



WRM BULLETIN

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Beijing: The carbon-cheating Games

According to the Chinese Technology Minister Wan Gang, the Beijing Olympic Games will result in the release of some 1.18 million tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere, "in part because so many athletes and spectators were traveling long distances". However, we need not worry about this, because the Chinese authorities assure us that the Olympics will be "basically" carbon neutral.

This is of course impossible. No-one can be "carbon neutral" once the fuel needed for "traveling long distances" (mostly by fossil fuel-powered planes, buses and cars) has been used. The carbon stored in that fuel will have been released, thus increasing the net amount of carbon in the atmosphere, by adding the carbon that had until then been stored in underground oil deposits. In the case of the Beijing Olympics, this will result in an additional 1.18 million tonnes of carbon that will contribute to increase global warming.

The problem is that many people honestly believe in the possibility of becoming "carbon neutral", mostly because –as the saying goes- "a lie repeated often enough becomes truth". And this particular lie is being constantly repeated by numerous "experts" with much to gain from carbon trading and even by some supposedly "green" organizations.

Such is the case of the well-known WWF (which has a panda bear as its logo), whose Chinese section has created a special web page for facilitating payments for becoming "carbon neutral". The site explains that "Through its Go for Gold global campaign, WWF is also calling Olympic athletes to commit to a carbon neutral trip for the Beijing Games by donating the equivalent of the carbon cost of their flight to a Gold Standard climate-change offset project." WWF - China even recommends five specific "sales points": www.climatefriendly.com, www.myclimate.org, www.atmosfair.de, www.nativeenergy.com, www.tricoronagreen.com

The above quote lends to believe that by paying –"donating"- a certain amount of money, the carbon released by the plane, bus or car will be made to disappear somewhere by someone doing something that will "offset" those emissions. Paraphrasing a well known film, this is in fact "Emission Impossible".

However, people are made to believe that a number of measures, that can be useful in themselves, but that bear no relationship whatsoever with "neutralizing" fossil fuel carbon emissions, can result in them achieving the "carbon neutral" status. For instance, there is no doubt that energy saving measures, energy efficiency, the use of solar, wind and geothermal power, the reduction in the use of cars, are all positive steps in the right direction. The problem arises –as in the case of the Beijing Olympics- when the organizers claim that these measures will ensure that the Games will be "basically" carbon neutral. They will not.

What is necessary for truly addressing the problem of climate change is to drastically reduce and eventually eliminate the use of fossil fuels. This is not an issue of individual choice about being "carbon neutral", but a political issue that needs to be dealt with at that level. In this case, the pressure –and guilt- must not be put on the Olympic athletes – who will have enough trouble in finding sufficient oxygen in the polluted air of Beijing- but on the governments that continue to promote a development model based on fossil fuels and environmental destruction.

The Beijing Olympics may have a successful outcome from a sporting perspective, but they will not have the "positive effect on climate change" claimed by Chinese minister Wan and will certainly not be "basically" carbon neutral. Trying to greenwash 1.18 million tonnes of carbon may prove to be a difficult endeavour.

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Brazil: Amazon deforestation takes on new force

This month, provisional measure No.422 was adopted as law by the Brazilian parliament, providing for an increase in the area of the Amazon that may be granted for rural use with no need to call for bids. The limit, previously set at 500 hectares, has been increased to 1,500 hectares, allowing deforestation of up to 20 percent of the area granted.

The voting had the strong opposition of the former minister of the Environment, Senator Marina Silva, who accused the Government of legalizing the illegal appropriation of Amazon lands. "This measure will mean a land privatization process," she declared, forecasting serious detriment to the Plan for Combating Amazon Deforestation.

This news appeared at the same time as the revelations of a new US study published in the journal "PNAS" denounced in the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper on 1/7/2008. The study shows that between 2000 and 2005, Brazil headed the list regarding area of deforestation and speed of devastation, although it had managed to reduce by 59 percent deforestation rates (dropping from 27,429 km² between August 2003 and July 2004, to 11,224 km² at the

time of the latest measurement taken between August 2006 and July 2007). However everything seems to indicate that this will now be reverted.

According to data from the National Space Research Institute – INPE – (Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Espaciales), the Brazilian Amazon lost 1,096 square kilometres during May and more than half of this deforestation took place in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (646 km²), where historically great pressure on the forest from soybean plantations and cattle-raising has been denounced.

Furthermore, although the expansion of sugar-cane to produce ethanol does not involve Amazon land, it exerts indirect pressure insofar as it is located in neighbouring areas making them more expensive and shoving other plantations and cattle-raising towards the Amazon, contributing to its penetration with the building of highways and facilities.

Additionally, deforestation also has a direct impact on global warming from the release of carbon dioxide, altering the evaporation-transpiration process regulating climate behaviour.

Repeating our opinion in this respect, there is no doubt that forests are disappearing, not because the people and their governments are ignorant or because of the lack of appropriate management plans. Forests are disappearing because a series of interconnected national and international policies are preparing the ground for this to happen. Therefore it is at this level that solutions must be found.

Article based on information from: "Brasil é líder total em desmatamento, mostra novo estudo", Instituto Humanista Unisinos, Internet, 1-7-08, <http://www.biodiversidadla.org/content/view/full/42192>; "Deforestación amazónica superó los 1.000 km²", Newspaper "El Universal C.A.," (Venezuela) http://www.eluniversal.com/2008/07/15/ten_ava_deforestacion-amazon_15A1799685.shtml

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- Guatemala: Agrofuels cause deforestation and displacement

In Guatemala, like in several other countries of the South, indigenous communities and the environment are paying a high cost due to the expansion of agrofuels. Deforestation, forced displacement, threats, illegal arrest and even murder are the signs of this encroachment.

The organization Salva la Selva (Save the Rainforest) has denounced a situation that has been occurring over the past three years in an area known as "Finca Los Recuerdos", where Ingenio Guadalupe, one of the companies producing ethanol in the country, has been deforesting indigenous land to plant sugar-cane for ethanol production.

In the midst of a food crisis and increase in the price of foodstuffs, on 30 June this year, 60 Kekchi families from La Isla, Caserío el Morador Semano, Corazón de Maíz and Teleman Punto 15, in Panzos, tried to recover part of their land to cultivate it and produce food.

According to Salva la Selva, in response "they were attacked by paramilitary forces associated with the company. During the attack, they shot at the indigenous people from a helicopter, and a 35-year-old man, father of three children had to be taken to hospital. The next day, families and representatives of the peasant organization CUC, carried out a peaceful protest, during which they were again attacked by the paramilitary forces who were accompanied by two representatives of Ingenio Guadalupe. There were shots, threats to kill and two women were illegally arrested." In the area of Coatepeque similar attacks took place, this time involving the expansion of oil palm plantations for the production of biodiesel.

According to information supplied by CUC and by the international human rights organization Rights Action, these events are representative of what is happening all over Guatemala. Members of CUC have denounced the following: "We make people see that the Government does not have any clear measures to face the food and high price crisis and we make them responsible for the reaction and action taken by the population as this crisis becomes more acute."

So far the measures adopted have been in support of agribusiness groups and, as has been denounced, to enable them to "illegally obtain land that belongs to indigenous communities and where violence committed by paramilitary forces and even by the State security forces is used to displace the communities."

Environmental destruction and violation of human rights are promoted by the world financial system: in January this year the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), approved funding that enables the Guatemalan Government to develop a national strategy for agrofuels. This will inevitably be expressed in more deforestation, more land appropriation, more forced displacements, more violation of the indigenous communities' human rights.

IDB is one of the major financiers of the expansion of agrofuels in Latin America and is preparing private credits for an amount of 3 billion dollars. Rights Actions is exhorting people to address a letter to the IDB, denouncing the situation and demanding immediate suspension of all support and funding of agrofuel production in Guatemala. This letter ends by stating: "The production of agrofuels in Guatemala has increased deforestation, desertification and accelerated climate change. It also increases hunger and violates the territorial rights of indigenous communities, increasing violent repression. Please immediately suspend your support of agrofuels in Guatemala." (Accessible at: <http://www.salvalaselva.org/protestaktion.php?id=283>).

Article based on information from: "Empresa de agrocombustibles reprime violentamente a indígenas en Guatemala," (Agrofuel company violently represses indigenous people in Guatemala), Salva la Selva, <http://www.salvalaselva.org/protestaktion.php?id=283>

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- Malaysia: Sarawak forest peoples harassed by logging and dams

In last month's WRM bulletin we recalled the long standing battle that local communities had waged for Sarawak's forests, notably through road blockades for stopping the entry of logging trucks into their territories.

Now the Kenyah people are in again for the defence of their livelihood. According to a report from the Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS), "More than hundred (100) indigenous Kenyah peoples from various longhouse communities living in the interior of Telang Usan (Kedaya Telang Usan) area in the Baram region of the State of Sarawak, East Malaysia, gathered at upper Moh River to stage a non-violent protest against logging operations of Samling Timber Company. On 19th May 2008, the Indigenous Kenyah from six (6) longhouse communities, namely Long Moh, Long Je'eh, Long Bela'ong, Long Sawan, Long Silat and Long Mekabar started with the blockade. The blockade is set on the major logging roads used by Samling Timber Company to carry out its logging activities within the communal lands and forest area of the Kenyahs of Kedaya Telang Usan in Baram Region."

The Samling group, one of Sarawak's timber giants certified by the Malaysian Timber Certification Council MTCC, had been carrying out illegal logging without prior consent within the indigenous communal land area. Not only that but also it ignored "reasonable demands for social benefits and development of the community as they are the rights stakeholders that should be fairly benefit from forest resources in their area," said the Borneo Resources Institute.

The Kenyahs had repeatedly complained to the authorities and the logging company about the problems caused by the destruction of the forest, on which they still rely very much for their existence. However, no measure was taken and the company had continued untouched, so they decided to resort to blockades to bring attention to their claim and

stop the logging trucks so the company couldn't extract and transport valuable trees born in the Kenyah's forest in the upper Sungai Sebu, Sungai Jekitan and Sungai Moh area. Their banners said: "Samling, do not rob the wealth from the poor people's land and give it to the rich in the city."

According to BRIMAS, on the last 14 June, Police personnel have been ordered to the blockade site to enforce a Warrant of Arrest granted by the Magistrate Court in Miri. Yet, so far we have no news that any arrest has taken place.

But it seems that no truce is given to Sarawak's forest peoples. According to Survival International, a leaked secret document reveals plans of the company Sarawak Energy Berhad to build a series of massive hydroelectric dams in Sarawak, submerging the homes of at least a thousand Penan, Kelabit and Kenyah indigenous people. One dam would also submerge part of the Mulu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage.

The power projects are planned to be constructed between now and 2020. The Sarawak Energy Berhad presentation was posted –it seems accidentally-- on a Chinese website and has now been removed. However, it still can be downloaded together with a map of the proposed dam sites from Survival's website, at <http://www.survival-international.org/news/3450>

Article based on information from: "Malaysian police ordered to clear Kenyah logging road blockade", Bruno Manser Fonds, <http://www.bmf.ch/en/news/?show=102>

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- Peru: National strike demands respect for indigenous collective rights

This past 8-10 July, the Peasant Confederation of Peru and the National Agrarian Confederation, with the wide backing of a large number of indigenous and peasant organizations, carried out a country-wide protest which coincided on July 9 with a national general strike called by the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP).

The protest drew together numerous communities, federations and organizations, including Amazonian indigenous groups, and was used to voice a range of messages. Chief among these was the demand for respect for the collective rights of indigenous peoples affected by the policies that the government is attempting to impose in the Amazon region, aimed at promoting industries with destructive impacts on the environment and inhabitants of the region, such as mining, oil drilling and tree plantations.

Some of the demands voiced by indigenous peoples in Peru relate to a series of draft laws and other legislative initiatives that violate indigenous collective rights, including the following:

* Legislative decrees 1015 and 994, aimed at coercively imposing a process by which collectively owned indigenous community lands throughout Peru would be divided into parcels and transferred to private individual ownership. This would leave the land unprotected, and open the way for the invasion of powerful economic groups, mainly representing extractive industries. The proposed regulations would also violate numerous articles of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to communal property and the right of communities to autonomously choose their own forms of organization.

* Draft law 840, known as the "Forest Law" (see WRM Bulletin N° 129), which is aimed at the privatization of thousands of hectares of land in the Amazon forest, purportedly to facilitate their "reforestation". The justification used is that the land in question is unforested, idle wasteland, with no acquired rights over it. However, indigenous organizations have countered that there are in fact no unused wasteland areas in the Amazon forest.

* Draft law 2133, which would authorize the sale of beaches, sandbars and marshes along riverbanks in the Amazon

region.

The Front for the Defence and Development of the Upper Amazon (FREDESAA) maintains that these laws would leave the Amazon region's inhabitants landless, converting the legitimate owners of the land into workers and eventually slaves.

The July 9 general strike, which left much of the country paralyzed, particularly in the southern Andes, central and Amazon regions, was also aimed at protesting the government's neoliberal policies, the United States-Peru free trade agreement, and the privatization of ports and basic services like water.

In numerous cities people took to the streets to demonstrate and set up roadblocks on highways. The government mobilized 100,000 police officers throughout the country and called out the armed forces to take control of strategic facilities such as electric power stations, drinking water reservoirs and airports. Around 200 protestors were arrested during the strike.

Article based on information from the following sources: "Unidad de los Pueblos ante Paro en la Amazonía del Perú", Red Ucayali, 09/07/2008, <http://peru.indymedia.org/news/2008/07/40434.php>; "El paro pegó fuerte en Perú", Carlos Noriega, Página 12, 10/07/2008, reprinted by bilaterals.org, http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php3?id_article=12653; "En defensa de las tierras de la Amazonía", FREDESAA, 06/06/2008, <http://frentes-regionales.blogspot.com/2008/06/fredesaa-frente-de-defensa-y-desarrollo.html>

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- Mangrove Loss and Climate Change—A Global Perspective

Mangroves are the rainforests by the sea. Large stretches of the sub-tropical and tropical coastlines of Asia, Africa, Oceania, the Americas and the Caribbean are fringed by mangroves, once estimated to cover an area of over 32 million hectares. Now, less than 15 million hectares remain —less than half the original area.

The importance of the protective mangrove buffer zone cannot be overstated. In regions where these coastal fringe forests have been cleared, tremendous problems of erosion and siltation have arisen, and terrible losses to human life and property have occurred due to destructive hurricanes, storm surges and tsunamis.

Today there is a growing urgency to recognize the importance of conserving and restoring protective mangrove greenbelts to lessen the dangers from future catastrophes, because as sea levels rise so will the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and storm surges. Mangroves can buffer against the fury of such destructive storms, protecting those settlements located behind a healthy mangrove fringe.

Mangrove Action Project (MAP) is working with other organizations in the global South towards restoring degraded and cleared mangrove areas as a high priority. MAP is especially interested in restoring some of the 250,000 ha of abandoned shrimp farms located in former coastal wetland areas, especially in Asia and Latin America. But, even more importantly, MAP is working to help conserve and protect existing mangrove wetlands around the world.

Conserving existing mangroves and restoring the vast areas of degraded and cleared mangrove wetlands will serve as a partial solution to global warming. Our planet perhaps faces one of the greatest threats to life as we know it. This crisis is being fueled by human induced climate change. Because nearly half of humankind today lives in cities and settlements located along the now vulnerable coasts, global warming and consequent sea level rise cannot be ignored. Already evacuations of low-lying islands have begun in South Asia and the South Pacific Islands. It is expected mass evacuations of millions of coastal residents will occur within the next 50 years as sea level continues to rise as a result of the greenhouse effect caused by excessive carbon gas emissions.

Nevertheless, mangrove wetlands are often the first line of defense, helping to secure the coasts against erosion and storms. Mangroves are also one of nature's best ways for combating global warming because of their high capacity for sequestering carbon. This is a characteristic of mangrove wetlands that now demands our most immediate and undivided attention. One of the greatest contributions that mangroves may have to offer is their great propensity to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and store this in their wetland substrate. According to the Feb. 2007 issue of National Geographic, "Mangroves are carbon factories... Measurements suggest that mangroves may have the highest net productivity of carbon of any natural ecosystem (about a hundred pounds per acre per day)..."

Mangroves have been seriously undervalued by those government agencies responsible for their protection and management, as is so clearly evidenced in the Caribbean, especially in the Bahamas where such travesties in shortsighted developments are now occurring at Guana Cay and Bimini Islands.

This combined lack of conservation ethic, shortsighted greed and weak law enforcement have allowed massive losses of these coastal wetlands, with one huge, hidden cost arising from the oxidation and release of stored mangrove carbon.

From a study performed by Dr. Ong of Universiti Sains in Malaysia, it was found that the layers of soil and peat composing the mangrove substrate have a high carbon content of 10% or more. Each hectare of mangrove sediment might contain nearly 700 metric tons of carbon per meter depth. In building large numbers of shrimp farms or tourist complexes, the resultant clearing of mangroves and subsequent excavation of the mangrove substrate could result in the potential oxidation of 1,400 tons of carbon per hectare per year.

Again, according to Dr. Ong, "Assuming that only half of this will become oxidized over a period of 10 years, we are looking at the return of 70 tons of carbon per hectare per year for ten years to the atmosphere. This is some 50 times the sequestration rate. This means that by converting a mere 2 percent of mangroves, all of the advantages of mangroves as a sink of atmospheric carbon will be lost..."

According to the latest study by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the current rate of mangrove loss is around 1% per annum—or around 150,000 ha of new mangrove area loss per year. This translates to around 225,000 tons of carbon sequestration potential lost each year, with an additional release of approximately 11 million tons of carbon from disturbed mangrove soils each year.

Obviously, this is an immense problem requiring our concerted action. Not only are we losing the important potential for carbon sequestration offered by the mangroves, but we are also seeing the release of major quantities of polluting gases from the disturbed mangrove substrate itself. This continued clearing of mangroves for whatever reasons must now be perceived in an entirely new light...a light that illuminates far beyond the dark crevices of development for convenience and profit to a future for life and a sustainable living on this now endangered planet...this home we call our Earth.

By Alfredo Quarto, Executive Director, Mangrove Action Project, www.mangroveactionproject.org

REFERENCE: Ong, Jim Eong, Prof., Centre for Marine & Coastal Studies, Universiti Sains, Malaysia, The Hidden Costs of Mangrove Services, Use of Mangroves for Shrimp Aquaculture, Intl. Science Roundtable for the Media, 2002 [index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- **Brazil: Historic federal court decision sentences Veracel Celulose (Stora Enso-Aracruz) for environmental**

violations

On 17 June 2008, a federal court in the city of Eunápolis, in the state of Bahia, passed sentence in a public civil suit filed in 1993 by the Brazilian Federal Public Prosecutor's Office against Veracel Celulose – known at the time as Veracruz Florestal – and the government environmental agencies CRA (Centre for Environmental Resources, responsible for environmental licensing in the state of Bahia) and IBAMA (Brazilian Environmental Institute, the national environmental authority).

Under the federal court sentence, Veracel has been ordered to replant, with native trees, all of the land encompassed by the licences it was granted between 1993 and 1996 to plant eucalyptus trees. This means that an area of 96,000 hectares currently covered by the company's eucalyptus plantations must be cleared and reforested with tree species endemic to the Atlantic Forest, one of the planet's most biologically diverse biomes, as well as one of its most seriously endangered. The company was also sentenced to a fine of BRL 20 million (USD 12.5 million) for deforesting areas of the Atlantic Forest with tractors and bulldozers during its first years of operation (1991-1993). Veracel has announced that it will appeal the decision.

Veracel Celulose is a joint venture formed by two of the world's biggest pulp and paper companies: Swedish-Finnish pulp giant Stora Enso and Brazilian-based Aracruz Celulose, each of which owns 50% of shares in the company. Veracel controls approximately 205,000 hectares of land in the extreme south region of the state of Bahia, with monoculture eucalyptus plantations accounting for around 96,000 hectares. Its pulp mill produces roughly 900,000 tons of pulp for export annually. Half of this production belongs to Aracruz, and the other half to Veracel.

This recent Brazilian federal court decision can be described as historic for a number of reasons:

- The decision means that justice has been done in the struggle waged for the last 15 years by the Socio-Environmental Forum of the Extreme South of Bahia and the Alert Against the Green Desert Network to have Veracel Celulose sentenced for its role in the destruction of the Atlantic Forest in the region. This destruction was documented in a videotape released by Greenpeace, which led then Minister of the Environment Fernando Coutinho Jorge to order a halt to Veracel's eucalyptus plantation project, despite the company's attempts to deny and camouflage the environmental damage caused. At the same time, this is the first time ever that a court decision has penalized an environmental violation committed by a large eucalyptus plantation company. While other companies have committed the same crimes, none have ever been sentenced for them.
- The decision means that justice has been done in the struggle waged by the Socio-Environmental Forum and the Alert Against the Green Desert Network, which have always maintained that companies like Veracel have been authorized to operate illegally, without complying with the rules and criteria for environmental impact assessments (EIAs). In 1994, three years after it had begun planting eucalyptus trees, Veracel commissioned an EIA for its plantations and the construction of a pulp mill, under orders from the Ministry of the Environment. The assessment was hastily prepared by the Finnish firm Jaakko Poyry (currently known as Poyry), which subsequently benefited from the plantation project by being contracted for consultancy services. At the time, the EIA was harshly criticized by auditors hired by the CRA and by NGOs. Nevertheless, the CRA granted the licences that the company needed to further expand its plantations and build the pulp mill.
- This decision marks the first time that the courts have stood up against the political and financial power of companies like Veracel and its owners, Aracruz and Stora Enso. These companies seize unlimited control over vast areas of land, finance political campaigns at every level and use their influence over public officials to obtain rules, incentives and financing to facilitate their investments, and hire the best legal firms in the country to avoid culpability for damages in environmental, social and labour-related lawsuits.

It should be stressed that this is not the first time that Veracel has been fined or questioned by the competent

agencies for committing illegalities:

- In March 2007, Veracel was fined BRL 400,000 (USD 250,000) by the federal environmental agency, IBAMA, for the illegal use of a toxic substance (the herbicide Roundup) on 31.6 hectares of land in a permanent preservation area.

- In December 2007, the company was fined BRL 360,900 (USD 225,563) by IBAMA for obstructing the natural regeneration of the Atlantic Forest through eucalyptus plantation projects on 1,203 hectares of land within this endangered biome.

- The company has 7,428 hectares of plantations bordering the Monte Pascual and Pau Brasil National Parks, in violation of an explicit recommendation from the Federal Public Prosecutors Office in Bahia for companies to refrain from planting more eucalyptus trees within a 10-kilometre radius of the region's natural parks, in compliance with federal regulations.

What is most remarkable of all is that, despite these antecedents, in March of this year, SGS QUALIFOR granted Veracel Celulose FSC certification of environmentally appropriate forest management for its monoculture eucalyptus plantations. The certification was issued in spite of severe criticisms voiced by local and international civil society, expressed in a letter signed by 347 organizations in August 2007. Moreover, even though an audit conducted by the FSC's accreditation agency ASI in March of this year documented various reasons for which FSC certification should never have been granted, the audit report did not recommend revoking the certification.

It is obviously in the company's interest to enjoy the legitimacy granted by the FSC label, given the fact that it is currently in the process of doubling its plantations and building a new pulp mill. The 2007 annual report of one of its two shareholders, Aracruz Celulose, quoted in the daily A Gazeta on 16 January 2008, states that: "Before the end of 2008, approximately 70% of the forest base needed to double Veracel's operations will have been acquired. The new production line will have a capacity for 1.4 million tons of pulp annually, which will raise the unit's nominal production to 2.3 million tons annually (50% for each of the partners, Aracruz and Stora Enso)."

In addition, Aracruz's own website announced that "USD 65 million has already been invested in the acquisition of 35,000 hectares of land and forests." (http://www.aracruz.com.br/show_press.do?act=news&id=1000557&lang=1)

This expansion will mean the continuation of the negative impacts on the environment that have long been denounced by local communities living near the company's monoculture tree plantations. It is extremely troubling when the FSC notes in its own audit report that "the company does not have appropriate procedures for monitoring water and environmental impacts, before, during and after forestry operations..." This in itself is more than enough reason for not certifying the company.

With regard to the doubling of the company's plantations and the new pulp mill, announced in the official Aracruz annual report, Veracel made this surprising claim: "At the end of the ASI audit, Mr. Alipio (forestry director of Veracel) stated to the ASI and SGS auditing teams that no decision had been made regarding the expansion of Veracel's activities. He indicated that for the moment the shareholders had only given the green light for initiating a viability and impact study for this project." (FSC Surveillance of SGS Qualifor in 2008, Forest Management Audit to VERACEL, Brazil, 26-28/03/2008)

Does this mean that the previously quoted statements by Aracruz are false? Or is the forestry director of Veracel lying?

These blatant contradictions, in addition to the facts outlined earlier, should be more than reason enough for the FSC to immediately revoke the certification granted to Veracel Celulose.

At the same time, it is crucial for Brazilian and international civil society to take action to ensure that the Brazilian federal court's decision is upheld, given its significance for all those who are opposed to the activities of these companies, and its special importance at this time of rapid expansion by Veracel and its owners, Aracruz and Stora Enso, which will mean even more negative impacts on local communities and the environment caused by projects of this kind.

It is for this reason that the Socio-Environmental Forum of the Extreme South of Bahia has formulated a motion of support for the Public Prosecutors Office of Bahia, to congratulate this Brazilian public agency, as well as the Federal Court of Bahia for its ruling in this case. The Socio-Environmental Forum invites everyone to sign this motion, which can be accessed at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Brazil/motion_support.html

By Winnie Overbeek, Alert Against the Green Desert Network/Brazil

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- Chile: Documentary-maker jailed for filming a documentary on the Mapuche struggle against forestry companies

The occupation of the Mapuche peoples' ancestral territories by large-scale eucalyptus and pine plantations belonging to major forestry companies such as CMPC and Forestal Bosques ARAUCO relies for its expansion on the support of State machinery. Repression, torture, death and criminalization of Mapuche resistance are the background for the "forestry model."

The Mapuche conflict is a sort of leprosy in Chilean society: concealed, stigmatized and denied.

Elena Varela, a documentary-maker and music teacher had become interested in Mapuche music and decided to carry out research work in the 9th Region to learn more about their music and instruments. However, the situation she found there changed the focus of her work.

According to her declarations "I saw that they are impoverished, that their lands are dry, that behind the forestry companies there is a whole political and military machinery and I saw that the forestry industry spends any amount of money to silence anyone rebelling against the system. The raids on Mapuche communities are constant and terrible. I believe that some people are still searching among the Mapuche for that terrorist Pinochet [former Chilean dictator] imagined, a terrorist that will never be found in the Mapuche area because that terrorist does not exist."

So Elena Varela devoted herself to filming a documentary which she called "Newen Mapuche" (the Force of the People of Earth), endeavouring to record the conflict the Mapuche communities are facing with the forestry industry over their historical territorial claims in defence of their collective rights and the protection of their environment from the depredation of monoculture tree plantations (see WRM Bulletins Nos. 120, 106 and 101).

Over the past few years, in the framework of social, cultural and environmental degradation caused by the territorial expansion of forestry industries, the legitimate social protests of the Mapuche people – the most affected party – have been answered by violent repression against them and against those who address this issue supportively.

The long arm of criminalization is reaching out. Ranging from the murder of Matías Catrileo, a young man who was killed from behind to the imprisonment -during the current administration- of more than 55 Mapuche accused of attacking the tree plantations, who were given prison sentences of up to ten years (see Bulletin No. 26), to the dozens of people injured in demonstrations or subjected to situations of intimidation and fear.

On 7 May, while she was producing her film, Elena Varela was arrested by over 20 armed police. In her declarations

during an interview with the journalist Jaime Diaz Lavanchy, Elena Varela stated that "For 24 hours they would not let me talk with a lawyer, nor would they tell me what I was accused of." It was only later that she learnt that she was being accused of "illegal association with the intention of committing a crime."

She claims that she is innocent and affirms that she is in jail because of her film. "I am a prisoner because of my professional work as a filmmaker, because of the information I handle, because of my interaction with Mapuche activists who are struggling for their beliefs, because of my interviews with people from repressed Mapuche communities who dare not say anything, because I know many cruel things that make me sick. The Mapuche people have been humiliated, have been persecuted. I have seen so many people who have been emotionally and psychiatrically crushed, so many people who do not dare to talk! That is why I am in prison."

"What hurts me most, are the children" says Elena "the sick children of Temucuicui! [a Mapuche community in the area of Ercilla, subject to constant raids by the Special Police Forces] You can see it from their drawings. They paint soldiers inside their homes, explosions of tear-gas bombs. That is what they don't want people to know! And they also want to know the whereabouts of the Mapuche who are fighting, in order to exterminate them, as they want to do with me. I wanted to make a film and they put me in jail. This is a way of exterminating me, of silencing me."

Amnesty International has officially declared that it believes that "the authorities have arrested her in an attempt to curb the investigation on this conflict and to try to intimidate both her and the Indigenous Mapuche people. The police confiscated video tapes, sound equipment, cameras and mobile phones and the wardrobe needed to film the documentary from her home. They also took the research material prepared by Elena Varela and documents related with the funding of the film by the Fund for Audiovisual Promotion of the National Culture and Arts Council. Amnesty International fears that this information may be used by the Chilean security forces to intimidate and harass Mapuche activists and those who contribute with their opinion to the research.

The situation experienced by Elena Varela is not unique. Since March 2008, the authorities have arrested three filmmakers who denounced the conflict between the plantation companies and the Mapuche people. The Mapuche Mapuexpress news programme reported that "Two French journalists, Christopher Cyril Harrison and Joffrey Paul Rossj, were arrested on 17 March in Collipulli, while they were filming a Werken [a traditional authority of the Mapuche people]. The police confiscated their filming equipment and the tapes containing the work they had done up to then. Although there was an attempt to extradite them, the French consul avoided it. Two days later, together with the Werken, they were attacked in the street by a group of twelve people. On Saturday 3 May something similar happened with Giuseppe Gabriele and Dario Ioseffi, two Italian documentarians, while they were filming a Mapuche demonstration taking place on one of Forestal Mininco's plots, claimed for almost two decades by a Chupilko community."

Amnesty International recommends a series of actions in the case of Elena Varela, among them addressing letters to the President, the Minister of Culture and the Minister of the Interior (see in http://www.amnistia.cl/index_aauu.shtml?x=87763). For their part, various well-known people from the film world have circulated a letter addressed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, demanding the liberation of Elena Varela and stating their "concern over the situation of freedom of expression in Chile" (see http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Chile/medidas_cautelares.pdf and a video of the press conference: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaS9Fcoz3LA>

Elena Varela's grief is very great "because I cannot show what I had to show. But I must be strong, because now it is I who is suffering the pain of the Mapuche people."

Article based on "Estoy presa por la información que manejo", Jaime Díaz Lavanchy / La Nación Sunday 9 June 2008, http://www.lanacion.cl/prontus_noticias_v2/site/artic/20080628/pags/20080628180307.html; "Chile: Libertad de Expresión", Amnesty International http://www.amnistia.cl/index_aauu.shtml?x=87763; "Documentalista de Film

Mapuche y las graves violaciones al trabajo documental", Mapuexpress, <http://www.mapuexpress.net/?act=news&id=2870>; input from Alfredo Seguel, Coordination of Mapuche Territorial Identities (Coordinación de Identidades Territoriales Mapuche), alfredosequel@gmail.com

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- Colombia: Oil palm grows by the force of violence

Since the beginning of the decade, all the areas of expansion of oil palm plantations have coincided geographically with areas of paramilitary presence and expansion, to the extent that some of the new plantations being developed have been financed as farming projects for the same demobilised paramilitary from the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – United Self-Defence Force of Colombia) who had previously made incursions into these very areas.

This strategy of territorial control through the expansion of oil palm is reinforced by government policies supporting and providing incentives for the planting of oil palms, also clearly in a quest for economic, political and military control of large areas of Colombia currently outside state control.

These state policies are reinforced by the investment strategies of international bodies. An analysis of the investment plans of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) illustrates this: "For the IDB, medium and long-term crops have greater export potential, a greater capacity for surviving in an open economy, yield greater benefits in terms of the pacification process and generate sustained growth of the agricultural sector, thereby overcoming the problems of long-term financing of farming. (...) And in accordance with the Country Document (IDB), the programme focuses its activities on the zones and important projects from the perspective of pacification efforts. In general, the IDB regards investment in medium and long-term crops as strategies for governability or territorial control in the face of problems such as guerrilla conflict, political violence, common criminality and drug crops. Extensive farming provides a genuine alternative for the occupation of territory and for the creation of employment in conflict areas."

Ultimately, all these policies share the idea that oil palm cultivation is a type of economic development useful in the pacification of the country. This confluence of illegal and criminal acts, government policies and international investment forms the Colombian oil palm model.

This model can be described as having 5 phases:

1. Attacks or conquest of territory by paramilitaries.
2. Illegal appropriation of the land. Theft or purchase with armed intimidation.
3. Sowing of oil palm.
4. Palm Complex = Plantations + Extraction Plants.
- 5a. Flow of oil towards national and/or international markets.
- 5b. Territorial control.

This description is a summary of the different processes being developed in the oil palm-growing regions of the country, but in its entirety (phases 1 through to 5) it is particularly applicable to the new plantations developed since the beginning of the decade.

In previous processes such as in Santander or Tumaco, the model began with the oil palm complexes already established (4), the palm companies being the ones who formed or invited and financed paramilitary groups as private security corps, in response to the guerrillas. In contrast in Casanare, the palm plantations expanded at the same rate as paramilitary activity, both expansions overlapping each other. The case which perfectly fits the model is that of plantations in the Chocó where it was the paramilitaries themselves who invited the oil palm companies to establish themselves in areas under their control.

The Attorney's office itself states that, "the appropriation, illegal seizure and theft of land by paramilitary groups (33%), guerrillas (17%), drugs traffickers, emerald traders, large landowners, some palm-producers and other actors has been described by analysts and the media as the 'agrarian counter-reform' and 'paramilitary agrarian reform'".

Of the estimated 2.6 to 6.8 million hectares, many are now planted with oil palm. This 'agrarian counter-reform' denounced by different analysts and the media has been denounced for a long time by the victims themselves, as in the case of the communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó affected by oil palm plantations.

The incursions, attacks or subsequent takeover of territory has taken a grim toll in Colombia's rural areas. The murders or massacres, the forced disappearances, the threats, the kidnappings, the torture and other types of persecution are causing the forced displacement – collective and/or individual – of the inhabitants of the land which is to be seized.

The statistics on forced displacement in Colombia are alarming. According to different records it is estimated that between 1,874,917 and 3,832,525 people have been displaced by violence in Colombia. Of this high number, two out of three displaced people owned land at the time of displacement. (Excerpted and adapted from: "The flow of palm oil Colombia- Belgium/Europe. A study from a human rights perspective")

Complaints continue: the Colombian organization Salva la Selva denounced that the community leaders opposing oil palm plantations and those supporting displaced communities possessing legal land tenure deeds to return to the locations they were displaced from, have been receiving death threats. Other people in the area have been attacked by members of paramilitary and military forces. In September 2007, two people received bullet wounds from men whom are believed to be members of a paramilitary group. The threats to the communities that have already returned to their lands also continue.

Since 2001, 113 murders and 13 forced displacements have taken place and many death threats and illegal land occupations have been reported. Last December the Attorney General of the Nation filed a claim against 23 representatives of oil palm companies, although this has not led to any real efforts to halt the expansion of oil palm or of cattle ranching on community lands.

Last May, members of the Caracoli community, collective territory of Curvaradó, Jair Barrera, Jonny Barrera and Devis Salas and the Human Rights defenders of the Justice and Peace Commission, Elizabeth Gomez and Luz Marina Arroyabe were illegally arrested by the police, with accusations aimed at incriminating them. They were later subject to cruelty, torture and threats. The police action was accompanied by beneficiaries of paramilitary groups and oil palm growers (see <http://www.salvalaselva.org/protestaktion.php?id=255>)

For its part, the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) announced new policies increasing Government support to the expansion of agrofuels with the intention of turning Colombia into an agrofuel exporting power.

The violation of Human Rights in the Choco and other locations and the accelerated destruction of tropical forests and other vital and biologically diverse systems are the direct result of these government policies.

Article based on: "The flow of palm oil Colombia- Belgium/Europe. A study from a human rights perspective", Fidel Mingorance, Conducted by HREV for the Coordination Belge pour la Colombia, http://www.cbc.collectifs.net/doc/informe_en_v3-1.pdf; "Colombia: agrocombustibles destruyen comunidades y biodiversidad", Salva la Selva, <http://www.salvalaselva.org/protestaktion.php?id=255>

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- Malaysia: Blockades against Sarawak oil palm company

In Europe and the US, palm oil is being promoted as an agrofuel that will allegedly prevent the increase of carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere. Of course, it is the large scale and not the small-scale diversified model which is being implemented and in fact it's just a way of delaying the imperative need of changing energy-intensive production, consumer and trade patterns. Oil palm plantations for agrofuel just add to the already damaging effects of palm tree plantations for industrial use.

In the meantime, big corporations take the lion's share profiting from the burgeoning market of an industrial crop that covers wide areas. Southern countries are being targeted, but the fruit of palm trees tastes bitter for their communities, that receive less than the promised crumbs. The following is one more example of this.

In 1996, Iban landowners in Sarawak agreed that their land in the Kanowit District be planted with oil palm. A joint venture between Boustead Plantations (60%), the villagers (30%) and the state government agency Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA) (10%) was established.

Through the agreement, villagers were promised roads that would connect the longhouses in the area, electricity and piped water supply, as well as 60-year land titles for the Native Customary Rights (NCR) landowners.

However, it was reported that despite the fruits have been harvested for many years, NCR landowners have been paid no dividends up to now except for an initial meagre advance paid in 1997. None of the other promises has been fulfilled.

The natives could no longer bear the abuse and decided to take action to protect their interests. In April a blockade action was staged to stop the company from entering their oil palm plantation. At first it was carried out only by three longhouse communities but later on others followed up to the present 20. According to an article by Tony Thien, about 400 people from 20 Iban longhouse communities in Machan have stopped the company from entering their oil palm plantation while at one access point into Ladang Kelimut situated on the right bank of the Rajang River, the villagers placed their own people to prevent workers from entering the estate. At another access road, they erected two barriers across. Many more villages are expected to join them in the blockades.

At the same time, the villagers lodged a police report in Kanowit, saying the company had failed to pay dividends to them and that they were giving the company notice unless such payment was made soon they would have to take the case to court and at the same time stop the company's operations.

As usual in these cases, the journalist reporting on the issue informs that "the company could not be contacted immediately for comment".

Article based on: "Angry native landowners act against Sarawak oil palm company", Tony Thien, Malaysiakini, <http://www.bmf.ch/en/news/?show=103>

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- West Africa: Wilmar and Olam International ambitious expansion plans for palm oil

An article in June's WRM Bulletin highlighted Unilever's role in the threat to Tanoe Swamps Forest, one of the last remaining forest blocks in Cote d'Ivoire. Following international protests, Unilever now 'promises' an Environmental Impact Assessment but has given no guarantee that the forest will be protected. Instead, they have publicised their long-standing plans to sell shares in PALM-CI, which holds the concession for Tanoe, although they will remain a

major PALM-CI customer. Behind the announcement, and possibly behind the plans to destroy Tanoe Forest, lie far-reaching changes in the region's palm oil industry.

In November 2007, Singapore-based Wilmar International and Olam International announced plans for aggressive expansion into West Africa. They formed a 50:50 joint venture, Nauvu, which acquired shares in Palm-CI, in the West African agribusiness firm SIFCA (also a major investor in Palm-CI) and in a new refining business set up by SIFCA and Unilever.(1) The Ivorian government has sold its shares to SIFCA. Since Wilmar International acquired the Kuok Group last year and became the world's largest palm oil trader, they have been looking at expanding into new regions, including in West Africa. Their plans are ambitious: Palm-CI, the largest palm oil and palm oil mill owner in Cote d'Ivoire, plan to more than treble their production by 2020. Wilmar, Olam and SIFCA seek to expand palm oil, sugar and rubber production, not just in Cote d'Ivoire but across the region, including in Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria, Africa's largest palm oil producer. An initial trial for producing palm oil biodiesel in Cote d'Ivoire has been held.(2)

The new Wilmar-Olam partnership and investment in West Africa is worrying news because both companies have been implicated in deforestation and disregarding the rights of communities. Wilmar's concessions are in Indonesia, where palm oil expansion has been closely tied to deforestation. Companies routinely clear the forest area than they actually plant with oil palms and make extra profits from, commonly illegal, timber sales. A 2007 report by Friends of the Earth Netherlands, Kontak Rakyat Borneo and Lembaga Gemawan (3) exposed Wilmar's involvement in rainforest destruction, in ignoring national laws and the rights of communities and in forest fires in Sambas District, Kalimantan. The Greenpeace Report 'Cooking the Climate' (4) reveals a large number of Wilmar concessions on rainforest land as well as a large number of fire hotspots during the dry season. Unilever is involved as a customer rather than as a plantation company, just as they now aim to do in West Africa. Olam, on the other hand, has obtained timber concessions in DR Congo in breach of a moratorium, and has had shipments of illegal logs seized.(5) Both Unilever and Wilmar are members of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, with Unilever as a founding member and also holding the presidency of the RSPO Executive Board. There is no evidence that their RSPO membership has translated into anything other than a PR-coup.

Wilmar's record in Uganda, the only African country where the company has held oil palm concessions so far, has followed the Indonesian 'model': Their subsidiary, Bidco, was granted permissions to destroy forests, including in Ssesse Islands, for palm oil (see WRM bulletin, August 2006).

Tanoe Swamps Forest could well be the first of many forests in West Africa targeted by this new business partnership.

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CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW!

- Asian Civil Society Groups Call For 'Climate Justice'

Over 170 activists who gathered in Bangkok from 12-14 July harshly criticised governments and corporations for their

failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They called for "climate justice" and a "fundamental departure from the current global order" to solve the climate crisis. Conference participants included fishers and farmers, forest and indigenous peoples, women, youth, workers and non-government activists from 31 countries.

"By climate justice," participants asserted in a conference document, "we mean that the burden of adjustment to the climate crisis must be borne by those who have created it, and not by those who have been least responsible."

The conference signaled the growing voice of social movements and civil society groups in Asia on the issue of climate change.

Throughout the three-day conference, participants repeatedly expressed frustration at how governments and corporations, who have thus far dominated the climate discussion, have failed to address the root causes of planet-threatening climate change.

After over 30 workshops and plenary debates, participants reached consensus on their opposition to carbon trading and "offset" schemes, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD) program, which allow polluters to buy their way out of reducing emissions.

Participants also rejected industrialized agrofuels, megadams, and nuclear power, saying these "false solutions" will "merely exacerbate the climate crisis and deepen global inequality."

As a solution, participants insisted that governments must confront the problem of overconsumption, both in developed countries as well as among elites in poorer countries.

The conference heard that while industrialized countries have been responsible for about 90% of historical greenhouse gas emissions, 99% of the risks posed by climate change are being borne by people from developing countries.

"Dealing with the climate crisis inevitably involves a fundamental departure from the current global order, and a comprehensive transformation of social, economic, political and cultural relations at the local, national, and global level," participants concluded.

The conference was hosted by Focus on the Global South, a policy and advocacy group housed at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, together with 24 other co-organizers from around the world. The majority of participants came from Asian countries, but there were also representatives from North America, Europe, Latin America, and Africa.

For more information about the conference, go to www.focusweb.org/climatechange

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