
The Vitoria Statement in Support of the Struggles of Local Peoples Against Large-Scale Tree Plantations

The following Statement was issued on 24/11/05 in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil at an international meeting on building support for local communities against large-scale tree plantations and GMO trees. This meeting was co-sponsored by World Rainforest Movement, FASE-ES and Global Justice Ecology Project.

The city of Vitoria in Brazil, owes its name to the “victory” of the colonialist Portuguese against the original indigenous inhabitants of the land. Today, the same name has a totally different meaning. The indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani peoples have retaken the lands that were stolen from them by the giant pulp mill corporation Aracruz Cellulose. They have been joined in the struggle against the company and its plants by other local communities and organizations from civil society who, through uniting in the struggle, have weakened the company’s power. They have thus become a symbol of victory for peoples all over the world who are fighting against similar corporations.

Peoples throughout the world are also uniting at the local, national and international levels to put pressure on large scale tree plantations that have been depriving them of their livelihoods and destroying their lands.

These struggles have brought us together in Vitoria, in Espirito Santo, Brazil to strengthen the local peoples’ movements against corporations that are advancing large scale monoculture tree plantations.

With that aim:

- We support the struggles of local peoples for land rights and access to land
- We support the struggles of local peoples who are defending their right to water, biodiversity, soils, foods, medicines, fuel, etc that come from the land.
- We support the struggles of local peoples for autonomy and self-determination.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against pulpwood plantations and pulp mills.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against oil palm plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against carbon sink plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against biomass plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against the certification of large scale tree plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and opposition to the introduction of GMO trees which would greatly exacerbate the impacts on local communities from large-scale tree plantations. We therefore call for a global ban on the release of GMO trees into the environment.

Large scale tree plantations, whether GMO or not, are the end result of a set of global economic mechanisms put into play by a series of international actors that make it possible for corporations to take over peoples’ lands, water and biodiversity in order to increase profits. In addition to the pulp

and paper corporations, the international entities working to disenfranchise local peoples in support of corporate profits and the neoliberal model include International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank; organizations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; commercial banks; and forestry consulting firms, all of whom act with the support of national governments.

We therefore demand that national governments end this destructive development model and act to support the rights and livelihoods of local peoples, rather than repressing them.

We call on the people of the world to join the struggles of local peoples who are defending their rights, lands, water, and biodiversity.

Signed,

World Rainforest Movement

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