
[NGOs call on FSC to stop certifying tree plantations](#)

WRM Press Release on [Open Letter to FSC Members](#) -

The General Assembly of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, from 3-7 November. Coinciding with the opening of the event, an open letter is being distributed to FSC members, calling on the FSC “to urgently resolve the serious problem of FSC certification of monoculture tree plantations.”

Wally Menne, from the South African Timberwatch Coalition explains that “the Forest Stewardship Council was created for the certification of forests. Plantations have nothing in common with forests and should have therefore never been within the mandate of the FSC. The time has come for the FSC to decide to stop certifying them.”

Another South African activist—Philip Owen from Geosphere- adds that “timber plantations have resulted in the depletion of scarce water resources, making them prone to devastating fires such as those recently experienced in South Africa and Swaziland, with the result of a number of people dead or homeless.” “Those plantations –he emphasises- were FSC certified!”

“By certifying these plantations, the FSC is strengthening large timber companies –that are members of the FSC- and weakening local peoples’ struggles to protect their land and resources”, says Marcelo Calazans from the Brazilian NGO FASE, adding that “by certifying these plantations, the FSC label has totally lost its credibility.”

After fires ravaged the Pigg’s Peak area in Swaziland, Nhlanhla Msweli from GeaSphere Swaziland commented: “Our experience is that plantations have not benefited local communities - instead they have brought pain and servitude”. He summed up the situation expressing that “we can link timber plantations to the poverty that is experienced on the ground, evicting people from their land is fatal, paying them peanuts is exploitation, not being environmentally responsibly is wrong, and not taking any responsibility for damages done on the environment is not being concerned at all.”

Nathalia Bonilla, from Accion Ecologica in Ecuador, expresses “frustration, because in spite of all the documented evidence about their negative social and environmental impacts, the FACE-PROFAFOR and Endesa/Botrosa plantations are still FSC certified.” She adds that “the certification company GFA is now in Ecuador assessing Endesa/Botrosa’s plantations. We fear that the opinion of local communities will not be taken into account and that the company will be able to continue its destructive activities under FSC’s ‘green’ label.”

“For many years we have been documenting the impacts of monoculture tree plantations and publishing detailed studies on a large range of countries (Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Ecuador, Indonesia, Uganda, Uruguay, South Africa, Swaziland, Thailand and others). Instead of learning lessons from them, the FSC chose to ignore the evidence and has continued to certify uncertifiable plantations,” explains Ricardo Carrere of the World Rainforest Movement.

The open letter, signed by over 3600 organizations and individuals from all over the world, calls “on those FSC members who share with us the desire to protect local peoples and Nature from the damage caused by the expansion of tree plantations to raise their voices at the upcoming general assembly and to help bring about the change that is needed.”

The urgency of that change is expressed in the letter by stating that “The time has now arrived for FSC members –particularly from the social and environmental chambers- to take sides: to continue to allow business as usual, or to fight for change; to protect the interests of large pulp and timber corporations or the rights of local peoples and Nature; to carry on accepting that plantations are a “type of forest” or to agree that they have nothing in common with them; to greenwash a most harmful land-use, or to oppose social and environmental destruction.”

Contact persons for further information:

In South Africa

Wally Menne, Timberwatch Coalition, wally_m@iafrica.com, Tel: +27 (0) 82 4442083, Skype: wally.menne

International

Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement, rcarrere@wrm.org.uy, Tel 598 2 4132989 – 598 2 4100985

The open letter and signatories are available

at: <https://wrm.org.uy/actions-and-campaigns/open-letter-to-the-fsc-members/>