From Durban: Call for a Moratorium on REDD+

Real action to face climate change has once again been blocked by the world's polluters. The 17th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN COP17) in Durban ended with the launching of a new round of negotiations (the Durban Platform) aimed at a new regime. The decision represents a crime against humanity as long as postponing action to 2020 allows global temperatures to increase 4 degrees Celsius, based on the promises for emission reductions, made by industrial countries in Cancun for the period 2012-2020.

In spite of a lack of action to come to a binding emission reduction agreement, many efforts once again were made in Durban to push for REDD+ as a way to move forward.

Indigenous Peoples participating in the UNFCCC negotiations, organized under the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities against REDD and for Life Forms have called for a moratorium on REDD+. They highlighted that “the sources of financing for REDD+ carbon offsets come from the private sector and carbon markets, which extractive industries are involved in. Carbon markets and REDD+ convert our territories and forests into carbon dumps, while those most responsible for the climate crisis do not commit to legally binding reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and continue to make profits. The World Bank itself has reported that the “financial flows required for climate stabilization and adaptation, will in the long run be mainly private in composition.”

REDD – coupled with Clean Development Mechanism – might allow industrialized countries “to offset 24-69% of their emissions … thus avoiding the necessary domestic cuts that are required to peak emissions around 2015”, as the Director of NASA, James Hansen has acknowledged.

The majority of the forests of the world are found in the land and territories of indigenous peoples and the group denounces that REDD+ -as well as the CDM- promotes the privatization and commodification of forests, trees and air through carbon markets and offsets, “a hypocrisy that will not stop global warming” and which could result in the biggest land grab of all time.

The call for a moratorium is based upon the precautionary principle which says that, “when an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not established scientifically.” A growing number of recent reports provides evidence that “Indigenous Peoples are being subjected to violations of their rights as a result of the implementation of REDD+-type policies and programs, including the right to life of objectors to REDD+, forced displacements and involuntary resettlement, the loss of lands, territories and resources, means of subsistence, food sovereignty and security, and the imposition of so-called “alternative livelihoods” that lead to separation of our people from their communities, cultures y traditional knowledge. Similarly, our rights to free, prior and informed consent, self-determination and autonomy consecrated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPs) are also violated. It is worth noting that the United Nations itself recognizes that REDD+ could result in the “lock-up of forests”.”

REDD+ not only harms Indigenous Peoples and local communities, but also damages the

environment promoting industrial tree plantations - which may include planting genetically modified trees – that under perverse incentives are replacing native forests thus increasing deforestation.

While biotic carbon – the carbon stored in forests – can never be the climatic equivalent to fossilized carbon kept underground, carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels adds to the overall burden of carbon perpetually circulating between the atmosphere, vegetation, soils and oceans. This inequivalence, among many other complexities, makes REDD carbon accounting impossible, warns the declaration.

“REDD+ is undermining the climate regime and violating the principle of common but differentiated responsibility established under the UNFCCC. Pollution credits generated by REDD+ obstruct the only workable solution to climate change: keeping oil, coal and gas in the ground,” concludes the statement.

The call of the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities against REDD and for Life Forms can be read at http://climate-connections.org/?p=12488&preview=true