
Declaration of Chiapas in REDDellion: Enough of REDD+ and the Green Economy!

From September 25-27, 2012, subnational governments from six countries will arrive in the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México, to promote and advance the new shadow program with which they hope, by way of investors and their government supporters, to privatize tropical forests. It is called REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), and its justification is the climate crisis. The 17 state or provincial governments that will participate are: Chiapas and Campeche in México; Aceh, Central Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, Papua and West Papua in Indonesia; Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso and Pará in Brasil; California and Illinois in the United States; Madre de Dios in Perú; and Cross River State in Nigeria. This group is hoping to advance, by way of this shadow mechanism, the privatization of Mother Earth, 1) in order to appropriate her resources and services (the objective behind bio-conservation, as the governor of Chiapas calls his REDD+ program in the Lacandon Jungle), 2) to elevate the unsustainable production of biofuels, destroying, in their wake, all forms of life, and 3) to rupture the main historic obstacles to capital in the forests and jungles of our nations: culture and community organization. All of this comes clothed in the concept of the “green economy”.

REDD+ has been developed under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Clean Development Mechanism. Within this framework, REDD+ is justified by the double pretext that deforestation causes between 12% y 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, and that tropical forests are the primary natural sink for these gases. In this manner REDD+ is formally conceived as making two parallel claims: to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases generated by deforestation, and, by pretending to foster the recuperation of these forests, to support the natural sequestration of more than 80% of the gases emitted by industrialised countries and generated by capitalist consumption. The “+” or “plus” refers to sustainable forest management, the enhancement of forest carbon stocks (which includes not only forests, but monocultures), and the conservation of ecosystems for the products and services they generate, the most prized of which is genetic material.

Countries with neoliberal regimes located in tropical latitudes, large polluting corporations, and corporate-friendly “big green” environmental organizations and carbon brokers, are giving increasing attention to this mechanism which promises “integrated financing” to nations and indigenous or peasant farmer communities with humid tropical forests, or space for plantations, and those States and companies that emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, by giving them “offset credits” to continue polluting.

Under REDD+, private and United Nations-led initiatives are formally tied to the discussions on climate change. But there are also subnational projects such as the REDD+ agreement signed two years ago between the states of Chiapas, Acre, and California, two weeks before the UN Summit on Climate Change convened in Cancún, México, in anticipation of the foreseeable disagreement on the establishment of carbon markets. The international body under which these three states signed this Agreement, and which will meet in Chiapas on the 25, 26, 27 and 28 of September, is the

Governors' Climate Change and Forests Task Force – GCF. In California, this tri-subnational agreement is part of a state law that proposes solutions to climate change, and requires the reduction of statewide emissions to 1990 levels, to be achieved by (but not necessarily before) 2020.

This offset-based proposal is the primary global pilot project promoting the implementation of REDD+ as a mandatory legal mechanism, and therein lies the importance of alerting the world to the dangers of this legislation and its implications for the privatization of forests and biodiversity and the destruction of the community life of Indigenous Peoples and peasant farmers.

The subnational agreement from California, USA, rather than addressing the root causes of greenhouse gas emissions, will offset emissions through the logic of capitalist accumulation: by buying carbon credits that will legally permit the continuation of the predatory and consumerist model. The agreement, in addition, alleges that it contributes to protecting forests and jungles in Chiapas and Acre, but fails to reveal the business interests in genetic patents behind this supposed altruism; that it contributes to the generation of low-carbon energy, without acknowledging the destruction of biodiversity and ecosystems that it brings; and that it promotes sustainable development of local communities, while hiding its true consequences: fragmentation of the cultures and organizational cohesion of the communities.

The subnational entity of Chiapas in México, a favored operator of the “green economy” to which other governments of the Mayan Jungle region have joined, with the support and strategic direction of the federal government of Mexico, hopes, on the one hand, to ensure the success of its devastating agrofuels business, which it refers to as ‘clean energy’; and on the other hand, to provide investors, carbon brokers, and corporate environmental groups with ‘green’ business opportunities such as bio-genetics, through the conservation of biodiversity in protected ecosystems, found by and large within indigenous peoples’ territories. This explains why the Montes Azules Biosphere was chosen as the first REDD+ project area in Chiapas, rather than those degraded and deforested regions whose recuperation would offer the carbon market a higher rate of greenhouse gas capture, or at the very least a more congruent platform for the REDD concept.

REDD+ is the new face, painted green by the climate crisis, of an old and familiar form of colonialism that advances the appropriation of lands and territories through dispossession, forced displacement, or the permanent leasing of land by indigenous communities. It demonstrates the incoherent logic of a green capitalism which, on the one hand, promotes the destruction of biological corridors in the lowland jungle (the best irrigated areas) with its “climate-friendly” agrofuels; and on the other hand calls for the conservation of biodiversity in neighboring protected areas.

We therefore declare that:

1) REDD+ fails to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples established in declarations, conventions, and international treaties, as well as in the Mexican Constitution. The affected Indigenous and peasant farmer communities of Chiapas have not been previously nor sufficiently informed or consulted, nor does this program consider cultural factors in its means and objectives.

2) REDD+ incentivizes the destruction of biodiversity. Subnational states, corporations, and multilateral bodies conveniently reconceptualize the meaning of forests to include plantations, among them African Palm, Jatropha, Eucalyptus, and others, whose cultivation depends on huge volumes of agrochemicals and natural common assets such as water.

3) REDD+ fails to address the root causes of the climate crisis. It does not focus on the urgent need

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from industrialized countries, which pollute the most, and allows them to continue polluting by way of offset permits as proposed in the REDD+ agreement between California (USA), Acre (Brasil), and Chiapas (México).

4) Under REDD+, “captured” carbon emissions are neither permanent nor accurately quantifiable. Under REDD+ it is not possible to undertake reliable carbon accounting due to the “leakage” from deforestation in other areas and other sectors. The lack of permanence of the forest carbon captured makes REDD+ a deception posing as a solution. Forest carbon is never permanently sequestered (unlike fossil carbon, which is permanently stored in the ground until its release by extraction and combustion).

5) REDD + makes Global South indigenous and peasant farmer communities responsible for absorbing the carbon emitted by the North, obligating them, among other activities, to maintain forest reserves, and it criminalizes them if they are opposed. Under the REDD+ scheme, the threat that Indigenous Peoples and peasant farmers will be displaced from their lands in order to clear the jungle for plantations is already materializing. Others who have stayed in their territories, and, faced with diminishing global prices for biofuels, have been jailed for cutting down African Palm trees, despite their unawareness that these trees are linked to REDD+ projects; others have been persecuted by forest-plantation carbon traders, as in Congo. REDD+ includes all types of forest plantations and monocultures, everything planted by large agribusiness corporations, and includes the soil itself.

6) REDD+ divides and assaults indigenous communities. The acceptance of the Chiapas REDD+ project by the Lacandon Community, an Indigenous People invented 40 years ago by the Mexican government in order to facilitate the business of extracing precious hardwoods, is: 1) a form of counterinsurgency, fomenting conflict between the Caribe ethnic group and neighboring indigenous communities in the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (in an official ceremony in April, 2011 the governor of Chiapas gave the Lacandon Community arms and uniforms to patrol their border against Tzeltal communities who were resisting the demarcation of the so-called ‘brecha Lacandona’ which would consolidate their dispossession); 2) antidemocratic in its failure to represent the majority of Indigenous Peoples in the Lacandon Jungle, and 3) a theft from the Nation because, beneath the cover of this false solution to the climate crisis is an attempt to trans-nationalize the immense biodiversity of the Mexican humid tropics, which are strategic for the nation’s sovereign development.

7) While awaiting the consolidation of its agreement with California, the state of Chiapas invented its own “clone” provisional program called “Reduced Emissions from Avoided Deforestation and Avoided Degradation (REDD+) for the Lacandon Jungle”, which gives state subsidies from the people of Chiapas to the Lacandon Community (made up of Caribe families and the Tzeltal and Ch’ol population centered in this zone). It is a case of draining public resources from one of the most deeply indebted entities in the nation, perpetuating paternalistic policies and the attitude of “if you don’t pay me I’ll deforest”, and heightening distributive injustice by directing yet more resources to the indigenous group that already receives the highest per capita contribution in the nation for conservation.

8) REDD+ creates conditions for a new cycle of capitalist speculation, based in carbon offset credits presented as a ‘market of the air,’ but which carry real impacts in the control and ownership of land through new regimes of privatization, such as the titling of target land as carbon reserves. In this manner, they open the doors to the commodification and trading of ‘natural goods’ such as land, water, and biodiversity, rather than their protection and defense under public policies and/or collective management by indigenous and traditional communities.

9) REDD+ promotes the emptying of the countryside, and the erosion of the main cultural support of the Indigenous Peoples: the traditional production of sovereign foods and the loss of agro-biodiversity. Impeding the practice of rotating fallows (considering them untouchable biomass that capture carbon), condemning the cultivation of annual cycle food (the milpa) to failure) and debilitating the ancestral selection of seeds, by converting Indigenous farmers, tyrannically and against their will, into renters of the forest, in direct threat to their food sovereignty.

We therefore declare:

In relation to the climate

- 1) Democratic and technically coherent measures are required to make the transition to a sustainable energy system, and to bring an urgent end to the use and abuse of hydrocarbons.
- 2) The largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions, the industrial and consumerist countries of the North, should implement urgent mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without substitutions or offsets, and with a focus on the reduction goals of their own countries.
- 3) Resources and measures to conserve forests and jungles should be additional and democratically defined, and not based in impositions or offsets that allow continuing contamination. They should take into account the sustainable alternatives offered by peasant farmers and Indigenous Peoples in harmony with Mother Earth, which support community-based forest management and conservation of forests; they should not be based in markets nor controlled by corporations, financial institutions or 'green coyotes', but collectively by the people.

In relation to REDD+:

- 1) We denounce the shadowy aspect of this program which, beneath the sign of the plus (+), integrates all of the products and services provided by ecosystems, such as biodiversity and water, as the focus of profits, wealth and control, and advances the dispossession or alienation of indigenous and peasant farmer communities that live in the most biodiverse regions with the greatest water captation on the planet.
- 2) We remonstrate the profound incoherence of the proposed "plus" connoting conservation and provision of environmental services, that considers toxic monocultures – specifically those grown for agrofuels – to be viable sinks for greenhouse gases, without taking into account their devastating impacts on immense areas that function as biological corridors, such as the alluvial plains around the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas.
- 3) We condemn the historic servility of the subnational governments that will meet in San Cristóbal de Las Casas on the 25th, 26th and 27th of September, headed by Juan Sabines, responsible for "legally, politically and culturally" securing the path of dispossession demanded by the transnational corporations, the domestic oligarchy, States the "green coyotes," and the hypocritical "big greens".

We alert the peoples and communities of the world to this cynical program of theft dispossession, in which the destruction or conservation of all types of tropical forests, including mangroves (as has occurred recently in Guatemala y México), or their perverse opposite, plantations and monocultures, are declared and imposed as both the cause and the primary remedy for climate change.

¡MOTHER EARTH IS NOT FOR SALE!

September 20, 2012, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México

Already signed:

Comunidades de la Región Amador Hernández, Chiapas, México, Grupos comunitarios de Marqués de Comillas, Chiapas, México, Grupos comunitarios de Benemérito de las Américas, Chiapas, México, Consejo de Médicos y Parteras Indígenas Tradicionales de Chiapas (Compitch), Chiapas, México, Sociedad Civil Las Abejas. Chiapas. México, Comité de Derechos Humanos de Base de Chiapas Digna Ochoa.-Chiapas.-México, Laklimal Ixim-Nuestro Pueblo de Maíz. Chiapas. México, Otros Mundos Chiapas.- Amigos de La Tierra México, Movimiento Mexicano de Alternativas a las Afectaciones Ambientales y al Cambio Climático (MOVIAC)/Capítulo Chiapas, K'INAL ANTSETIK A.C. (CHIAPAS), Elsa Stettner, Comité Pro Defensa de Arcediano, A.C., Alfredo Menchaca, Amigos de la Barranca, A.C., Procesos Integrales para la Autogestión de los Pueblos , Prodh.-Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez A.C. México, MEDIO AMBIENTE Y SOCIEDAD, A. C.- Baja California México, David Barkin.-Profesor Distinguido de Universidad Autónoma Xochimilco, Mario Bladimir Monroy Gómez.- Grupo Jade, Taller de Desarrollo Comunitario A.C. - TADECO –Guerrero. México, La vida.- Veracruz, México, Frente, Amplio Opositor a Minera San Xavier, (FAO) SLP. México, Pro San Luis Ecológico,SLP.-México, Desarrollo de la Mujer Oaxaqueña AC (IDEMO), Universidad de la Tierra en Puebla , Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), Bia'lii. Asesoría e Investigación, A.C.-México, Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario (IMDEC) .-México, Red Manglar México, La Coalición de Organizaciones, Mexicanas por el Derecho al Agua (COMDA).México, Alianza Internacional de habitantes, Pobladores AC., Alianza Mexicana por la, Autodeterminación de los Pueblos (AMAP), Bios-iguana.- Colima, México, UPVG,, Unión Popular Valle Gómez México, Red Nacional Género y Economía (REDGE).-México, Mujeres para el Diálogo, A.C. (MpD).-México, SIEMBRA A.C.,-México, RAMLC.- La Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio.-México, Mtra. Rocío Mejía, REDGE.-México, AMMULIMI (Asociación de Mujeres Líderes Microempresarias, AC), Maderas del Pueblo del Sureste, AC, Comité Nacional para la defensa y Conservación de los Chimalapas, RED DE LA ESPERANZA. Economía solidaria.-México., Tsunel bej. Chiapas.-México, MADRE TIERRA MEXICO a.c., Asamblea veracruzana de iniciativas y defensa ambiental.LA VIDA.-México, José Enrique González Ruíz.-Programa de posgrado de Derechos Humanos de la, Universidad –Autónoma de La Ciudad de México. UACM., Movimiento de Afectados por las presas y en defensa de los ríos. MAPDER. México, CEIBA-Amigos de La Tierra Guatemala, Savia, Escuela de Pensamiento Ecologista (Guatemala), Consejo de Pueblos de Occidente (CPO), Guatemala, Frente Petenero contra las Represas.- Guatemala, ADH.-Asamblea Departamental de Los Pueblos de Huehuetenango.- Guatemala, Movimiento de Víctimas y Afectados por el Cambio Climático (MOVIAC).- Guatemala, Red-manglar Internacional RMI.-Guatemala, Asociación Santa Marta, ADES.- El Salvador, Centro salvadoreño de Tecnología Apropiable .CESTA/Amigos de LA Tierra El Salvador.- El Salvador, Movimiento de Víctimas y Afectados por el Cambio Climático (MOVIAC).- Guatemala El Salvador, Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH.- Honduras, Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares de Honduras (COPINH).- Honduras, COMPA/Insurrectas Autónomas Honduras, Movimiento Madre Tierra.- Honduras, CTC/COMPA HONDURAS, COECO-CEIBA/Amigos de la Tierra Costa Rica, Colectivo Voces Ecológicas COVEC.- Panamá, Camille Chalmers, Profesor de la Universidad de Estado de Haití, Plate-forme haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif .-PAPDA.-Haití, CMMLK Centro Memorial Martin Luther King CUBA, Coalición de Tendencias Clasistas.-Venezuela, CENSAT.-Agua Viva/ Amigos de La Tierra.-Colombia, Tatiana Rodríguez Maldonado.- CENSAT/Agua Viva Colombia, Otros Mundos Colombia .-Colombia, Movimiento Colombiano en Defensa de los Territorios y Afectados por Represas "Ríos Vivos".-Colombia,

Sobrevivencia.- Amigos de La Tierra Paraguay, NAT.-Amigos de la Tierra Brasil, FASE.-Federação de Orgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional / Espírito Santo.-Brasil, MAB.-Movimiento de Afectados por las Represas, Brasil, Amigos de La Tierra Argentina, Antonio Zambrano Allende - Movimiento por el Poder Popular MPP (Perú), Convergencia de Movimientos de los Pueblos de las Américas (COMPA), Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo Extractivo Minero (M4), ATALC.- Amigos de La Tierra América Latina y el Caribe, Red Latinoamericana contra Represas y por los ríos, sus comunidades y el AGUA – REDLAR, Misiones Agrícolas de Estado Unidos de América, Global Exchange.- USA, RECOMA (Red Latinoamericana contra los monocultivos de árboles), Movimiento Mundial por los Bosques (WRM), Acción Ecológica, Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, Global Justice Ecology Project, Carbon Trade Watch, Indigenous Environmental Network, Aktionsgemeinschaftsolidarischewelt. AWS Brasilien, France Ameriue Latine.- Francia, Council of Canadians, Communities for a better environment.-USA, Movement Generation: Justice and Ecology Project, Oakland, CA .-USA, Sursiendo, Comunicación e Intervención Social, Ik balam (Agencia de Noticias ambientales)