
Open Letter to National Governments regarding the September 21st, International Day of Struggle against Monoculture Tree Plantations

Humankind faces an environmental, economic, and climate crisis that poses a threat to its survival. Destruction of ecosystems endangers not only communities that directly depend on them, but also the planet as a whole. Power centres have not questioned the production and consumption imperatives that are responsible. Instead, they are promoting false solutions that allow the same actors that created the crisis to continue accumulating wealth while the majority of the world's population see their living standards deteriorate.

Today we are witnessing the confluence of two processes: incorporation of new aspects of life into the market economy and financialization of the economy itself, including speculation in new 'green' commodities.

Capitalist societies have always appropriated human and nonhuman nature. Today a range of radically new products are being developed for sale: carbon, biodiversity, water and so on. At the same time, speculative financial markets have gained increasing power over the rest of economy and of life, in a response to the capitalist crisis that began in the 1970s. Enter the Green Economy, encouraged by the United Nations and rationalized by the claim that the only way to assure that nature is conserved is to price it. As fresh objects of commerce and speculation, so-called 'ecosystem service' commodities are recruited as saviours of an economy that remains centred on plunder and exploitation.

For actors that enrich themselves through the financialization of nature – banks, investment funds, pension funds, transnational companies – the Green Economy means nothing more than new business opportunities. Acting in tandem with major conservationist organizations, they appropriate UN processes such as the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity, using them to legitimate their actions.

Preserving nature becomes a business, restricting the access of local communities to zones and goods that are essential to their survival. REDD and proto-REDD projects are a clear example, as was emphasized at peoples' meetings during the recent Rio+20 World Summit.

In many cases, it is the same actors who are speculating on the 'business of nature' and getting richer through its destruction. At the same time that financial capital explores 'ecosystem services', it is also continuing to expand its interests in destructive activities. For example, it is increasingly common that pension or investment funds from Northern countries invest and speculate in large-scale monoculture tree plantations in Southern countries. The negative impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, water sources, and the means of survival of local communities have been widely demonstrated.

This is a call to unite our struggles in order to demand that governments start a process of dismantling speculation in and commodification of life in a way that can help protect landscapes and livelihoods from the destruction and inequality exacerbated by the financialization of life.

This is why, as part of the September 21st International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, and on the eve of the Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will be held in India on October 1-19, we are launching this open letter demanding that our governments stop the expansion of tree plantations in our territories and take a firm stance at the Convention against the growing financialization of nature.

What indigenous peoples use to call 'the sacred' cannot be priced; it has to be defended!

To sign on this letter please send a message to letter-21-09-2012@wrm.org.uy including your name, organization and country.

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