
Declaration of Heredia on Climate, Forests and Plantations

Heredia, 28 March 2009

We, organisations of civil society from every continent, have met in Costa Rica between 24 and 28 March to share experiences, visit peasant communities, think and present proposals on the question of climate, forests, and plantations.

During the first part of our meeting we visited several peasant communities in the northern part of the country and were able to see the impact of pineapple monoculture on local communities, on their territories, sources of water, health, local ecosystems. We were able to see how these peasant communities continue to protect and regenerate their forests against all the attacks they suffer.

We were able to see clearly how the imposition of an agro-export model that is repeated in different shapes and with different crops all around the planet contributes to the current climate disaster. This model of commodity exports, with its system of monocultures, intense use of fossil-fuel based agro-chemicals and transport of products over thousands of miles for the consumption of the rich North, is one of the main causes of the current climate crisis.

Costa Rica sells itself to the world as a green country that defends its forests and biodiversity, but we have seen that this image does not reflect the reality of the environment or people of Costa Rica.

After two days of reflecting about the causes that have led our societies to this situation, and about the proposals put forward from official circles, we want to share our conclusions, commitments and proposals to address climate change.

Our first conclusion is that climate change is the inevitable consequence of a social, political and economic system that has turned nature and people into commodities. Even though climate change is one of the most serious threats that we face for the future, it is also part of a series of crises that have been happening in the last few years.

Secondly, we have come to the conclusion that none of the solutions proposed by governments and the United Nations really deal with the causes of climate change.

We have concluded that carbon trading, REDD mechanisms, payment for environmental services, offsets and all market-based mitigation mechanisms are instruments which not only do not fulfil their purported objective but also advance the commodification of life and therefore the destruction of our planet and aggravation of climate change. All of these proposals become “moving targets” which, by continuously changing, try to distract us from the real problems.

The global market, its huge corporations have co-opted UN climate negotiations and have taken them hostage, turning them into a business space which in no way responds to the real needs and urgent measures that need to be taken.

The World Bank, which has been responsible for financing the destruction of the planet, is now taking a leading role in climate negotiations, promoting failed market models that make a mockery of attempts to tackle the climate crisis.

Neither do the technologies that are being developed as a response – such as agrofuels, transgenic plants, the use of biochar, and others that may arise – constitute a real response to climate change. Behind all of these false solutions we find the corporations, with the complicity of the governments, who have become simple facilitators of the corporations' business activities. At the same time, it is also the governments who are promoting repression and criminalisation of individuals and organisations who resist the imposition of plantations, monocultures and all of these false solutions.

For this reason, we commit to create our own agenda, focused on the needs and struggles of our peoples, to generate and contribute to a wide social movement with the objective of transforming the system from the bottom up.

Within this framework, the defense of the climate, forests and other ecosystems by the people is the only possible alternative for the future we are building. Women are playing a leading role on the path to changing the relationship between people and with nature that privileges co-operation over domination and control.

We reject plantations and monocultures because they displace communities, destroy forests, pollute the planet and generate further climate change. This rejection is one of the main points on our agenda for the future. We underline the fact that plantations are not forests.

It is on this basis that we propose:

(1) The defense of land and territories against any type of land concentration in the hands of the few. We propose an integral agrarian reform, starting out from the integration of women and men in solidarity with their land and the protection of water and the biodiversity which sustains us. We completely oppose market-based agrarian reforms promoted by the World Bank, whose only objective is to displace communities in order to occupy their territories. Our proposal is to establish a relationship to the land in a respectful manner without aggression. We understand that defending the territory is defending our culture and our way of relating among ourselves and with the earth.

(2) Food sovereignty. We understand food sovereignty as the right of people to decide on everything that relates to the production of food and agriculture. Food sovereignty starts with the defence of native seeds and with the link to nature. In order to be sovereign, we need to produce locally the greater part of food for our own consumption in harmony with nature, and in this way we can produce food for all in a diversified way in order to avoid monocultures while cooling the planet and fighting climate change. This is the way to achieve healthy and harmonious people and ecosystems.

(3) Opposing market-based climate mechanisms. We will resist and denounce as false carbon trading, REDD, as well as similar market-based schemes that may arise in future. We commit to explaining in every possible arena why these will never provide a response to the climate crisis.

We will implement these objectives by carrying out activities in which we will coordinate with and support each other:

Education and awareness-raising through the production of educational and audio-visual materials and any other tool that allows us to extend the number of people conscious of the problems;

Carrying out case studies together with affected communities in order to document the impacts of climate change and its false solutions and accompany them in their struggles against them;

Alliance building with all the social movements that question this economic system, including indigenous peoples, womens´ organisations, human rights organisations and trade unions;

Supporting movements of people affected by climate change, to help their voices be heard and to reinforce their strategies for survival;

Working at local, national and international level in coordination and solidarity.

We return to our countries in solidarity with the people of Costa Rica in their struggles against free trade agreements, in defence of biodiversity, water, modes of production in harmony with nature and a world of justice and solidarity.

Participants at the WRM meeting

Alejandra Porras (COECOCEIBA) - Costa Rica

Almuth Ernsting (Biofuel Watch) - United Kingdom

Ana Filippini (WRM) - Uruguay

Carlos Salvatierra (Savia) - Guatemala

Carlos Vicente (GRAIN) - Argentina

Chris Lang (REDD Monitor) - Germany

Eduardo Aguilar (COECOCEIBA) - Costa Rica

Elizabeth Bravo (Accion Ecologica) - Ecuador

Elvin Castellón (FEDICAMP)- Nicaragua

Francesco Martone (FPP)- Italy

Ginting Longgena (FoEI) - Indonesia

Grace Garcia (COECOCEIBA) - Costa Rica

Gustavo Castro (Otros Mundos / Amigos de la Tierra) - Mexico

Ines Soares Rodrigues (Via Campesina) - Brazil

Isaac Rojas (COECOCEIBA) - Costa Rica

Javier Baltodano (Friends of the Earth International) - Costa Rica

Juan Almendares (Madre Tierra) - Honduras

Juan Figuerola (COECOCEIBA)- Costa Rica

Jutta Kill (FERN) - Germany

Lambert Okrah (Institute for Cultural Affaire) - Ghana

Mariana Porras (COECOCEIBA) - Costa Rica

Miguel Marín (FEDICAMP) - Nicaragua

Nicola Bullard (Focus on the Global South) - Phillipines

Oscar Reyes (Transnational Institute) - The Netherlands

Ricardo Carrere (WRM) - Uuguay

Ricardo Navarro (CESTA) - El Salvador

Sarah Sexton (The Corner House) - United Kingdom

Winnie Overbeek (Alert against Green Desert Network) - Brazil

Witoon Permpongsacharoen (FER) - Thailand