
[Press release - International Day of Struggle against Tree Monocultures](#)

International Day of Struggle against Tree Monocultures

“Plantations are not Forests”

Social organizations from several countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia (1) signed a joint Declaration (2) on the occasion of September 21, the International Day of Struggle against Tree Monocultures.

“Since 2006, every September 21st we commemorate the International Day of Struggle against Tree Monocultures, as a way of breaking the circle of silence around the violations faced by the communities whose territories are invaded and surrounded by industrial tree plantations - including eucalyptus, pine, acacia, rubber and oil palm. Those large scale monoculture tree plantations require significant use of water, agrotoxins and chemical fertilizers, occupying huge areas where many people lived or depended upon”, states Winfridus Overbeek, coordinator of World Rainforest Movement, one of the signing organizations.

This year the focus is on the the impacts of oil palm plantations as they “are those that have expanded fastest in the past few decades”. According to the signing organizations, “a series of free trade agreements have removed most of these protections in many countries” and “the increasing European agrofuel demand” son responsables de esta expansión “not only in Indonesia and Malaysia but also in those countries in Africa and Latin America, close to the equator with the climatic conditions to grow oil palm”.

Furthermore, “the current attempts of ‘greening’ the industrial oil palm sector and also other large-scale plantations with ‘zero deforestation’ commitments” add to make matters worse. However “the interest of corporations in protecting forests is not the welfare of local populations or the genuine conservation of habitats and species” but in the forest “as a carbon and biodiversity store, a potential source of carbon and biodiversity credits that can be sold to polluting countries and companies”, express the organizations.

On the other hand, they denounce in their Declaration that “the emphasis in deforestation tends to give less attention to the whole range of impacts industrial oil palm plantations cause in many countries, such as: destruction of local livelihoods and displacement, destructive logging and human rights violations, privileged land access for corporations, not communities, miserable working conditions and increasing criminalization of social movements and local opposition.

According to these organizations, “certification schemes, such as RSPO and related new schemes try to ‘improve plantations’ while maintaining the logic of unlimited expansion”. They also state that “there is no way to make large-scale industrial tree monocultures acceptable, neither for local communities nor for a world facing a severe crisis with manifold symptoms, including climate change, economic and environmental deterioration and increasing militarization and human rights violations”.

The signing organizations “condemn the large-scale, growth- and export-oriented model that drives oil palm expansion globally”. “With plans to increase more and more, and therefore it will continue to contribute to climate destruction rather than presenting any real solution to climate change. And who will be most affected by such policies are forest peoples and peasant communities who will see oil palm plantations continue to expand, and their access to their lands and forests increasingly restricted”.

“In the countries where industrial oil palm plantations occupy large areas of land, governments should give absolute priority to the demands of the communities, support their control over the lands and forests they depend on rather than adopting policies that facilitate handing these territories over to transnational companies”, demand the organizations.

The Declaration ends up urging governments “to invest in local diversified food production and food sovereignty, as the best way to support communities and also local and national economies as well as to promote more environmental and social justice”.

Notes:

1.- Acción Ecológica, Ecuador; Brainforest, Gabon; CALG - Coalition against Land Grabbing, Philippines; Censat Agua Viva, Colombia; Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement - CED, Cameroon; COECOCEIBA - Amigos de la Tierra Costa Rica; Colectivo de Reservas Campesinas y Comunitarias de Santander, Colombia; Consumers' Association of Penang, Malaysia; ERA/FoE Nigeria; FASE/ES, Brasil; Friends of the Earth International; Fundaexpresión, Colombia; GRAIN; JA! / FOE Moçambique; Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales - OLCA; Organización Ambiental Chinampa, Colombia; Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña - OFRANEH, Honduras ; Otros Mundos, México; People Common Struggle Centre – PCSC, Pakistan; Red latinoamericana contra los monocultivos de árboles - RECOMA; Sahabat Alam Malaysia / FOE Malaysia; SAVIA, Guatemala; Sawit Watch, Indonesia; School of Democratic Economics - SDE, Indonesia; Third World Network, Malaysia; World Rainforest Movement - WRM

2.- Full declaration text is available at: <http://wrm.org.uy/actions-and-campaigns/international-declaration-21-september-2015/>