Statement on Tree Plantations from participants at recent Forest Movement Europe meeting

The Forest Movement Europe (FME) is an informal network of more than 45 NGOs from12 European countries. It is a loose movement with no formal membership and without a formal secretariat that has been working on forest issues for nearly ten years.

It was mainly due to the activities of the groups that participated in the movement that the tropical rainforest campaigns in Europe took off, imports of tropical timber into several European countries declined and the struggle of forest peoples, e.g. in Sarawak, Malaysia and the Amazon were headline stories.

The FME meets once a year and in this year's meeting, June 2009, the following Statement on Tree Plantations was issued, supported by many NGOs and some individuals:

"The undersigned participants of the Forest Movement Europe wish to express our concern about the spread of fast wood tree plantations in the South, which are being implemented with support from some European governments and the direct involvement of a number of corporations based in Europe.

In spite of the fact that those plantations are resulting in a large number of severe social and environmental impacts, they continue to be promoted as 'planted forests' as a means of hiding their true destructive nature.

Local communities impacted by eucalyptus, pine and other fast wood monocultures state that 'plantations are not forests'. All the available evidence proves that local communities are right, because while forests provide a wide range of benefits to both people and the environment, plantations result in:

- the appropriation of forest land that provides for peoples' livelihoods
- the destruction of forests and other equally valuable ecosystems
- the depletion of water resources
- the impoverishment of soils
- the disappearance of plant and animal biodiversity.

We therefore call on European governments to stop all types of support to the spread of fast wood plantations and to adopt a clear definition of forests, which excludes large scale monoculture tree plantations."

The document with signatures is available at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/information/Statement_Tree_Plantations_2009.html