Ecuador: Statement by the indigenous peoples against forest/REDD CO2lonialism

The inclusion of forests on the carbon market in its REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) format was adopted by the United Nations System through the UN-REDD Programme. In 2008, the UN Secretary General presented the UN-REDD Programme, implemented by three UN agencies: FAO, UNEP and UNDP, in close collaboration with the World Bank.

This is a programme involving plans and credits to compensate for carbon emissions, which has been rejected by many social, environmental and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, that denounced the REDD initiative as a false solution to climate change.

The International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change has declared that: *"REDD will not benefit Indigenous Peoples, but in fact, it will result in more violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights. It will increase the violation of our Human Rights … steal our land, cause forced evictions, prevent access and threaten indigenous agriculture practices, destroy biodiversity and culture diversity and cause social conflicts. Under REDD, States and Carbon Traders will take more control over our forests."*(1)

The UN-REDD Framework Document itself warns that the Programme may erode non-profit making conservation practices based on cultural values, and exclude the landless and those having communal usage rights.

Still, carbon traders are moving fast. Australia and Indonesia have announced that they are working on two REDD carbon trade projects worth 200 million dollars that will use the forests of Asia and the Pacific to compensate for local industries' carbon emissions. They are planning to submit these projects at the negotiations on Climate Change to take place in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

However, organizations are working just as fast to unmask the REDD initiative, qualified as Forest CO2lonialism, and the organized peoples are expressing themselves on this issue.

In a recent communiqué, issued from Puyo, Ecuador, on 3 August (2), the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) pronounced itself against any type of environmental negotiations on forests, warning that "Any negotiation or extractive policy or activity involving forests and biodiversity on our Ancestral Territories will cause unimaginable implications, among them the extinction of the identity of the Ancestral Nations, the loss of control and management of our territories, passing them into administration by the State, foreign countries, transnational corporations, REDD negotiators or carbon traders. This will end in misery, hunger and extreme poverty as never seen before, as is the case with our indigenous brothers and sisters in the Amazon to the north of Ecuador, because of geopolitical, economic and commercial interests."

Based on this, the Confederation resolves that "it will not negotiate or dialogue without the consent of

its grassroots on negotiations involving Oil, Mining, and Hydroelectric Extractive Activities, the Forest Partner Plan, REDD deals, or Environmental Services, etc, because certain organizations such as the Environmental Energy and Population Institution, the World Bank and Carbon Traders, together and in partnership with Latin American governments, intend to negotiate on the life of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples, affecting our Territorial Rights."

Their rejection of REDD projects is because "they aim at taking away our free management of our resources and also because they are not a real solution to the problem of climate change, on the contrary, they just make it worse."

In exchange, they have made a genuine proposal, set out in a "Guide for the Indigenous Peoples. False solutions to climate change" (3) which would imply:

- Drastically Cut Emissions at Source
- Transition to sustainable models of production, consumption & development
- Promote sustainable family farming, organic faming, perennial pastures
- Promote a paradigm shift
- Leave fossil fuels in the ground
- Promote renewable energy
- Scale down: Promote local sustainable energy solutions
- Reduce, reuse, recycle
- Phase out extractive industries
- Redirect military budgets; Stop war; Promote peace
- Pay ecological debt and cancel foreign debt to address climate crisis
- Promote peoples' sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water
- Ensure rights-based resource conservation
- Implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Demarcate and protect Indigenous Peoples' territories
- Promote food sovereignty and food security
- End deforestation and its underlying causes
- Promote energy-efficient modes of transportation and specifically public transportation

(1) Quoted in FPP's briefing: "Some views of indigenous peoples and forest-related organisations on the World Bank's 'Forest Carbon Partnership Facility' and proposals for a 'Global Forest Partnership'",http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/forest_issues/fcpf_ip_survey_feb08_eng.pdf
(2) "Ecuador: CONFENIAE rejects environmental negotiations and extractive policies" (in Spanish), Servindi, http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/14994
(3) "A Guide for Indigenous Peoples. False solutions and climate change",http://www.earthpeoples.org/CLIMATE_CHANGE/Indigenous_Peoples_Guide-E.pdf