2001-2006) of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-i-Islam, which had opposed the accord, and the subsequent caretaker government. The situation was further complicated by bloody internal strife between the PCJSS and the UPDF, a Jumma political party (formed in 1998) that rejected the accord in favor of "full-autonomy" within the state of Bangladesh. Communal attacks and land grabbing continued unabated.

In the December 2008 elections, the Awami League won a landslide victory on a platform including a pledge to fully implement the CHT Peace Accord. The new government has taken a number of positive steps such as (re-)establishment of relevant committees, cancellation of unused plantation leases and withdrawal of an army brigade and 35 temporary military camps. But settlers have challenged the constitutionality of the accord in the courts, and vested interests are fighting to preserve the status quo. The government's remaining four year tenure will likely determine the fate of the accord.

The CHT Jumma Peoples Network of the Asia-Pacific (Australia), the Indigenous Jumma People's Network USA, the Organizing Committee Chittagong Hill Tracts Campaign (Holland), and Jumma Net (a support NGO in Japan) have launched a joint signature campaign to encourage the government to implement the CHT Peace Accord as promised. The goal is to collect 100,000 signatures by the end of January

2010, to be submitted to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Please sign the petition (<http://www.cht-global-voices.com>) to help the Jumma peoples regain control over their forests, lands, and destiny.

Global Voices for Peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a signature campaign for full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord, <http://www.cht-global-voices.com>.

Contact:

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<http://www.jummanet.org/en/index.html>, <http://www.ijpnus.org/home>

[index](#)

- India: Pushing “REDD plus” at the expense of forests and forest dwellers

The Copenhagen Accord - the agreement reached by a group of countries at the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit and imposed on the rest - was defined by Transnational Institute's Praful Bidwai as “a travesty of what the world needs to avert climate change”: The two degrees Celsius increase target in global temperature is 0.5 degrees above the target accepted by the majority of UN nations; poor countries are mainly left to fend for themselves in terms of adapting to climate change; and eventually, violations of the Copenhagen Accord would have no meaningful consequences.

The agreement is also instrumental in driving what is termed "REDD plus". Paragraph 6 says: “We recognize the crucial role of reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation and the need to enhance removals of greenhouse gas emission by forests and agree on the need to provide positive incentives to such actions through the immediate establishment of a mechanism including REDDplus, to enable the mobilization of financial resources from developed countries.”

Though “REDD plus” has been left undefined and the question of what kind of forest protection will be financed and how will be a matter of further negotiations, the core of REDD plus is making forests a mode of earning carbon permits. It entails carbon offsets, more business, permission to emit somewhere else.

A briefing of the Indian organisation Campaign for Survival and Dignity (1) reveals the key role played by the Indian government in pushing "REDD plus" at the expense of forest dwellers: “In fact, the government of India was one of a few countries who objected to including any binding requirement that people's rights should be respected in the negotiating text. India has also been one of the only countries in the world pushing for inclusion of plantation activities in carbon trading under REDD (this is what makes it "REDD plus").”

According to the group, the government of India wants to include afforestation and plantation programmes in REDD plus, so that they are eligible for receiving money, and expects to earn “carbon credits” on the basis of carbon supposedly stored in forests. They say that “both these points are mentioned in the draft negotiating text of December 15th. In the Indian context, this model will lead to land grabbing and

conflict as:

- Despite the Forest Rights Act of 2006, the legal rights of adivasis and forest dwellers are still not being recognised. For instance, rights to minor forest produce, grazing areas, community forests, etc. have hardly been recognised anywhere in the country. Without legally recognised community forest rights, it will be easy for companies and the government to grab and sell community forests and resources for REDD credits. The negotiating text of December 15th also only “encourages” countries to respect forest rights rather than requiring them to do so.

- There is no agreed upon method by which carbon absorption or storage in a forest can be measured. Forests do not consist of just standing trees – trees grow, fires and other disasters take place, people and wildlife consume nontimber forest produce, etc. Forests are constantly changing. How will this be accounted for? Trading on forest carbon credits will lead companies and the government to shut off forests from all use by people, on the one hand, and on the other will encourage fictional carbon storage figures. This is exactly what has already happened in carbon forestry projects in Brazil and elsewhere. Moreover, and most fundamentally, carbon trading simply allows the industrial countries to avoid reducing their own emissions. Carbon trading in forests will thus simply become a giant scam, harming both the environment and people.

- If, as the government is demanding, afforestation is made part of REDD, these dangers increase. Afforestation programmes often take place on cultivated lands (including shifting cultivation fallows), village commons, community pasture lands etc. that actually belong to and are being used by people. Such programs are already leading to evictions of people and/or displacement from their livelihoods across the country. They also often involve destroying biodiversity-rich natural open forests and grasslands; REDD would encourage this, since it does not distinguish between plantations and natural forests. In October 2008, the Standing Committee on Environment and Forests sharply criticised such programs, saying that ‘afforestation ... deprives forest dwellers and adivasis of some or all of their lands and impacts their livelihoods and basic needs – for which they are neither informed, nor consulted, nor compensated.’ Till date, however, no central afforestation program has included even a reference to forest rights, leave alone complied with legal requirements.

- In the meantime, the government continues to run such programs through the administrative scheme of 'Joint Forest Management' – where forest guards control the 'participatory' bodies. These programs often cause divisions and conflict in the community, while ignoring people's actual legal rights. Institutionalisation of such programs through REDD will cause even more conflict and marginalisation of forest dwellers.

- Finally, a carbon trading model involving private companies will create a huge financial incentive for wholesale takeovers of forests. A recent survey found that the world's largest investment companies are tracking REDD very closely. With such funds, there will be a rush by private companies seeking access to public forest land for plantations as well as control over official forest protection programs. Reliance, ITC and other companies have been demanding access to 'degraded' forests for

commercial afforestation for many years, and this scheme could legitimise their demand. The lack of legal rights combined with such pressure will make land grabbing very likely.”

REDD trading schemes see the forest for the wood that can be bought and sold for its carbon content denying its living nature, its condition of ecosystem which is inhabited by and used by people and wildlife. Campaign for Survival and Dignity fears that “if the talks simply say that trees are what is important, what is to prevent companies from destroying natural forests and grasslands to replace them with commercial plantations (thereby damaging the environment and potentially releasing even more carbon)?”

They claim that “if forest protection is being sought, surely the government should be trying to strengthen global forest governance - not weaken it by bringing in private companies and trading.”

(1) “REDDPLUS AT COPENHAGEN. Little Known Scheme Poses Major Dangers for Forests, Adivasis, Other Forest Dwellers”, Campaign for Survival and Dignity, <http://www.forestrightsact.com/climate-change/item/download/3>

[index](#)

- Malaysia: Penan demand against government for forestry licenses

The Penan have been living in the rainforests of Sarawak since time immemorial. They used to hunt and gather food from the rainforest and they lived on sago, a starch extracted from the pith of sago palm stems, until the 1950s, when they decided to settle at village locations where they live today. (1)

In the 1980s, large-scale industrial logging started operating in Sarawak. Logging operators have trespassed onto the Penan’s ancestral land and many Penan who have struggled for land rights against loggers have suffered intimidation and violence at the hands of security forces hired by logging firms and Malaysian police. Even a Penan chief was murdered in 2008, allegedly for his opposition to logging. Also mono-crop plantations and other alleged “development” projects followed suit disrespecting Penan’s land rights.

Intrusion has not ceased. Forestry operations by the three Malaysian timber conglomerates of Samling, Interhill and Timberplus in concessions issued to Damai Cove Resorts, Samling Plywood, Samling Reforestation and Timberplus have affected Penan villages located in the rainforest of Sarawak’s Middle Baram region particularly the communities of Ba Abang, Long Pakan, Long Item, Long Lilim and Long Kawi. For over ten years, various logging operators have trespassed onto their ancestral land with bulldozers, excavators, shovels, trucks and lorries, destroying a substantial area of the Penan’s forest, fruit trees, crops and cultural heritage, such as graves and historical sites.

The communities are demanding land titles for an area of 80,000 hectares,

cancellation of the four logging and tree plantation licenses unlawfully issued on their lands as well as compensation for damages done by timber companies in the course of their past operations. The Penan have asked the court for an injunction "against the licensees, plus their contractors and subcontractors, for the removal of all structures, equipment and machinery from the plaintiffs' native customary rights land". They consider Sarawak government's issue of timber and tree planting licenses to be "oppressive, arbitrary, illegal and unconstitutional".

Outside logging company workers - mostly male workers - who came to live nearby the indigenous communities have also tragically disrupted the Penan's community life. In September 2009, a Malaysian government report confirmed allegations by the Penan of the middle Baram region that a number of indigenous girls and women had been sexually abused and raped by logging company employees.

Destruction, disruption, violence. Penan's voices reveal what this kind of "development" has brought to them: "Interhill shows no respect whatsoever for us as people who are living from the forest" "Since Interhill advanced into our area in 1988, we have seen nothing but destruction and no positive development whatsoever." "Interhill is polluting our drinking water catchments with motor oil and old truck batteries. They simply dump their trash into our river." (2)

(1) "Penan to sue Sarawak gov't over logging, plantations", December 10th, 2009, <http://www.borneoproject.org/article.php?id=790>

(2) Tong Tana, March 2009, "No luxury hotel at the expense of the rainforest", Bruno Manser Fonds, http://www.bmf.ch/files/tongtana/TT_March_2009_e.pdf

[index](#)

- Panama: Land dispute and violation of the Naso people's Human Rights

The Naso people, also known as the Teribe or Tjer-di, live in the Bocas del Toro province in northeast Panama, in a territory spanning 1,300 km² and covering most of the river Teribe and river San San basin.

This indigenous group, which historically defended itself from colonizers and was already established in this territory when the first Spanish conquistadores arrived in the region, continue practicing subsistence agriculture and fisheries in close relationship with the surrounding nature which provides them with food, shelter, health, occupation and leisure.

Today these people are facing a struggle for survival. The Ganadera Bocas (a cattle-raising group), brandishing deeds granted by the State and overriding the previous rights of the Naso communities living there, entered the territory with police forces using teargas to evict this native people from an area of at least 200 hectares claimed by the Naso as part of their ancestral territory and who aim at incorporating this area in their Naso Tjër-Di region.

The extensive cattle-ranching carried out by Ganadera Bocas is threatening to

destroy the Naso's traditional economy and thus wipe them out as an ethnic group because it has totally deforested the basin of the two rivers and has sunk in muddy dung the community's roads.

For several months now the Naso have been living in protest camps, both in Panama City (in Cathedral Square) and in San San Druy, seeking a solution to the land dispute. They have been arbitrarily evicted from all their camps.

On 19 November "without any court order and only supported by the arbitrariness of the Governor of Bocas del Toro, Simon Becker and the arrogance of the Panamanian Minister of Government and Justice, José Raúl Mulino, the State violated all the laws and left without shelter, in the middle of the rainy season, some 200 people who, according to witnesses in the area "are almost without food and have nowhere to shelter from the rain." (1) On 20 November anti-mob police with the use of teargas bombs again evicted over 200 Naso indigenous people who were living in communities in San San and San San Druy in Changuinola, Bocas del Toro province. Following this eviction, employees of the Ganadera Bocas Company entered the area with heavy machinery and proceeded to demolish the indigenous people's homes. (2)

The Naso have been claiming their land since the seventies and in particular asking to create their own region on their traditional lands. However, after all this time they still have not obtained legal recognition of their traditional lands.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur condemned the eviction of the Naso communities in Panama and pointed out that "article 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples establishes that 'Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.'"

In addition to being a land dispute, this is a human rights issue. In this respect, the UN Special Rapporteur declared: "In particular, I urge the Government to immediately re-establish dialogue with the affected Naso indigenous people in order to reach a peaceful solution to this situation." (2)

Shi Nasoga Unkon – We are all Naso.

(1) <http://www.panamaprofundo.org/boletin/pueblosindigenas/gases-lacrimogenos-y-violencia-en-comunidades-naso.htm>

(2) Relator ONU condena desalojo de comunidades Naso en Panamá y exhorta al diálogo (UN Rapporteur condemns eviction of Naso Communities in Panama and urges for dialogue), <http://tiny.cc/OG2qt>

[index](#)

The forest is not for sale! The forest must be defended! This is the clamour in the district of Barranquita, Province of Lamas in the San Martin region. The property rights acquired by the inhabitants of the hamlets in the Caynarachi river basin, located in the Peruvian Amazon, over the land they work have been violated. These people have been real guardians of the forest, looking after -on their own plots- its immense wealth in flora, fauna and water resources.

In spite of this, in mid-2006, the State allocated 7,000 hectares to the Agropecuaria del Shanusi Company, a member of the Romero group, for the establishment of monoculture oil palm plantations that had been declared of national interest. There are hundreds of landholders (posesionarios) who have been waiting for years for the land tenure deeds. They are being denied these deeds under the excuse that the company has requested the land and that the inhabitants have only worked a small area – because they are conserving a lot of primary forest!

The company started the work of preparing the land by deforesting practically the whole area to establish a monoculture oil palm plantation. According to the Servindi news agency (1), at the end of 2009, the company hurriedly built “a track for vehicles, crossing the whole piece of land known as Palmas del Oriente, extracting non-metals from the Lorocache hill, diverting the course of streams, drying up some water courses springing from the Lorocache hill and taking over an enormous lake called Cocha Muerta, where they have put up a ‘Private Property’ sign. All this has been done without the legal authorizations from the relevant government bodies and, in addition, a large amount of timber has been removed.”

Hundreds of labourers are working with chainsaws, machetes, axes and tractors, helicopters overfly the area and security personnel guard it. “There are over 50 chainsaw operators and thugs carrying out actions in the forest. Barranquita is ready for an uprising and could become the next Bagua,” (see WRM bulletin 142 for details on the Bagua uprising) warned the mayor of the San Martin region, César Soria, who denounced that the owners of the companies have left hundreds of hectares of land devastated and water courses filled in by the work of tractors and other heavy machinery, displacing communities and compromising their free passage. (2)

Making use of a new citizen’s arrest law, the company devastated the peasant farmers’ crops and housing in addition to mistreating and arresting some of them. According to Servindi, one of the peasant farmers was imprisoned for a month and is still under subpoena.

All these manoeuvres have forced some inhabitants to sell their lands and leave, but mass protests have also taken place. In 2008, the residents of Barranquita filed for precautionary measures to avoid one of the Romero Group companies (Agricola de Caynarachi S.A.) from entering the area. Protected by Law No. 653 for the promotion of investment and without prior consultation with the communities, by Ministerial Resolution No. 255 – 2007, the Government allocated the company 3,000 hectares known as “Palma de Oriente,” for the industrial production of oil palm. This involved paralysing the development plans undertaken by the Barranquita Coordination Board for the Struggle against Poverty (Mesa de Concertación de Lucha contra la Pobreza de Barranquita) in addition to affecting primary forest and the boundary lines of various Barranquita annexes located on the banks of the Caynarachi river. (3)

The company's activities devastated communal forests and violated the peasants' rights in the communities of the District of Barranquita. The population is demanding the granting of property deeds and the cancellation of the contract established with the company for the allocated area.

On 7 January, the indignation of the peasant farmers in the area over the violation of their rights and the destruction of the district's primary forests – the few left in the region – led to a great march and demonstration. The Barranquita Resistance Committee expressed its protest against the Romero Group and against the concessions granted by the central Government and reaffirmed "its option to defend its citizens' rights and the environment and all its biodiversity; no company shall enter its territory without prior consent." (4)

(1) "Peru: Denuncian crimen ecológico del Grupo Romero en Barranquita, bajo Huallaga, San Martín"(Ecological crime committed by the Romero Group in Barranquita, baja Huallaga, San Martín) , by Barranquita Resiste, 23 December 2009, Servindi, <http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/20681>

(2) "Autoridades y dirigentes de Barranquita anuncian protestas para proteger sus bosques" (Authorities and leaders of Barranquita announce protests to protect their forests), Info región, 4 January 2010, <http://www.inforegion.pe/portada/45514/autoridades-y-dirigentes-de-barranquita-anuncian-radicalizacion-de-protestas-para-protger-sus-bosques/>

(3) http://barranquitaperu.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html

(4) Mobilization of leaders in San Martín, 7 January 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu7SQBwc-IQ&feature=youtube_gdata

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- Brazil: The negative impacts of monoculture eucalyptus plantations has lead to suspending them in various localities in the State of Sao Paulo

As experts like geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves have repeatedly stressed, economic models based on monoculture plantation activities will always be incompatible with a healthy, balanced environment. Any industrial-scale monoculture activity, and especially plantations of millions of cloned eucalyptus trees, cannot contribute to the goal of so-called sustainable development.

The dramatic impacts suffered by local peasant communities offer clear proof that the "eucalyptization" of the Paraíba Valley has unleashed an unprecedented sequence of environmental devastation. Owing to a total lack of government monitoring, the corporations responsible for the overwhelming upsurge in eucalyptus in the region show a total disregard for any environmental rules or regulations. Despite their harmful effects, companies continue to plant these trees on the peaks of mountains,

around water sources, and in areas formerly occupied by native gallery forests. In the municipality of Taubaté, in particular, plantations have even spread to the basin of the Una River, the source of drinking water for the inhabitants of Taubaté and neighbouring Tremembé. Despite the fact that the river basin has been officially declared a protected area by the municipality of Taubaté – due to its crucial role as a supply of water, its natural beauty and its contribution to ecological preservation – it has nonetheless been occupied by large eucalyptus plantations, in a flagrant and unchecked violation of environmental laws that expressly prohibit forestry activities in environmental conservation areas, such as the now ravaged Una River basin.

Moreover, these monoculture eucalyptus plantations cannot be considered forests, because they do not fulfil the functions of genuine native forests in the cycle of returning nutrients to the soil, and are furthermore incompatible with biodiversity.

Cloned eucalyptus trees lack the dense foliage needed to capture rainwater, which instead falls directly onto the soil beneath. When these trees are planted on the peaks of mountains, rainwater washes downhill along the exposed, dry land surface, carrying away the minute amounts of nutrients in the soil and thus contributing to both the desertification of plantation areas and sedimentation of bodies of water in the surrounding lowlands.

At the same time, given the rapid growth rate of cloned eucalyptus trees (which can be harvested as little as six years after planting), any nutrients absorbed from the impoverished soil of the plantations are ultimately destroyed when the trees are cut down and processed for industrial pulp production. The result is total devastation of the land, with massive areas that resemble moonscapes more than landscapes, populated only by row upon row of dead stumps: the final legacy of the unbridled expansion of eucalyptus.

Further adding to the harmful impacts on the environment is the indisputable fact that monoculture eucalyptus plantations rely heavily on the use of tons and tons of glyphosate-based herbicides, which are not only a danger to the environment, but also a carcinogen. Because these toxic substances are frequently applied to trees on the tops of mountains, the effects of gravity and rainfall carry them down to the surrounding lowlands, where they contaminate rivers, streams and springs, resulting in devastating impacts that have yet to be fully measured. One particularly dramatic example is a recent case in the town of Piquete, where glyphosate poisoning led to the death of over 8,000 kilos of fish, hundreds of pigs, wild birds, amphibians and fruit trees, not to mention the impacts on the health of the people living around the vast eucalyptus plantation where this hazardous agrochemical was recklessly used.

In a study considered a key reference work on the subject, scientist Augusto Ruschi maintains that the overwhelming consumption of water by plantations of fast-growing eucalyptus trees is responsible for the water shortage recorded in the already devastated northern region of the state of Espírito Santo.

At the same time, the establishment of massive landholdings covered entirely with this alien tree species has destroyed the former cultural diversity in rural areas. Family farming and small-scale livestock raising, activities pursued for centuries by the region's inhabitants, have become unviable in the face of the uncontrolled

expansion of monoculture eucalyptus plantations. This has led to the disappearance of traditional cultural expressions like local festivals and religious ceremonies that developed around sites considered sacred by the local population, now rendered impossible by the huge expanses of eucalyptus holdings that continue to provoke almost unimaginable hardships in a region already ravaged by the advance of large-scale monoculture production.

The “green” image put forward by agroindustry is clearly deceitful. Vast plantations of eucalyptus trees are not forests, and they do not create even one tenth of the jobs claimed by the companies that own them. The dramatic socio-environmental impacts of these plantations have spurred the Ombudsman’s Office of the State of São Paulo to take legal action, with significant success. In three public civil suits filed in São Luiz do Paraitinga, the District of Catuçaba and Piquete, the courts have ordered the suspension of further monoculture plantation projects until the companies responsible for this unbridled exploitation of natural resources have carried out the environmental impact assessments duly required for each plantation, accompanied by public hearings before the populations affected by them.

Source: Summary of the article “Eucalipto, monocultura e insustentabilidade ambiental”, by Wagner Giron de la Torre, Ombudsman of the State of São Paulo and Coordinator of the Regional Ombudsman’s Office of Taubaté. The full text of the article was published in a special edition of *Diario Contato* (issue no. 438) commemorating the 364th anniversary of Taubaté, São Paulo.

[index](#)

- Indonesia: Government proposes 21 million hectares of plantations to meet climate targets

There are two realities in the forestry sector in Indonesia. In one, the forests continue to be destroyed, peat swamps are drained, forests are logged, burned and replaced by industrial tree plantations. Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights are bulldozed along with the forests. Meanwhile, in the other reality, trees are planted, forests are restored and greenhouse gas emissions will soon become a thing of the past.

Occasionally, these two realities collide. In December 2009, Cornelis, the Governor of West Kalimantan, was giving a speech about the government's "One Man, One Tree" campaign, but was repeatedly interrupted by the noise of logging trucks loaded with newly logged timber on the nearby Trans-Kalimantan highway. "I'm making a speech about the tree-planting movement and a truck carrying piles of timber passes by," the Jakarta Globe reported him as saying. "If we ask the drivers, I don't think they will have permits," he added. After four trucks had interrupted him, Cornelis asked the police to stop any more logging trucks for driving past. Just until he finished his speech.

In September 2009, Indonesia's President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, told a G-20

summit in the USA that Indonesia "will change the status of our forests from that of a net emitter sector to a net sink sector by 2030." He also announced that Indonesia planned to cut its emissions by 26 per cent against business as usual by 2020.

Yudhoyono repeated the 26 per cent target during the climate negotiations in Copenhagen. "During the talks Indonesia said that it was seriously committed to reducing carbon emissions by 26 percent by 2020, however, the President lied about his seriousness," Walhi's forest campaigner, Teguh Surya, told the Jakarta Post.

As Indonesia's forests burn, the government is looking forward to massive expansions in the oil palm and pulp and paper industries: the two industries directly and indirectly responsible for many of the fires. There are plans for 20 million hectares of new oil palm plantations and 9 million hectares of new pulpwood plantations. And the Forestry Ministry plans to hand over 2.2 million hectares of forest to mining companies over the next ten years. Bad as all this is, things could soon get much worse.

On 6 January 2010, Zulkifli Hasan, Indonesia's Forestry Minister, revealed the government's cunning plan for meeting its emissions target: 21 million hectares of "new forest". "If the scenario described proceeds, if the planting proceeds, we can reach more than 26 percent," Hasan told journalists in Jakarta. An area of 500,000 hectares is to be planted each year, at a cost of US\$269 million.

Of course, the 21 million hectares of "new forest" will not be forest at all. It will be plantations. That's 20 million hectares of oil palm plantations, 9 million hectares of pulpwood plantations and 21 million hectares of carbon plantations. A total of 51 million hectares of proposed plantations.

Indonesia has an appalling record of corruption and fraud associated with plans to promote plantations. A report published recently by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) looks in detail at the Indonesian government's Reforestation Fund, which started in 1989 under the Soeharto dictatorship. Much of the money went to companies with close ties to political elites. The companies cleared forest, lied about the area planted, invested little in the area and pocketed the cash. A 1999 audit by Ernst and Young found that more than US\$5 billion was lost from the reforestation fund between 1993 and 1998. The audit was not released publicly.

In addition to the money sloshing around for the proposed plantations, vast sums of money could pour into Indonesia through REDD schemes. According to a report by the Indonesian Forest Climate Alliance, Indonesia could receive US\$4.5 billion a year if it were to reduce deforestation by 30 per cent. Christopher Barr, co-author of the CIFOR report, points out that the situation has improved since the fall of Soeharto in 1998. But without improved financial oversight, "The problems that have plagued the Reforestation Fund over the last 20 years are likely to reoccur," Barr told Reuters. The CIFOR report notes that "During both the Soeharto and the post-Soeharto periods, weak financial management and inefficient administration of revenues by government institutions at all levels undermined effective use of the Reforestation Fund."

The Indonesian government's enthusiasm for REDD provides another example of two realities existing in parallel. In the fake reality of REDD proponents, corruption will disappear. Palm oil and pulp and paper companies will be paid not to destroy an area of forest without using the money to expand their destructive operations elsewhere. By putting a price on carbon, forests will be worth more standing than logged - that's the theory. But for this to work, the price of carbon offsets will have to be higher than the price of palm oil. This is extremely unlikely to happen (and impossible to predict) over the lifetime of a REDD project. What is certain is that deforestation will continue as long as the government encourages the expansion of the industries responsible for destructing the forests.

By Chris Lang, <http://chrislang.org>

[index](#)

- Mozambique: Pine and eucalyptus companies are advancing on peasant land in the north of the country

Pine and eucalyptus planting companies are advancing on land belonging to peasant family communities in several provinces in northern Mozambique. This is a relatively recent process, encouraged by the Mozambique Government that sees monoculture tree plantations as a tool to promote development and progress in the more remote regions such as the province of Niassa.

The main incentives for monoculture tree plantations are focussed on this province. Niassa is the province farthest away from the capital city Maputo. It is the largest of the country's ten provinces, the least populated and, what is very important for the companies, the province covers much flat and fertile land.

The companies have been granted concessions by the country's central Government that allow approximately 250,000 hectares to be planted over a 50-year period. Presently five companies are working in the region with a total of 11,000 hectares of plantations and the forecast is to expand and cover approximately 100,000 hectares in the next few years. Funding is provided by the Swedish Government and the Global Solidarity Forest Fund, set up by various Swedish and Finnish Churches. This Fund states that it is offering employment to the communities and planting trees on degraded land that these have abandoned.

However, various negative impacts resulting from the expansion of monoculture tree plantations have been observed in the province of Niassa. After visiting some 10 communities in different districts, it became obvious that the main impact from the expansion of the plantations is related with the communities' access to their land. In the first place, the companies are occupying lands in the vicinity of the communities as they are located near the highways and the companies intend to benefit from these highways to facilitate transportation of their harvest. Several communities have had to accept the presence of companies granted concessions by the central Government and, in some cases, at the very most a negotiation took place regarding

where land could be occupied by the company.

Secondly, the communities do not agree with the companies' statement that they are occupying degraded land. The fact is that the communities usually leave cropland fallow for some years after a cycle of plantation. This does not mean that the community has abandoned the land. The plantation of eucalyptus and pine on these lands reduces the future availability of land for the community. It should be noted that 80 % of the province's population lives in rural areas.

Another of the negative impacts is related with employment. This is the argument the companies use to get the communities to accept the plantations, but there are complaints because jobs are only temporary, salaries are very low and transport is not always offered.

In the district of Lichinga and neighbouring districts, the Mozambique National Peasant Union (UNAC) – a member of *Via Campesina* – and the Lichinga Peasant and Associations Union (UCA), are warning rural communities and society in general about such negative impacts. As an alternative, they propose obtaining more support and encouragement for community food production. Finally, as various leaders have affirmed, "no-one eats eucalyptus." Additionally, these Unions are standing up for respect and implementation of the 1997 Land Law in favour of the communities, before the companies start occupying the lands, as this Law guarantees the peasant communities access to the land and its ownership.

By Winnie Overbeek based on an exchange trip to Mozambique conducted in November 2009

[index](#)

- South Africa: Threatened grasslands

Natural forests aren't the only landscapes being taken over by timber plantations. South Africa's biologically diverse native grasslands are being rapidly replaced by water-intensive monocultures including eucalyptus and tropical pine – trees used for paper pulp exports.

We're standing at God's Window, a popular lookout point just at the edge of the Drakensberg escarpment in northeastern South Africa. Below us, a 700-meter cliff plunges into a dark sea of foliage. Mile upon mile of forest fans out ahead, stretching all the way to Kruger National Park on the border with Mozambique.

"The problem is that these aren't forests. They're gigantic monocultures of foreign origin," explains Philip Owen, coordinator for Geosphere, an environmental organization supported by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

When Europeans first arrived here on the low plains, the landscape beneath us was dominated by grassland and savannah, with native forests limited to the river valleys. Today only remnants of this original ecosystem survive.

“Many people see grasslands as uniform landscapes, when they actually contain an enormous range of diversity – 82 plant species per square kilometer and an abundance of insects, birds and small mammals. Only one out of six plant species are grass, whereas most are resilient perennials. In some cases they can survive for thousands of years in one location.”

Over sixty percent of South Africa's grasslands have disappeared and can never be restored. Here in the Mpumalanga province, the process has continued unabated for generations – so long, in fact, that many today regard Australian eucalyptus and tropical Mexican pines as native tree species. The first of these were planted one hundred years ago as a source of timber for the mining industry.

Timber plantations now cover 1.5 million hectares in South Africa, including 600,000 in Mpumalanga. The road stretching from God's Window to the capital of the province, Nelspruit, has the feeling of a forest in northern Sweden. But the perfectly aligned tree rows and exhausted, grayish soil tell another story altogether.

The soil here lacks the microorganisms necessary for pine and eucalyptus leaves to decompose. The canopy above blocks out all light, while the roots stretch down to the water table below.

“These pines absorb 25 liters of water per day, while eucalyptus can consume up to 600. This is significantly more than any of the native tree species,” says Philip Owen.

Philip started Geosphere in 1999 after a large summit on South Africa's water crisis. In many respects, the damage in Mpumalanga has been done. The plantations are here, and the lack of available land limits their expansion. But Geosphere's efforts reach far beyond Mpumalanga, spreading information and influence to the neighboring countries of Mozambique and Swaziland, where exotic tree species are rapidly taking root. In tiny Swaziland, they now cover a full ten percent of the country's area.

“Development is crucial to southern Africa, but additional timber plantations aren't the right model. They don't provide a lot of jobs or income, and they drastically impact water access, biological diversity and social structures.”

Philip is particularly upset that over 80 percent of South Africa's timber plantations have received FSC certification for responsible forestry. To consumers in the north, this picture is misleading. After all, it is here in industrialized countries that most of the timber is consumed.

West of Nelspruit lies South Africa's largest paper mill, Ngodwana. As we drive into the valley, the air is heavy with the stench of sulphate. A yellowish haze of smog surrounds us long before the smokestacks rise on the horizon.

“The water flow is regarded as sufficient for diluting waste to an 'acceptable' level. But this doesn't take into account the fact that periods of drought are becoming longer, and water flow is diminishing.”

The mill produces 500,000 tons of paper pulp annually, most of which is exported. Demand is high, and the mill's owner, the multinational Sappi group, plans to

increase production by 70 percent. Additional raw materials will be supplied in part by converting plantations from pine to eucalyptus, which offers more rapid growth at the expense of increased water consumption. As production increases, employment levels will remain the same.

As South Africa, the Rainbow Nation, struggles for equality between blacks and whites, the working environment here seems to be frozen in time. The black workers live down in the valley, where we visit Bhamgee, a chaotic shantytown lacking so much as roads and basic conveniences. What was once a small village has now grown to accommodate the arrival of prostitutes, who have made their way to the valley at the prospect of a large population of millworkers and transport drivers. Prostitution, HIV and AIDS are now endemic to the area.

Further up the mountainside, higher-ranking employees live in gated communities. As white visitors, we pass by the armed, black security guard without a problem, despite the fact that we have no official reason for our visit. Only white employees can be seen outside the luxury villas, often with two cars parked in the driveway. Green parks separate the houses, giving the impression of an affluent Swedish neighborhood.

Philip Owen was raised under apartheid. He describes his school years in Nelspruit as a form of brainwashing quite different from his experiences at home, where racial lines were often less clear. At Geasphere, whites and blacks work side-by-side. Thirty kilometers away, at Philip's home, I meet Thelma Nkosi and December Ndlovu, both of whom work for the organization.

"The plantations have many negative social effects, and the lack of water affects women most of all. They're forced to walk much further to collect water and wood," explains Thelma.

Life has also become less secure. It is dangerous to pass the plantations, where rapists and criminals often hide. The trees cause erosion, soil depletion and threaten the food supply. At the same time, cultural effects are also evident.

"Our identity is threatened when ritual sites are forced out by plantations. Ancestors' burial places become inaccessible, trees with traditional functions disappear and initiations, among other rites, can no longer take place," explains December.

These experiences in Mpumalanga are important for less wealthy countries such as Mozambique and Angola.

"They're crying out for investments because it's easy to buy into the timber companies' propaganda. The drawbacks aren't noticeable until later on," says Thelma.

Philip's environmental activism was sparked when timber plantations were established on the mountain above Sudwalaskraal. Here Philip lives on the family farm, which was purchased by his grandfather in the 1960s, and is now divided among relatives. The mountainside is covered by native rainforest, the cliffs pocked with three-billion-year-old limestone caves that were inhabited by humans (homo

habilis) as long as 1.8 million years ago. The Sudwala caves are historical and geological wonders that attract throngs of visitors each year.

The effects of the plantations are clearly evident. Today, the caves have dried out and are now watered by hose. The springs that supported the rainforest have disappeared during the dry season.

We hike to the remaining grassland at the top of the mountain. The sunset offers a glimpse of the native landscape's original, sweeping beauty. Philip's wife, Elsmarie, points out rare herbs, grass species and snakes' dens, along with the small pine seedlings that constantly creep in from the dark wall of the plantation on the opposite side of the mountain.

"It's an ongoing battle to prevent the spread of non-native species. In South Africa, as much acreage is covered by tree plantations as by trees that have spread uncontrolled. Pines can be cut down, but to remove eucalyptus you have to poison the roots," explains Philip.

Portions of blackened grasslands testify to recent fires. This needs to happen on a regular basis in order to maintain biodiversity, but when the fires encounter timber plantations the results can be devastating.

"We've recently had severe forest fires that have killed many people. Previously, native trees would store humidity and act as buffers, but now it's too dry. The heat is so extreme that the soil's surface is baked into a hard crust. Rainwater runs off and evaporates instead of seeping into the earth."

The next day we follow December to his hometown, Bushbuck Ridge, where the contrast to the white farms is drastic. Here, one million people live in a sprawling shantytown, often without water or electricity. December supports his family by washing cars in an open shed beside his house.

More than 80 percent of South Africans rely on traditional medicines rather than Western techniques. As the grasslands disappear it becomes increasingly difficult for practitioners to find their raw materials. December takes us to Hilda Calinah Manyike, a trained nganga, or herbal healer. She holds an official license for collecting herbs in national parks and preserves. Her reception hut contains a small pharmacy.

"Before, it was easier to find all the herbs I needed. Now I have to travel long distances to find them, and some are no longer there at all."

Nowadays, Hilda finds it impossible to cure certain ailments such as asthma. Instead, she is forced to send patients to a Western doctor – if they can afford it.

Bushbuck Ridge borders Kruger National Park to the east. Within the park's fences live the same huge animals that once wandered across the low plains and surrounding savannahs.

As we pass through the gate we're forced to brake for a passing herd of elephants. Gnus, giraffes, zebras and a variety of antelope meander along both sides of the road. Here, too, we see baboons, which the forestry companies have exterminated

in the plantations.

We spend the night inside the park. In the darkness I hear elephants crashing about like pieces of enormous lumber machinery. At dawn, a lion roars.

“The biological diversity of these grasslands has supported human life for thousands of years. In the past one hundred years, it’s been completely transformed,” says Philip, who wants to see a global awakening.

“Grasslands like the North American prairie, the Hungarian puszta and the Russian steppes are the most threatened of all types of vegetation. 80 percent are already gone, and are beyond restoration.”

From Swedish Society for Nature Conservation’s magazine “Sveriges Natur”.

[index](#)

- Uruguay: A place where the lies about plantations are all too obvious

Everywhere in the world where large-scale monoculture tree plantations are established, their arrival is preceded by a series of promises used to trick the local population into welcoming these ventures. After a few years have gone by, people start to realize that these promises are not being kept, and that things are actually even worse than before. But by then it is too late. The companies have taken over the area and set up their plantations.

The town of Tranqueras, in the northern Uruguayan department of Rivera, is perhaps one of the most notorious examples of this deception. Before the advent of tree plantations, Tranqueras was known as the “watermelon capital of Uruguay”, because the sandy soil in the surrounding area was ideal for growing this particular crop. Of course, Tranqueras did not live by watermelons alone; a number of other crops as well as livestock were also raised in the area, for the most part on small and medium-sized family farms.

Today Tranqueras has been renamed the “watermelon and forestry capital” of Uruguay, although you would be hard pressed to find a watermelon grown in the area, since all of the suitable soil has been taken over by vast pine plantations. In the town itself there is a large sawmill where the pine timber is processed.

If all of the promises about job creation and development had been true, Tranqueras would be booming today, since the employment generated by the plantations would be combined with the employment provided by the sawmill. This is a far cry from the reality in Tranqueras, however, as the testimonies gathered during a visit to the region in November 2009 reveals:

“There is no sign of the prosperity that the plantations were supposed to bring to Tranqueras. On the contrary, there used to be two banks, two petrol stations, an agricultural cooperative, a rice mill, a pasta factory, a tax office, and other things. Today almost all of that has disappeared. Tranqueras has grown, but in what way? In

the number of people, with unskilled labourers, who earn unskilled labourer wages, and have unskilled labourer mentalities. A population with a primary school education, whose greatest aspiration is to have a tree to prune. Is that progress?" According to the local inhabitants interviewed, 90% of the jobs created by the plantations involve seasonal, unskilled manual labour.

Perhaps the situation can be summed up best by the testimony of a beekeeper, who gives classes in beekeeping as a potential alternative source of income outside the plantation industry. "We have to learn to live with cancer," she said, referring in this way to the pine and eucalyptus plantations. "We have no choice, which is why we have to try to get what we can out of this cancer." In this case, they can merely try to make the best of a bad situation by producing honey, taking advantage of the flowering of the pine tree plantations (which only supply pollen) and the eucalyptus plantations (which are better suited for honey production, but are relatively scarce in the area).

Referring to the plantations as a cancer is a particularly apt metaphor, given the fact that their spread has severely affected the health of local ecosystems and the survival of the local population.

Every person interviewed, without exception, stressed the impact of the plantations on the water supply. One local resident noted that "the streams and rivers are shrinking and wells dug eight to ten metres down have gone dry." Another reported, "It is plain to see that the soil is drying up. Areas that used to be marshes are now dry and you can drive over them in a car."

The scarcity of water makes it impossible to grow any other crops, and people find themselves forced to sell their land... to the very plantation companies that caused the problem. For example, there are some local residents who would like to start up an organic vegetable farm, "but the problem is that we have no water. Twenty-metre-deep wells have gone dry, and today you have to dig semi-artesian wells, 60 metres deep, which costs at least 4,000 US dollars." Watermelon farming has disappeared as well, "because there is nowhere to plant them and because there is no water."

What's more, the little water left is contaminated, both by the toxic agrochemicals used on the tree plantations and by the enormous amount of pollen produced by the pine trees, which all end up in the area's waterways. One person told us that "the water is poisoned. I know someone who rented a field near the plantation and he had to give it up because the animals wouldn't drink the water, and if they did, they died." A local government representative from Tranqueras described the situation this way: "When they start up a plantation, the first thing they do is kill everything that's living. Work teams head out with containers of poison and a spoon, 14 or 15 people working about seven metres apart; every five steps or so they stop and dump a spoonful of poison. And so the whole countryside is filled with poison, and when it rains the poison gets washed into the waterways and leaks into the aquifer. Around two years ago – I don't know if it was from an overload of pine pollen or because of these poisons or because of very low temperatures – a lot of fish suddenly died."

The pollen problem "is terrible in July and August and up until September. It gets in everywhere, under the doors, all over the furniture, in pails of water, which turns to

slime. You see dead fish in the river covered with a layer of pollen,” recounted a local resident. “There are a lot of cases of conjunctivitis and allergies caused by the pine pollen,” added another.

As for other species of flora, “under the pine trees nothing survives, everything dies.” This problem is especially obvious to beekeepers, whose bees have access to nothing but pine and eucalyptus trees for producing honey.

With regard to fauna, there have been serious impacts resulting from both the use of toxic agrochemicals and the alteration of local ecosystems. “Partridges, armadillos, lizards, etc., etc., they all died from the agrochemicals sprayed on the plantations, sometimes from planes,” reported a local resident. In the meantime, other animals have migrated to the area. Wild boars have become a veritable plague, to the extent that “you can’t keep sheep anymore.” “Boars can cover up to 50 kilometres in one night, and there are people who start out with 90 sheep and end up with 15 because of the boars, which sometimes even attack calves. The problem gets worse every year, and while there are usually around five or ten boars in a herd, you sometimes see as many as 50.” There has also been an upsurge in the fox population, which has obviously had an impact on livestock production. Native bird species like owls have also disappeared, as a result of poisonous chemicals and other changes in the ecosystem. According to one person interviewed, “there is a kind of beetle that the owls used to eat but now they have turned into a plague because of the disappearance of the owls.”

From a social viewpoint, the expansion of tree plantations has led to the expulsion of the rural population. A local resident told us, “Before the plantations there were around 200 families living in the countryside and there was a school with around 100 kids. Now, after the plantations came, there are 150 abandoned houses and the school was left with four students, and finally shut down.” One former rural resident recounted how the plantation company offered to buy his land for more than its market value, and he decided to sell. He moved to the town and tried to get a job on the plantation. Things did not turn out as planned: the money from the sale of his land was “eaten up” by basic living expenses and he ended up in the urban poverty belt that has grown up around Tranqueras.

When it comes to employment, not only do the jobs on the plantations pay extremely meagre wages (“barely enough to eat”), but salaries for sawmill workers are equally poor. “You leave for work first thing in the morning, at 6:00, and get home at 6:30 in the evening, and we make 10,000 pesos [roughly 500 dollars] a month, the same as 10 years ago,” commented one sawmill worker.

The fact that tree plantations are now almost the only source of employment in the area makes many people hesitant to speak out against the industry. As a local family farmer explained, “The people who have work don’t complain. But when it comes to people who don’t depend on the plantations, they all complain.”

After more than 20 years of plantation-based “development”, the “forestry capital of Uruguay” has just one paved street – the town’s main street – and it does not even have sidewalks. This means people are forced to walk on the road, running the risk of being hit by a car or truck.

The situation is concisely summarized by the following comments from local residents: "How have the people benefited? People had to leave the countryside and move to the city. Some of them work on the plantations, not because they like it, but because there's nothing else. The benefits are for the people who come from the outside and for people who have money. The young people here have no future." "The cost of living has gone up, buying power has gone down, and there are more poor people now."

To the disgrace of those who continue to support the FSC certification scheme, the plantations owned by the leading forestry company in the area (FYMNSA) have been FSC certified for years. Meanwhile, transnational forestry giant Weyerhaeuser is in the process of obtaining the FSC "green label" for its plantations here through the certification company SGS, which is slated to conduct its main evaluation during the last week of January 2010. Given the FSC's past record in Uruguay, there is little doubt that the granting of the FSC label will be a mere formality, and the people of Tranqueras will not only have to "learn to live with cancer," but also put up with its greenwashing.

Source: Testimonies from interviews conducted by Grupo Guayubira in November 2009

[index](#)

- What is behind the term "Planted Forests"

The term "planted forests" was coined by FAO with the aim of placing tree plantations on the same level as forests. Gradually it has spread and been assimilated by many international and national organizations, while multinational corporations from the forestry sector have taken advantage of this to emphasize the matching, as was evident at the latest World Forestry Congress, held in Argentina in October 2009.

To consider a forest and a tree plantation as synonymous in addition to not making sense could also be termed as an aberration - they have little or nothing in common except for the presence of trees and even so the difference is enormous as most of the trees in tree plantations are alien species and, in most cases -except for economic reasons- are more damaging than beneficial to the environment. This does not stop us from being bombarded with their ecological advantages centred mainly on the reduction of atmospheric pollution produced by carbon dioxide.

So, if the environmental advantages are not that substantial, what is behind this equation? Only and exclusively a big business, boosted by the forestry sector companies that have no qualms in admitting it, but of course with a green-wash or eco-wash which currently sells well.

What we are saying is not a product of our invention, nor of our eco-egocentric "radicalism," or even of our "ignorance," as some malicious self-interested people would call us, with the sole purpose of keeping certain interests in the running. What we are stating is reflected in the Conclusions and Strategic Actions of the Buenos

Aires Declaration, made at the Thirteenth World Forestry Congress [held from 18 to 23 October 2009 in Argentina]. This Declaration suggests carrying out certain actions:

- * Implement mechanisms for cross-sectoral monitoring and reporting to influence policies and actions related to forestry.
- * Promote land tenure reform providing secure rights to communities and local stakeholders to use and manage forest resources.
- * Develop financing strategies within the framework of national forest programmes using innovative instruments for investment and market development in forestry.
- * Focus immediately on climate change related mechanisms as the first priority with particular attention to REDD issues.
- * Recognize the importance of planted forests in meeting economic, social and environmental needs.
- * Focus activities on degraded landscapes, especially restoration of degraded forest lands.
- * Develop and implement technologies to maintain and enhance the productivity of planted forests and their contributions at local and landscape levels.

That is to say, on the one hand, to fight against any idea opposing forest plantations now that, on a world level, a broad opposition movement has arisen, firmly opposing the matching of forests with tree plantations, while involving the struggles of indigenous peoples to keep their native forests as a source of life and well-being. This idea is closely linked with that of bearing on governments to establish laws making land acquisition more flexible and to finance their plans – not a hard thing to achieve on their part. From the present 7% tree plantation coverage, that is to say 270 million hectares, their intention is to reach 30% by the year 2030.

The excuses are well thought out: “The importance these plantations have in reducing CO₂,” especially at this time of great social concern over climate change and its effects, as reflected in one of the items they establish as a priority.

With recognition of the importance of “planted forests,” that is to say tree plantations, a more appropriate term, the intention is to make forest equate with plantation, thus allowing forests and all the species going to make up this ecosystem to be replaced by plantations of any kind of tree species although lacking in forest dynamics and placing them in the same category. But this does not work, it cannot be sold, so they refine the idea and set it out more skilfully, launching the idea that “monoculture plantations are a way of controlling deforestation and helping to counteract the pressure generally exerted on primary forests.” This idea is hard to maintain if, as we have seen, the plan is to increase by 23% fast-growing tree plantations in the next 21 years and if, for this expansion, the use of abandoned farm land is not feasible (although not rejected) because “degraded” forest lands are preferred (namely, forests in various stages of regrowth). We should not forget that for increased output, the introduction of genetically modified species is an option.

In fact, the 205 companies from all around the world present at the Thirteenth World Forestry Congress, did business amounting to 36 million dollars with the Congress serving to “strengthen the sector’s private trade networks placing them at the forefront of the new challenges and trade opportunities opening up in forest trade.” No country

is safe from these plans -including ours, where forestry companies and their associations intend to share out the further 3.8 million hectares the government wants to plant over the coming 30 years within the National Forestry Plan and thus apply for their share in the budgets allocated for this purpose. It is not in vain that the most usual complaint made by forest producer associations to the various administrations is their slowness in this matter. .

But there is always a match, and in response to plans to invade the world with tree plantations, voices are being raised on an international level forcefully opposing them, and many of these voices are organized within the World Rainforest Movement. In Spain the struggle against the destruction of native forests and the introduction of alien species has always been one of the ecologist movement's premises. We are now facing new challenges that have to be met and the first one is to take apart the idea that a "planted forest," that is to say a plantation, is a synonym for Forest.

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[index](#)
