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OUR VIEWPOINT

- COP 17 in Durban: From pessimism to optimistic signs

What can we expect from the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban?

Could it be that at this meeting, the world's governments – and especially those of the countries that have historically created the most pollution – will finally be willing to reach a binding agreement, if only because the first period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012? Could it be that this agreement will make the second decade of the

21st century a “turning point” in history, in the sense of ushering in the beginning of profound changes in the currently predominant industrial model of production and consumption? Could it be that significant cuts in emissions will be established for the countries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, so that the global temperature will not rise above the levels that would signify drastic impacts for humanity? Could it be that the environmental debt owed by the countries of the North to the countries of the South will finally be recognized? And could it be that the world's remaining fossil fuel reserves will be left underground?

Or perhaps, instead, what will prevail this decade is an agreement with no binding commitments, leaving everything open to the transnational corporations and the carbon market, dominated by the strategy of viewing forests and monoculture tree plantations as carbon stocks through REDD+ projects? With “adaptation” funds administered by international financial institutions historically responsible for financing pollution and environmental destruction, like the World Bank? With the vision that the “green” economy or “green” capitalism, in addition to serving as an opportunity for a new cycle of accumulation of capital and profits, will be our “salvation”, “ratifying” the right of a small few to continue polluting more at the expense of the majority?

If we look at our governments and what they have done at international negotiations in recent years in Copenhagen and Cancún, where they address problems that affect us all, we cannot help but feel pessimistic.

At the same time, however, there are optimistic signs if we direct our attention to what has been done by the world's peoples, who are not only feeling the effects of the climate crisis, but also the effects of a much wider crisis. A crisis with economic, social, political, cultural and even ethical and moral dimensions. This notion has already inspired the climate justice movement to adopt the slogan, “Change the system, not the climate!”

If we look back over the last year on the side of the peoples, we see that many people, and especially young people, have taken to the streets. From the Arab world to Europe to the United States and many other countries in between, there have been mobilizations that have sometimes gathered over a million participants together. Take for instance the small South American country of Chile, held up as an example of the “success” of neoliberal policies, where the people are demanding free, quality public education. Also significant is the fact that thousands of people have taken to the streets to protest against the international financial system, even on Wall Street.

Judging by the stances they have adopted, and the repressive measures they have used, it would appear that our governments are afraid of the people who elected them. A prime example is what happened recently when the Greek government suggested organizing a referendum to consult the population on whether or not it agreed with a new European Union “bailout” plan. Both the leaders of the European Union and the stock markets were gripped by panic at the mere thought of consulting the public and, even worse, the possibility of being forced to abide by the opinion of the majority of the population of a sovereign nation! They were frightened by the prospect of a government making use of a valid tool for participatory democracy.

Large-scale mobilizations and marches also took place in the struggle for climate justice in Copenhagen and Cancún, in addition to the major conference on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth held in Cochabamba in 2010, a participatory and dynamic meeting that gathered together more than 35,000 participants, who contributed to creating a profound final declaration symbolically entitled The People's Agreement. In Durban there will once again be thousands of people taking part in demonstrations.

Nevertheless, these massive popular mobilizations and the demands and positions they have put forward in clear opposition to what governments have done until now have not yet succeeded in “overthrowing” the “dictatorial regimes” of the transnational corporations from the oil industry and other sectors, the big conservationist NGOs that preach market-based environmentalism, and the other consultants, speculators and experts who are more interested in the profits to be gained from the carbon business than in the future of humanity.

But why have we gone from talking about Durban and the climate to discussing more wide-ranging struggles, like those waged by the people of the Arab world or Chile? What do these struggles have to do with demonstrations around climate conferences? They are all completely tied together. All of these people, and especially the young, have taken to the streets to demand better living conditions for all and social justice. They are protesting against the currently dominant system which, now more than ever, aggravates social and environmental inequalities, and deprives the majority of the world's young people of any prospects for the future.

The system against which all of them are directly or indirectly struggling has cleverly managed to fragment the different issues of social and environmental injustice, while turning a deaf ear to proposals of alternative paths that often involve very simple and easily feasible measures. And this has also served to divide and fragment protests and resistance struggles.

It is up to us to tackle the great challenge of overcoming this fragmentation, as we head towards Durban and, after that, the Rio+20 conference in 2012, in order to build a more unified and thus stronger movement to fight for social and environmental justice. This is fundamental, if we want our governments to start listening to us and taking action.

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CLIMATE BUSINESS

- Climate change, supposedly renewable energy and biomass

Since time immemorial, human beings have used biomass to produce energy in a sustainable way. In the meantime, industrialization is exhausting the world's reserves

of fossil fuels, leading to the frenetic search for other sources of energy. One of these is bioenergy, based on the production of energy from living matter, or biomass.

Biomass is organic material such as trees, shrubs, grasses, grains, algae, microbes and also plant residues.

The Kyoto Protocol and related agreements have given rise to policies in Europe such as the Renewable Energy Directive, adopted by the European Parliament in December 2008. The goal of the directive is to diversify energy sources, but also to open up new globalized markets for European agroindustry. It automatically led to an industrial-scale bioenergy boom in many countries on the continent.

Today, two thirds of the so-called renewable energy consumed in the EU comes from biomass. Other renewable energies – such as solar, wind and hydro power – account for only one third. The European Commission has set a target for 14% of all of the European Union's energy to be generated from biomass by 2020. The raw material will not necessarily be waste – as is frequently claimed – but also wood, as well as vegetable oils and biogas. At the same time, 75% of subsidies for renewable energies are allocated to biomass and biofuels, while the remainder are divided between solar and wind energy.

This is all happening behind the backs of the general public. The information they are provided with is biased towards selling the benefits of the “green economy”, which is merely a means of pursuing the continuation of unlimited growth instead of adopting concrete measures to promote energy saving and efficiency.

“Renewable” means that something is constantly replaced by new growth, while “sustainable” refers to activities that can be continued without a negative impact on the environment. But contrary to the claims that are often made, neither of these concepts applies to the globalized economy and the massive and ever growing use of energy, nor to the environmental and social impacts of this economic model.

The supposed benefits of the generation of electricity from forest biomass are the unlimited availability of wood, the use of forest residues from tree pruning and forest maintenance, and the “clean” or carbon-neutral production involved.

But let's not kid ourselves: there are nowhere near enough forest residues to meet the demand from all of the biomass power plants that are being built. Worldwide production of wood pellets was around 10 million tons in 2008, and this is expected to double in the next four to five years. The UK-based organization Biofuelwatch predicts annual worldwide growth of 25% to 30% in the next ten years. This huge increase in the demand for wood to produce electricity will have a major impact on forests in Europe, North America and Russia, and will force many countries to import the raw materials from countries in the global South.

The demand for wood for electricity and heat generation is expected to reach 700 million cubic metres annually in Europe. The timber industry (for example, for furniture manufacturing) and pulp and paper production already require 500 million cubic

metres of wood annually. This has led FAO to predict that by 2020, Europe will face a dramatic shortfall of some 400 million cubic metres of wood annually.

The demand for imported wood has led to a race for the control and use of productive land, and the displacement of indigenous and peasant communities from the forests to make way for companies that produce wood-based industrial raw materials. The carbon neutrality of this activity is also questionable, since it is not based on any scientific evidence, but rather on calculations designed to serve its interests.

Countries like Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany are witnessing unprecedented development in large-scale biomass energy production. In the United Kingdom, for example, the demand for biomass will be around 50 to 60 million tons annually to supply the numerous biomass power plants that are either planned, under construction or already operating. But the United Kingdom only produces between eight and nine million tons of dry biomass a year. Conclusion: it will need to import the rest.

What is presented to the public as a benign and beneficial shift from fossil fuel to renewable energy is in fact a global plunder of the South's natural resources for the benefit of the North, which will further deepen injustice and worsen poverty and hunger.

By Guadalupe Rodríguez, Rainforest Rescue, guadalupe@regenwald.org

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- Liberia: The case of Vattenfall – African timber to save the climate in Germany?

The Swedish state-owned multinational Vattenfall is Europe's fifth largest energy producer. Its affiliate Vattenfall Europe, based in Berlin, is one of the four biggest companies in the German energy market. Vattenfall's energy production there is primarily fuelled by coal (65%) – it has its own lignite mines in east Germany – and uranium (26%). But the company has also branched out into the use of supposedly “clean” energy sources, like wood. According to its website, Vattenfall has more than 40 heat and power plants in Europe fuelled in full or in part by biomass, and calls itself “one of the world's leading companies in the sector.” (1) It consumes more than three million tons of biomass annually, of which 60% consists of domestic and industrial waste, and 30% consists of by-products from the forest industry.

For years, Vattenfall has been considered one of the “black sheep” of the German energy market, because of its high consumption of coal and the exploitation of its lignite mines, as well as its nuclear plants and the frequent accidents that occur there. It has been the target of repeated protests by citizens and environmental NGOs, as was the case when it planned to build a new coal-fired power plant in Berlin. On that occasion, the company changed its plans and announced in March 2009 that it would instead build two biomass electric power plants and two natural gas power plants. The Senate of Berlin and the environmental community were pleased with the

decision and congratulated the company.(2)

On October 8, 2009, Vattenfall Europe and the Senate of Berlin signed a Climate Protection Agreement aimed at a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions in Berlin by 2020.

(3) Biomass plays a key role in this strategy, by helping the city to fulfil its commitments to protecting the climate, at least on paper. The company will build one of the biggest biomass power plants in Europe in Berlin, with a total capacity of 190 megawatts (MW), in addition to a smaller plant (32 MW) and co-firing (260 MW) in four already existing coal-fuelled plants that are also included in the project.

Over the following months, more details about the plans slowly leaked out to the public and the first doubts were raised about how the necessary biomass would be sourced. In May 2010 Vattenfall stated that its plants in Berlin would require 1.3 million tons of woody biomass annually, more than three times the amount initially announced (400,000 tons a year). Since then it has become fully obvious that it is impossible to obtain all of this biomass in the region.

In Berlin and the federal state of Brandenburg, which surrounds the city, there are already 42 biomass power plants, which combined with the timber and pulp and paper industries consume practically all of the woody biomass available. Vattenfall claims that it will primarily use wood waste products such as Christmas trees, the residues from pruning trees in urban parks, etc. In addition, it has suggested the establishment of plantations of fast-growing trees, and has identified some 300,000 hectares around Berlin for potential use for this purpose. It should be mentioned that south of the city there are already vast industrial monoculture pine plantations, incorrectly classified as forests.

However, in late February 2010, the media reported on an agreement signed by Vattenfall with Buchanan Renewables in Liberia to purchase and import a million tons of rubber tree wood chips from this African country. (4) On June 9, 2010, the German NGO Rainforest Rescue (Rettet den Regenwald) launched a protest action on its German-language website, which was signed by 21,433 people. (5) But one week later, Vattenfall AB of Stockholm announced that it had acquired a 20% share in Buchanan Renewables for 20 million euro, while the Swedish state-owned investment company Swedfund had acquired an additional 10% share. (6)

In the following months, an ever growing number of voices spoke out in criticism. Beginning in the autumn of 2010, the NGO Powershift organized public hearings and distributed a video about the Vattenfall project in Liberia. (7) Vattenfall and the Senate of Berlin contracted the consulting firm IFEU and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to assess the possibilities of certifying the project under different “green labels”. The resulting study confirmed numerous problems, limitations and conflicts. (8) Nevertheless, it reached the conclusion that certification was possible under the FSC, ISCC, PEFC and RSB schemes.

On April 15, 2011, Vattenfall Europe and the Senate of Berlin signed an “Agreement on Sustainability in Biomass Sourcing”.(9) The document is a smokescreen. It contains no concrete data or measures defining how this alleged “sustainability” will be ensured. Vattenfall and its partners claim that two thirds of the rubber trees in

Liberia are old and unproductive and must be replaced. Harvesting this timber would generate income for the population and hard currency revenues for the country. And in spite of having to transport this biomass 6,000 kilometres from Liberia to Germany, it would supposedly continue to contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Buchanan Renewables was founded in 2008 by North American investors, among them Canadian billionaire John McCall MacBain. Initially, the company harvested trees from the smallholdings of peasant farmers. Many of them had planted rubber trees along the borders of their farms to demarcate their landholdings: a common practice in a country where few people hold title deeds to their properties. The company's harvesting of trees gave rise to numerous problems and discontent among the local population. The business was conducted primarily on the basis of rather unclear verbal agreements, and conflicts arose over arbitrariness in terms of the species and volume of trees harvested, destruction of neighbouring fields of crops, lack of payment, etc.

Negotiating with hundreds of individual small farmers – each one of them the owner of a small number of harvestable trees – is not an easy task, and would make it difficult to acquire the large volume of timber planned for. This led Buchanan Renewables to begin mechanized harvesting on the industrial rubber tree plantations of the Japanese-US multinational Bridgestone/Firestone, near Kakata, where Bridgestone/Firestone manages the largest rubber tree plantation in the world.

The situation in Liberia

After years of dictatorship and two civil wars, Liberia is currently one of the poorest countries in the world. The economy is largely dependent on the export of iron ore, rubber and timber. There are approximately 260,000 hectares of industrial rubber tree plantations in the country. Local NGOs like SAMFU (10) and UN reports (11) Describe disastrous working and social conditions on the plantations, especially those run by Bridgestone/Firestone. There are charges of, among other abuses, child labour, violence and a general absence of legality. In addition, around 200,000 hectares of rainforest are logged every year.

The primary energy source for families in Liberia is woody biomass, in the form of firewood and charcoal. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 99.5% of households cook with firewood. The rainforests, mangroves and old rubber trees are the main sources. The supply is basically met by thousands of informal firewood collectors and small-scale sellers. Local activists report that in the last two years there has been a sharp rise in the prices of firewood and charcoal.

The Ministry of Energy of Liberia stated in its 2007 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy and Action Plan (12) that “scarcity of firewood is becoming a serious problem in most parts of Liberia, especially in Montserrado County [around the capital, Monrovia]. Nationally, Liberia is harvesting well above the level that can be sustained annually without depleting the current stock and degrading the environment. (...) The use of woody biomass as a source of energy will increase in relation to rural population growth and poverty. If this demand is not met in a sustainable manner, it will eventually lead to deforestation, environmental

degradation and probably desertification in Liberia.”

The supply of electric power is almost non-existent in Liberia. Those who have the means to do so rely on their own small gasoil-powered generators, an inefficient and highly polluting way to produce electricity. However, there are government plans to reconstruct the electric power grid. In January 2009, Buchanan Renewables was awarded the concession to build and manage a 34 MW biomass-fired power plant to supply electric power to the capital, Monrovia. (13) According to the concession contract, the estimated capital cost of the project was 149 million dollars. The biomass to be used for the project was wood from old rubber trees. Nevertheless, almost three years later, construction work has yet to begin, and Liberia remains without electricity. On the other hand, since 2009, Buchanan Renewables has begun to export rubber tree wood chips to Europe.

The Vattenfall project in Liberia is the first of this kind in Germany, but it is setting off all the alarms. The large-scale use of biomass can hardly be met by local sources, and this directly leads to global markets and large industrial plantations. The massive expansion of biomass use further diminishes the possibility of implementing truly sustainable solutions, such as energy saving and efficiency. Instead, the pretext of the energy crisis and climate change are being used to allow corporations to gain greater control over land, water, biodiversity, agriculture... and life.

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You can take part in weekly protest actions on cases like these by email. Find out more by visiting <http://www.rainforest-rescue.org/>

(1) <http://www.vattenfall.com/en/biomass-energy.htm>

(2) <http://www.taz.de/1/berlin/artikel/1/vattenfall-gibt-endlich-gas/>

(3)

<http://www.berlin.de/sen/umwelt/klimaschutz/aktiv/vereinbarung/vattenfall/index.shtml>

(4) <http://www.nanews.net/MAIN.asp?ID=3578>

(5) <http://www.regenwald.org/mailalert/590/berlin-tropenholzverbrennung-in-kraftwerken-von-vattenfall>

(6) http://www.vattenfall.com/en/press-kit-biomass.htm?WT.ac=search_success

(7) <http://power-shift.de/?p=151>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEfpBmPCvdA>

(8) http://www.berlin.de/sen/umwelt/klimaschutz/aktiv/vereinbarung/download/IFEU_nachhaltiges_Holz_VattenfallSenGUV.pdf

(9) http://www.berlin.de/sen/umwelt/klimaschutz/aktiv/vereinbarung/download/nh-vereinbarung_vattenfall.pdf

(10) SAMFU, 2008: The heavy load – A demand for fundamental changes on the Bridgestone/Firestone rubber plantation in Liberia, <http://www.laborrights.org/sites/default/files/publications-and-resources/The%20Heavy%20Load.pdf>

(11) UN Mission in Liberia, 2006: Human Rights in Liberia's Rubber Plantations: Tapping into the Future. http://unmil.org/documents/human_rights_liberiarubber.pdf

(12) Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, June 2007: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy and Action Plan, Monrovia, Liberia, pp. 3-4, http://www.reeep.org/file_upload/5272_tmpphp5vFwxs.pdf

- The new trend of biomass plantations in Brazil: tree monocultures

A new expansion cycle: carbon and biomass plantations

Within the context of Brazil's efforts to be a global economic power, a report was brought out by the Secretary of Strategic Affairs of the new government, under president Dilma Rousseff, which the Brazilian media got access in March this year. It announced that the new governmental policy is to more than double the tree plantation area in Brazil to 15 million hectares, increasing Brazil's market share from US\$ 7 billion to US\$ 25 billion. While the first expansion cycle aimed especially at pulp and paper production, this time the government aims to expand plantations for different purposes. The pressing issue is that billions of subsidies are needed to achieve this aim, more than the government itself is willing to contribute.

In this sense, the international focus on the climate crisis came as a very welcome alternative angle for the corporative sector and the government to use to open the door to new subsidies, especially for 'renewable' carbon plantations, with doubtful climate benefits. For example, the Plantar company in the state of Minas Gerais has been a pioneer in offering carbon credits through a CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) project based on renewable eucalyptus tree plantations, ironically destined to be burnt again, emitting back into the atmosphere all the CO₂ that was stored. The resulting charcoal is the energy source for Plantar's pig iron industry.

Another example is the efforts of companies like Fibria and Suzano Papel e Celulose to sell carbon credits from the carbon stored in its plantations on the voluntary carbon market through the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX), a stock exchange to commercialise carbon credits, founded in 2003. Once again, this mechanism is about a temporary carbon storage, not a permanent one, which is what is needed to combat the climate crisis. Another way that the Brazilian government has attempted to get subsidies is to get a new instrument improved at UNFCCC level called 'forests in exhaustion'. This instrument would guarantee that the older tree plantations receive money from the carbon market to guarantee the replanting of these plantations.

One of the latest developments is the plan to implement large-scale eucalyptus tree monoculture plantations for biomass wood production in the Northeast of Brazil by the company Suzano Papel e Celulose. Suzano is a private company that has been operating for 85 years. It is the second largest eucalyptus wood pulp producer in the world, with five pulp mills in Brazil, located in the states of São Paulo and Bahia, which produced 2.7 million tons of pulp and paper in 2008. Nowadays it controls 722 thousand hectares of land with 324 thousand hectares of eucalyptus plantations, in the states of Bahia, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Tocantins and Maranhão. Suzano has ambitious plans to increase its pulp and paper production to 7.2 million tons with three new industrial complexes: one in each of the Northeastern

states of Maranhão and Piauí, and a third one that still has not been decided on.

Suzano's biomass plantations

Suzano also has even more ambitious plans: to invest in a new type of plantation - biomass plantations. In order to achieve this plan, in mid-2010 the Suzano Group created a new company called Suzano Energia Renovável (Suzano Renewable Energy). The proposed investment amounts to US\$ 1.3 billion, and includes five wood pallet production units, with a total production capacity of 5 million tons of biomass fuel. The first phase includes land acquisitions and the construction of three wood pallet production units, producing 1 million tons each, which would start operating in 2013. Suzano expects a liquid income of US\$ 500 million in 2014, and already has guaranteed sales contracts for 2.7 million tons. A non-binding 'memory of understanding' was signed between Suzano and the UK company MGT Power Ltd. in August 2010.

No public information is available about where exactly the biomass plantations will be located in the Northeast of Brazil and how many hectares will be necessary, however, field trials with eucalyptus and acacia were carried out in Piauí and Maranhão in 2009. The company's director, André Dorf, declared in 2010: "the lands have already been prospected and the acquisition process must take place still this year", stressing also that the Northeast "(...) has our preference because of the proximity of important ports which facilitates the flow of the production, once our aim is supplying the European continent".

Biomass plantations are very different from wood pulp plantations. The rotation cycle is two to three years instead of the seven years that is normally used, and the trees will be planted more densely. Different from wood pulp and paper production, which aims for a maximum of cellulose (to be transformed into pulp) and a minimum of lignin (the 'glue' of the tree), the plantations for 'energetic' purposes aim for a maximum of lignin. According to the director André Dorf, around 30 thousand hectares are necessary for producing 1 million tons of wood pellets. Considering the aim of Suzano to produce 5 million tons of wood pellets, a total of 150 thousand hectares of land is therefore needed.

Problems are already happening in the Northeast of Brazil with Suzano's land acquisitions for eucalyptus plantations for pulp production. This is a region where, for example, traditional quilombola communities still struggle to get the rights over their traditional territories recognised. Inaldo Serejo, coordinator from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in Maranhão, affirms in an interview that "there is an expansion going on in Maranhão, for example, of companies like Suzano Papel e Celulose that has been buying immense land areas, occupied by traditional communities, to plant eucalyptus". Therefore, an increase in problems can be expected with the further expansion of new biomass plantations.

Resistance to biomass monoculture in Brazil

The Movement of Small Peasants (MPA), one of the major rural peasants' movements in the Northeast of Brazil, and members of Via Campesina Brazil have

been struggling for years against tree monoculture expansion in Brazil, through demonstrations and other protest actions. Raul Krauser from the national coordination of the MPA explains the reasons of their resistance struggle: "We already have bitterly accumulated a list of impacts on the lives of peasants from eucalyptus monoculture expansion: acquisition of big unproductive farms that should be destined to agrarian land reform; rise in land prices in the whole region; the companies are fencing [in] the peasant communities and put pressure on them to sell their lands; families get scared of staying isolated in a plantation area and because of the persecution of the companies, together with local elites, they sell their lands; local economies go worse, increase in hunger, violence and social degradation; organisations that oppose to this expansion are criminalised by the companies and by the 'Brazilian state' that gives subsidies, fiscal incentives, economical, military, juridical and also moral support, creating an image that who is against these mega-projects is against development. Considering the fragility of the caatinga biome, the previews of climate change in the region, (..), the impacts in the Northeast will be undoubtedly much worse and the proportions of the disaster much bigger than we have seen in other regions of the country. There is a tendency that peasant communities will be destroyed, what will immediately mean a decrease in food production, threatening the local food supply, therefore the society as a whole will be affected."

Krauser continues affirming that: "We are strongly against this expansion, once if the burning of wood is considered less polluting, the production of the wood is highly dangerous and bad for the life of peasants and other communities, bad for the development of the country. We have enough cases that prove sufficiently that where tree monocultures enter, also hunger, misery, social inequalities increase. So-called sustainable development does not go together with tree monocultures in tropical countries. What the companies tell is not more than an illusion."

According to the latest information from the Suzano website, it is stated in the report of the first trimester of 2011 that "The company is evaluating alternatives for structuring of capital for Suzano Energia Renovavel", a sign that the company has still not found enough financial support to fully implement the project.

Final remarks on the implications of biomass monoculture

As the Brazilian experience with industrial tree monocultures shows, there is a huge potential for conflicts wherever this model is expanded. In the case of the Northeast, major concerns are the direct and indirect expelling of local peasant populations by up to 150 thousand hectares of plantations and, besides, the loss of water resources through the fast-growing plantations. As a matter of fact, these would probably be the first commercial plantations with such a short rotation cycle in Brazil and worldwide. And all this in a region, the Northeast of Brazil, traditionally affected by heavy drought periods.

This example shows, once again, that the only way to start solving the global climate crisis is by drastically cutting carbon emissions in the North. Implementing large-scale monoculture tree plantations within a conventional agricultural model, and transporting wood pallets over the ocean for power stations in the UK, is just another

false solution, whilst simultaneously creating new problems for local communities in the Northeast of Brazil.

Article adapted from original article with the same title, written by Winnie Overbeek and published on-line by Corporate Watch (www.corporatewatch.org)

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- CDM does not reduce emissions. Leaving fossil fuels in the ground does

Last month, I was in Bangkok for a meeting about carbon markets in southeast Asia. It was ironic to be discussing a false solution to climate change when large areas of Thailand were underwater and floods were threatening the capital. (While we cannot say that this particular flood was caused by climate change, we can say that this type of flood will become more common as the planet continues to warm.)

The Bangkok meeting was organised by (CDM-Watch and Focus on the Global South with participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Burma and Cambodia. The meeting highlighted two distinct problems with CDM projects:

1. Because CDM is a carbon trading mechanism, it does not reduce emissions; and
2. Several CDM projects are in themselves destructive and create serious impacts for local communities and their environments.

“The CDM has never been designed to reduce emissions,” said Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi of Focus on the Global South. “Even worse is that there are no measures in place that address negative environmental and social impacts.”

For several years, International Rivers has been monitoring how CDM hydropower projects are not additional, because they would have gone ahead anyway, without assistance from the CDM. At the Bangkok meeting, Carl Middleton, of Chulalongkorn University, spoke about the Kamchay Dam in Cambodia, which is currently under validation as a CDM project. Financing for the project was secured in 2006 from the China Exim Bank and construction of the dam is expected to be finished this year. “It is impossible to assume that this project is additional,” Middleton commented. The dam will flood 2,000 hectares of lands including part of the Bokor National Park. “No intention has been communicated to address the severe environmental impacts it will cause,” Middleton added.

International Rivers maintains a database of hydropower projects in the CDM project pipeline. As of 29 October 2011, 1975 hydro projects with an installed capacity of 86,439 MW had applied for CDM credits, more than two-thirds of which are in China.

Nichakan Yuenyao is a local researcher from a community affected by a biomass power project in Surin Province in Thailand. She spoke at the meeting about the impacts that the community is suffering as a result of this supposedly “clean

development” project. She explained that air pollution from the project was a problem, leading to lung diseases and skin problems. One villager told her he has to keep his doors and windows closed all day in an attempt to keep the dust out of his house. Noise is also a problem and after four years of operation, the biomass plant has affected villagers' water supplies.

Another speaker was Patrick Bürgi, one of the co-founders of carbon trading company South Pole Carbon Asset Management. “Some of these environmental impacts could be easily addressed, for example by adding dust nets or sprinkling water,” he said. “The problem is that there is no enforcement mechanism in place.” Which is quite an admission, coming from a proponent of CDM projects.

During his presentation, Bürgi explained that, “CDM is about money transferred from the developed world to the developing world to finance projects that will help climate change mitigation.” Since this is not true, I asked Bürgi to confirm that in fact CDM does not reduce emissions, because it is a carbon trading mechanism. While emissions may be reduced in one place, selling carbon credits allows pollution elsewhere to continue. CDM is “at its best a zero sum game”, as then-chair of the CDM Executive Board, Lex de Jonge put it in 2009.

In addition to Bürgi, the panel included Bo Riisgaard Pedersen of the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy and Sudeep Kodialbail of SGS a CDM Designated Operational Entity. Although they nodded while I was asking the question, they were somewhat reluctant to acknowledge in so many words that CDM does not reduce emissions. Eventually Kodialbail acknowledged the point (sort of). “If you look at the UNFCCC website, it's very interesting when you read it because they don't use the word reduce, they use the word stabilise,” he said.

Hearing this, I jumped up. “It doesn't reduce,” I shouted. “Can we have this in big letters? CDM does not reduce emissions. It's true. CDM does not reduce emissions. Can we all agree?”

It turns out that we could agree. “You are quite right saying that CDM as such does not lead to net reduction of emissions,” Bürgi replied.

For me, the highlight of the meeting came towards the end when Jerome Whittington of the National University of Singapore talked about a proposal that he and colleagues are working on for a strict cap on fossil energy extraction – in other words a planned phase out of coal, oil and natural gas mining.

In 2007, before the UN climate meeting in Bali, journalist George Monbiot made a similar suggestion and pointed out that, “The talks in Bali will be meaningless unless they produce a programme for leaving fossil fuels in the ground.” Four years later, with greenhouse gases rising by a record amount last year, it is about time that this simple solution to runaway climate change was taken seriously.

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

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- False solutions to climate change enabling land grabbing in Africa

Next week an international farmers' conference will take place in Mali to stop land grabbing. Organized by La Via Campesina, it is aimed at opening a space to listen to and learn from local peasants, mainly from African countries, on what they have to say about land grabbing and to unite forces to resist the process and build future strategies.

A few days after, in Durban, South Africa, thousands of people representing governments, the big polluting companies and big conservation NGOs, but also people struggling for climate justice, will meet for the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Land grabbing is taking place in Southern countries at alarming rates. In Africa this trend is scandalous: 60 million hectares of land traded in 2009! (1) Foreign governments, pension funds, wealthy individuals and corporations are buying huge tracts of lands to make way for monocultures, from tree plantations to industrial agriculture, and even for financial speculation.

Within the UNFCCC, the framework for consolidating and amplifying land grabbing is being built. Governments and corporations are paving the way to continue doing business as usual instead of seriously addressing climate change and drastically reducing carbon emissions – too much energy and money has been spent in creating and promoting false solutions to climate change.

In the words of La Via Campesina, in its “Call to Durban” statement: “Under the UNFCCC, developed countries and polluting corporations, historically responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions, are allowed all possible tricks to avoid reducing their own emissions. For example, the carbon market and carbon offset mechanisms allow countries and companies to continue polluting and consuming as usual, while paying small amounts of money to help poor people in developing countries reduce their emissions. What actually occurs is that companies profit doubly: by continuing to contaminate and by selling false solutions. Meanwhile, under REDD, poor people are stripped of many of their multiple rights to use communal forest lands, even as new land-grabbers emerge to consolidate large tracts by evicting farmers in order to traffic in carbon credits.”(2)

False solutions to climate change are pushing for land grabs in the South. Communities are displaced and territories occupied with monoculture tree plantations to act as carbon sinks or to be traded as wood chips or pellets for energy, or in the case of oil palm to produce oil.

Conflicts related to monoculture tree plantations in Africa are on the rise. A recent case in Uganda involves the UK-based New Forests Company, which is responsible for forcibly evicting 22,500 people from their land to make way for carbon sink plantations.

Oil palm plantations are also causing numerous conflicts in countries such as Liberia,

Cameroon, Uganda and Ghana, among others. For example, in Liberia, the Malaysian company Sime Darby, which received a 220,000-hectare land concession for oil palm plantations, was denounced by local communities for being “engaged in active land clearing, destruction of our sacred sites, destruction of our crops, damming of our creeks and streams, filling in of our swamps, destruction of grave sites, destruction and pollution of our drinking water sources, forceful displacement of our people without adequate compensation, active planting and cultivation of oil palm including the massive establishment of an oil palm nursery without our free prior informed consent.” (3).

In Cameroon, the US-based SG Sustainable Oils (SGSO) is planning a 30,000-hectare oil palm plantation in the South West Region in an area directly adjacent to Korup National Park and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve, and another 40,000 hectares just to the east of that plantation and adjacent to Bakossi National Park and Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary. Opponents say: “The oil palm plantation will displace and disrupt the social and economic situation of over 30 villages (over 3,000 people). Their culture and way of life is closely tied to these forests, which provide these villages with clean water, food, and important income-earning capabilities. Most of these villagers rely heavily on farming to feed their families and earn an income. It is unclear how local villagers will be compensated for the loss of their forest and farms. Some documents suggest that villages will be resettled and/or will be allowed to remain, but will be surrounded by oil palms.” (4)

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) is among the newest false solutions that will also serve to expand land grabs. There are several cases reported of communities being expelled or displaced from their territories or communities whose rights to use their lands and forests are jeopardized by REDD projects.

The recent WRM publication on the REDD pilot project in the Democratic Republic of Congo being undertaken by Conservation International and the Walt Disney Company in the two forest reserves of Tayna and Kisimba-Ikobo describes the numerous flaws and rights violations of these kinds of initiatives. The report says: “We were able to determine that the consent for the implementation of the REDD project in the Kisimba-Ikobo reserve has numerous flaws and is, at best, only partial. Moreover, the process has only deepened an ongoing conflict in which land and forest use rights are at stake. Part of the community is opposed to the REDD project because it merely reinforces the creation of a 'community' reserve which, in fact, has stripped these communities of their rights over their ancestral lands and forests. In a recent letter addressed to the governor of the province by dissatisfied communities from this reserve, they state that they are opposed to the REDD project because it does not respect their rights to the land and they have not been given the opportunity to express their demands.

“The significant percentage of the population of Kisimba and Ikobo who already opposed the creation of the nature reserve and now the REDD project are being even further marginalized. The REDD project promoters seem to simply ignore the fact that this part of the population did not provide its consent for the project, and they are doing nothing to attempt to resolve the conflict.”(5)

False solutions to climate change are at the very least distracting, if not criminal. The time has come to be aware that the real solution to climate change is for polluting countries to cut carbon emissions at source.

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1- <http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/19559>

2- http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1109:la-via-campesina-call-to-durban&catid=48:-climate-change-and-agrofuels&Itemid=75

3- Letter of complaint to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) from members and inhabitants of affected local communities within the proposed Sime Darby 220,000 ha oil palm concession in Liberia, October 2011,

<http://www.forestpeoples.org/topics/palm-oil-rspo/publication/2011/letter-complaint-roundtable-sustainable-palm-oil-rspo-members->

4- See WRM Bulletin 165.

5- WRM Publication "Conservation International REDD pilot project: a different kind of Disney production". Available at

http://www.wrm.org.uy/subjects/REDD/DRC_REDD_en.pdf

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- Brazil- Behind the Greenwashing: The commodification of forests and impacts on local communities in the state of Acre

The state of Acre, in the Brazilian Amazon region, earned worldwide attention in the late 1980s through the struggle for social and environmental justice waged by the late Chico Mendes. In more recent years, the state has once again gained prominence in Brazil and internationally, but for very different reasons. This time the spotlight on the state is a result of the propaganda around the "green" development model promoted through "forest governance" and based on the so-called "sustainable management" of the forests and the sale of environmental services. Today the state is portrayed as a "green" success story.

However, there are numerous facts and figures which demonstrate that the reality of the forest policy in Acre tells quite a different story, including: (1) the continuation of logging and other commercial exploitation activities; (2) the conversion of the "standing forest" degraded by selective logging of precious woods into a new source of profit that is also "sold" through "environmental services" mechanisms like REDD+; (3) the greater difficulties and growing restrictions faced by forest peoples, especially those who are fighting for freedom and autonomy in the conservation of the forests on which they depend for their continued survival.

We could begin by looking at some figures related to land ownership. Between 2003 and 2010, according to the federal government agency responsible for agrarian reform, INCRA, the share of land in Acre owned by smallholders fell from 27% to 17% of registered properties. In 2003, 19,200 families occupied 1.1 million hectares

of land, and in 2010, 23,500 families occupied 1.388 million hectares. In the meantime, the concentration of land ownership rose sharply (1). In 2003, 444 large landholders controlled 2.8 million hectares of land, while in 2010, 583 landholders owned 6.2 million hectares, equivalent to 78.9% of all lands registered that year. A contributing factor to this growing concentration of land ownership was the regularization of the ownership of land illegally occupied by large landholders, through the “Terra Legal” (Legal Land) programme.

Other noteworthy figures refer to the promotion of logging activity in so-called direct use conservation units, primarily to produce timber for export, a business that has grown exponentially in Acre in recent years to reach almost one million cubic metres of timber in 2010 – a 400% increase since the implementation of “forest governance”. In the meantime, in other states in the Amazon region, logging has been reduced by half. Both logging and extensive cattle ranching, which has also undergone colossal expansion – from 800,000 head of cattle in 1998 to over three million head in 2010 – are activities proven to be destructive to forests (2). To make matters worse, among the government’s plans is another project that will have major climate impacts: the exploitation of oil and gas.

Secondly, the expansion of so-called “sustainable” logging activity poses a direct threat to the survival of local populations. One example is the situation faced by the community of São Bernardo. In its forest-covered territory, the company Laminadas Triunfo is carrying out “sustainable forest management plans” on large landholdings known as Ranchão I and II. The legal grounds for the logging of rubber trees on these lands is an agreement that the local families had to sign in the Public Ministry of the state of Acre, which supposedly establishes their approval of the company’s “sustainable” management activities. At the same time, they are being pressured to leave the area. Some families have ended up moving away, but others refuse to go, because they know that life in the city offers no prospects for them; on the contrary, it would mean unemployment and poverty. The families who have held out and remain in the region where they have lived for many years report serious impacts, including the degradation of the streams that are the source of water in the region, the migration from the area of animals they have traditionally hunted, and the destruction of the forest and roads due to the continuous extraction of timber by Laminados Triunfo, a company that has nonetheless earned the FSC green label for its “sustainable management” of forests in other areas. While these families have traditionally had access to areas of up to 800 hectares of forest for rubber tapping and other activities, the company is offering them in exchange an area of barely 75 hectares per family in locations that are a long distance away and have been degraded by extensive cattle farming. These families are struggling to establish an autonomous extractive reserve that would allow them to conserve the forest while maintaining and strengthening their way of life, without depending on logging. The process for the creation of such a reserve has been slowly underway since 2005.

Another significant factor is a state government project currently being implemented, which is aimed at the sale of environmental services. Known as “Fogo Zero” (Zero Fire), the programme provides families with a monetary transfer of 100 reais (USD 60) a month, but in exchange, they must refrain from the traditional practice of setting carefully controlled fires to prepare the land for the planting of subsistence crops,

which ensure their food security and are essential for their food sovereignty. This is a serious violation of these communities' right to food.

Moreover, it would appear that Fogo Zero is merely a trial run for the implementation of Law 2.308, adopted in 2010 by the Legislative Assembly of Acre, which established the State System of Incentives for Environmental Services. The services included range from carbon sequestration to so-called "sociobiodiversity". The law is based on the argument that the only way to ensure protection of the environment is by assigning it monetary value. But the real danger of this type of legislation is that the national market, and to an even greater extent the international market, will move in and take over control of the state's territory, with the backing of the state government, which is responsible for the entire system of regulation, registration, validation, measurement and monitoring of the supposed services provided, absorbing a significant share of the money generated. This is a detailed commodification of nature with a language and practices that are comprehensible only to a select group ("market-based" international environmental NGOs, consultants and corporations), but inaccessible to the general public, and especially the forest peoples.

To address these issues, a workshop called "Environmental Services, REDD and BNDES Green Funds: The Amazon's Salvation or a Green Capitalism Trap?" and a number of field visits were organized in Rio Branco, the capital of Acre, on October 3-7, 2011.

The workshop participants released an [open letter](#), signed by the numerous organizations they represent, in which they state: "The 'destroyers' would now be those who fight to defend nature. And so those who have historically ensured the preservation of nature are now viewed as predators, and are therefore criminalized. It comes as no surprise then that the state has recently become more open in its repression, persecution and even the expulsion of local populations from their territories."

"In Seringal São Bernardo, we were able to observe the priority placed on the interests of timber companies, to the detriment of the interests of local communities and nature conservation," the letter reports.

With regard to programmes like Fogo Zero, the workshop participants stress: "These populations may be allowed to remain on their land, but they are no longer able to use it in accordance with their ways of life. Their survival will no longer be guaranteed by subsistence farming – which has been transformed into a 'threat' to the earth's climate stability – but rather by a 'bolsa verde' or 'green allowance', which in addition to being insufficient is paid in order to maintain the oil civilization."

As for the new environmental services legislation mentioned above, they note that it generates "environmental assets" such as carbon market credits, adding: "Under this law, the beauty of nature, pollination by insects, regulation of rainfall, culture, spiritual values, traditional knowledge, water, plants and even popular imagery are converted into merchandise."

“While making it possible to purchase the ‘right to pollute’, mechanisms like REDD strip ‘traditional’ communities (riverine, indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities, rubber tappers, women coconut gatherers, etc.) of their autonomy in the management of their territories.”

The letter also condemns a carbon “offset” deal involving the state of California in the United States, which would purchase the carbon credits generated, and the states of Chiapas in Mexico and Acre in Brazil, which would provide the credits. The Amador Hernández region in Chiapas is already suffering serious impacts from a REDD+ project resulting from this “partnership” (see <http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/165/Mexico.html>), leading the workshop participants to declare: “Because we are fully aware of the risks posed by projects like these, we oppose the REDD agreement between California, Chiapas and Acre, which has already caused serious problems for indigenous and traditional communities such as those in the Amador Hernández region of Chiapas, Mexico.” In the meantime, communities in California continue to suffer the health impacts caused by the fact that polluting industries in California can continue to produce emissions by purchasing carbon credits from the project in Mexico and eventually from Acre.

The letter concludes: “Finally, we want to express here our support for the following demands: agrarian reform, official demarcation of indigenous lands, investments in agroecology and the solidarity economy, autonomous territorial management, health and education for all, and democratization of the media. In defence of the Amazon, of life, of the integrity of the peoples and their territories, and against REDD and the commodification of nature. Our struggle continues.”

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(1) More information is available at <http://www.mst.org.br/Gerson-Teixeira-agravamento-da-concentracao-das-terras>

(2) The statistics on logging and cattle herd sizes were provided by the Centre for Research on the State, Society and Development in the Western Amazon at the Federal University of Acre (UFAC).

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- India: Forests and tree plantations under carbon offset schemes

The new abstractions created by the climate change discourse in the form of REDD and REDD+ have come to deepen the commodification of forests as greater mobility is created and trading across countries and continents is made possible through climate mitigation and forestry schemes, say Kanchi Kohli and Manju Menon from the Indian organization Kalpavriksh, in the recent publication “Banking on Forests: Assets for a Climate Cure?”

Still without an international agreement established, both REDD and REDD+ work on a dual financing mechanism as of today, with money to be generated voluntarily both from bilateral or multilateral grants as well as a market based carbon trading

mechanism where forest carbon in a different country can be traded for meeting emission targets. The UN-REDD programme states that it is an “effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development” while REDD+ money goes to maintain enclosures of forests and to generate new ‘carbon stocks’ - which means in practice creating tree plantations. In both cases the final attempt is to conserve carbon or create carbon sinks.

Kalpavriksh's report explains that in India, the “National Mission for a Green India” (GIM) approved in February 2011, is part of India's National Action Plan On Climate Change (NAPCC) and seeks to increase forest/tree cover on 5million hectares of forest/non- forest lands as well as improve the quality of the forest cover on another 5 million hectares. In order to achieve this, the Mission would link with ongoing programmes which include availing benefits under REDD+, CDM and other carbon market mechanisms.

Not just forests but other ecosystems as well will be considered in order to enhance carbon sequestration and storage, bringing in lands under other multiple uses such as marginal lands. However, lands which the GIM identifies as marginal farming lands or wastelands are already under multiple yet formally unrecognised community uses, such as for grazing or as part of shifting cultivation cycles, and their transfer to afforestation schemes will bring impacts on the socio-economic conditions of communities dependent on them. It has been highlighted by forest peoples' movements that afforestation programmes change the nature of ecosystems as well as directly reduce peoples' access to forest produce and animal fodder depriving forest dwellers and adivasi (Indigenous People) of some or all of their lands.

Kalpavriksh's authors conclude that “the GIM is clearly carbon compliant, keeping the doors open to whichever way the climate change negotiations head on the issue of carbon sinks. In this carbon led discourse, the country is ready to receive money through grants, private sector trading as well as other carbon forestry programmes.” They also point out that since 2009, the State Forest Departments have also been receiving money collected over the years towards compensating for or payment of Net Present Value (NPV) for the diversion of forest land for non-forest use such as mining, industrial or infrastructure expansion in the country. That money has been used for afforestation schemes, like was the case of the state of Uttarakh and which has allocated money for plantations through local Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees. The state of Karnataka has also proposed monoculture plantations including commercial plants like biofuels. Similarly the state of Madhya Pradesh has proposed 38.8% and the state of Himachal Pradesh has proposed 28.4% for plantations out of their total proposed NPV budget for 2010-2011.

The report of Kalpavriksh is conclusive in that the various processes which have either treated forests as commodities or conservation enclosures find in the GIM a place, treating forests “as a mobile, tradable commodity either at the national or the global scale. Each time the unit of measurement changes, it adds more money to the forest coffers, either through the pretext of diversion or conservation. The GIM also works well within a global system where it is possible to show forests as sovereign

assets which can be made available, at a cost, to provide carbon forest credits to global players.”

While a legally binding agreement on emissions reductions is unlikely to be agreed in the near future, many predict a future of carbon market REDD and therefore, opening the road for further commodification of Indian’s forests and expansion of monoculture tree plantations.

Article based on: “Banking on Forests: Assets for a Climate Cure?”, by Kanchi Kohli and Manju Menon, Kalpavriksh, <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/list-of-books/books-in-print/201-env-a-development-books/90-environment-a-dev-books>; and two briefing papers: “Compensatory Afforestation and Net Present Value Payments for Diversion of Forest Land in India” and “Loss or Gain. The National Mission for a Green India” by the same authors, sent by Kanchi Kohli, e-mail: kalpavriksh.delhi@gmail.com.

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PEOPLE IN ACTION

- Call to donors to halt funding REDD+ projects

On last 21 September - the World Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations - the “No REDD Platform”, a coalition of environmental groups and Indigenous peoples organizations, launched a call to the international donor community to halt the diversion of forest conservation funding to REDD+-type projects and related activities, while also noting that the ‘detection, documentation and rejection of the negative social and environmental impacts of REDD+ projects’ suffer from a lack of support. The letter aims to be a wakeup call to funders as well as an invitation to bridge this funding gap

The group expresses profound concern about the way funds for forest conservation and restoration, and poverty eradication, are being misdirected toward a mechanism that is inherently about commodifying and privatizing air, forests, trees and land and suffers from a large number of inherent risks and problems which cannot be remedied.

REDD+ projects are already having severe negative impacts on the environment and on economically and politically marginalized groups in society, particularly Indigenous Peoples, small farmers, other forest dependent communities, and women for who forests play a major role in sustaining their livelihoods. A sudden increase in the economic value of forest land due to the introduction of performance payments for forest conservation will definitely lead to an increased risk of conflict over land between these communities and more economically and politically influential groups that see an opportunity to profit from these payments.

Performance-based payments for forest carbon storage address only one presumed driver of forest loss: the lack of proper economic valuation of the role of forest

carbon storage in overall carbon sequestration failing to address other direct and indirect drivers of forest loss including lack of recognition of the land rights of Indigenous Peoples; overconsumption of and trade in forest products; perverse incentives for mainly export-oriented activities such as subsidies for monoculture crops and industrial tree plantations; mineral, oil, gas or coal exploration and extraction activities, shrimp farming and large-scale infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric dams.

The (No REDD Platform) more than 200 organizations that already have subscribed this letter denounce that “REDD+ is a fundamentally flawed symptom of a deeper problem, not a step forward. It is a distraction that the planet – our Mother Earth - does not have time for. We should build on the many existing examples of successful forest conservation and restoration rather than investing billions of dollars in an untested, uncertain and questionable REDD+ scheme that is likely to undermine the environmental and social goals of the climate regime rather than support them.”

The letter concludes: “Addressing climate change and forest loss require measures that contribute to thorough economic, ecological and social transformation. To present all sides of the REDD+ story as part of a larger effort to build the diverse and powerful global alliances that can support the transformation that our planet and peoples need, will require the full support of the charity, gift-giving and philanthropy community.

The full letter can be read at http://noredd.makenoise.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NOREDD-letter_21sept.pdf

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- Philippines: Rally to stop Chinese mining in Palawan!

On 10 November, indigenous peoples and farmer communities with people's organization ALDAW gathered in Brooke's Point city, in the island of Palawan, to peacefully demonstrate against the visit of Chinese investors of the Jinchuan Group (JNMC). The Chinese group has already established partnership with MacroAsia Corporation for the exploitation and extraction of nickel.

The mining project encroaches on the ancestral domain of IPs and farmer communities as well as on community conserved areas and would have a serious impact on farmlands, watersheds, primary/secondary forest on which those peoples depend, since time immemorial, for their livelihood and cultural sustenance.

The Palawan Tribes of Brooke's Point and The ALDAW Network (Ancestral/Land Domain Watch) oppose the partnership between Macroasia and the Chinese Jinchuan Group and call for the immediate cancellation of the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) of MacroAsia in Brooke's Point Municipality (Palawan) (read more at <http://intercontinentalcry.org/chinese-investors-face-angry-crowd-of-protesters-on-palawan-island/>).

For more information contact the ALDAW Indigenous Network at:
aldaw.indigenousnetwork@gmail.com

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- Help Kuy People of Cambodia to Save their forest

In Cambodia, some 200,000 mostly Indigenous Kuy villagers are desperately trying to prevent the destruction of Prey Lang ("Our Forest), the last large primary forest of its kind on the Indochina peninsula. The Cambodian government has issued a patchwork of concessions to road builders, mining companies, and agro-industries. Bulldozers are slashing the forest to build new roads, rubber plantations, and mines.

The Kuy people are desperately trying to persuade the government to stop the destruction and allow them to protect and manage Prey Lang, before it is too late. "Without forest, there is no life. In the Kuy language, Prey Lang means 'Our Forest.' This forest is for everyone. Prey Lang is our forest, but it is your forest, too. You can help save it" says Thai Bunleang, Kuy elder, small farmer, and Prey Lang Network activist.

To help them save the forest, visit Cultural Survival website in support of the campaign at <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/take-action/cambodia/letter>

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- Mekong: International petition against the Xayaburi Dam

On the first week of November, International Rivers launched an international petition calling on the Prime Ministers of Laos and Thailand to cancel plans to build the Xayaburi Dam. They expect to collect as many signatures as possible to help add pressure on these governments before the upcoming Mekong River Commission Council meeting that will take place from next December 7-9th.

You can help circulating the petition to your list-serves and placing a link to it on your websites. The petition can be found at
http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2486/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=8547

For more information contact Ame Trandem, International Rivers, E:
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