
Selection of organized civil society opinions regarding forests

A large number of environmental, social and indigenous peoples organizations are concerned about the possible outcomes of the WSSD regarding the fate of the world's forests. The following is a brief summary of the major concerns of some of those organizations:

* International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest

After stating that "the commitments taken on in Rio have been forgotten", the International Alliance goes on to say that "Many documents arising from the preparatory meetings and official documents for the Johannesburg Summit Meeting are distant from the spirit of chapter 26 of Agenda 21, our role as original peoples and our models of conservation and protection of the environment are not highlighted. Furthermore, the lack of political will from our governments in recognising and respecting the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the world have prevented the full and effective participation of the Indigenous Peoples."

The Alliance highlights the fact that the "development and conservation of tropical forests should be based on guaranteeing and ensuring our territories and basic rights. We are convinced that there cannot be sustainable development of forests without respect of our fundamental rights as peoples."

In line with the above, the Alliance considers that it is "important that the World Summit on Sustainable Development take up the principles of environmental responsibility, based on recognition of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities to manage and monitor the resources on which we depend and that the governments take on the obligatory task of maintaining or respecting the rights of the Indigenous Peoples or those of their other citizens. Less paper and more action to safeguard our Mother Earth."

* World Rainforest Movement/Friends of the Earth International

The following concepts are included in the recommendations of a joint WRM/FoEI publication on forests to be released in Johannesburg, calling on the WSSD, among other things, to "promote positive solutions to deforestation and forest degradation." That implies securing commitments at both national and international levels.

At the national level, the WSSD must

- Promote recognition of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' land rights.
- Support environmentally-sound small and medium-scale agricultural and forest management.
- Promote land reforms that ensure equitable distribution of existing agricultural lands.
- Foster development and livelihood patterns that incorporate forest biodiversity conservation in all productive activities.

At the international level, the WSSD must

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- Promote positive changes within multilateral financial institutions (particularly the IMF and World Bank) to ensure that all their programmes and projects avoid negative impacts on forests, local communities and indigenous peoples, and include where appropriate a strong component of forest biodiversity conservation.
 - Push for similar changes in bilateral development and export-credit agencies.
 - Inform the relevant fora (e.g. WTO, IMF, World Bank) about the impacts of increased international trade on forests and ensure that those concerns are taken on board.
 - Ensure close collaboration between the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding the impacts of global warming on biodiversity and of deforestation on climate change.
 - Generate awareness about the impacts of increased consumption in the North on forests in the South as a first step to change current unsustainable consumption patterns."

WRM and FoEI positions on WSSD are available at:

<http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/WSSD/index.html>

<http://www.rio-plus-10.org>

* Third World Network

TWN calls on organizations to get involved in the WSSD process because of the consequences the agreements to be reached in Johannesburg may have on people and the environment. Among other issues, TWN highlights the fact that:

"As a multilateral summit on sustainable development, its outcomes will affect the work of all civil society groups. Drafting and implementing a global programme for poverty alleviation, nature conservation, environmental sustainability and economic and social development is a task that should not be left to governments (and governments of the north to be precise), and certainly not at all to business lobbies."

Consequently, "civil society groups of all levels should contribute in monitoring, advocating and lobbying for a comprehensive plan of action to enable the fair and equitable sharing of the world's resources between the rich and the poor, north and south; and to protect the earth's ecology in order to safeguard the world's future. After all, the document emerging from Johannesburg will be a blueprint of life itself. It will be a missed opportunity if we let life slip us by."

Third World Network positions on WSSD are available at: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/focus29.htm>

* Global Forest Coalition

The GFC presses for the need "to fight/lobby to halt deforestation and forest degradation by addressing the underlying causes driving them." Additionally, it stresses the "need to strive for the 'de-corporation' (no more corporate/commercial interests defining the fate of forests) of forest control/management and fight for the devolution and restitution of forests to Indigenous Peoples and communities."

More specifically on WSSD, the GFC puts at the forefront the need to convince the public and decision makers "that the continuation of corporate control of forest areas, trade and management, has proven pernicious for forests in every aspect and that a new era of forest control, in the hands of communities and Indigenous Peoples is in order. Only in this way forests will become a vehicle of welfare and sustainable development, and only this way will ensure that forests continue providing all

their environmental benefits."

* Greenpeace International

In line with the concerns of most civil society organizations involved in global processes, Greenpeace summarises the past ten years by saying that:

"Since the Rio Earth Summit ten years ago, there has been more rhetoric than action in protecting the environment and natural resources upon which all of our lives depend. While waving the flag of 'sustainable development' governments and corporations have continued largely with business as usual, pursuing a course of economic growth at any cost, with little respect for ecological limits. When action on some issue has been taken, it has been either because the environmental damage was so gross that governments could not hide, or because activist organisations have forced the change. It is extraordinary that in the 21st century, gross environmental abuse still continues. Globally, we are conducting a war on the environment. We need to make peace with the planet, and with one another. In the meantime, key promises, and treaty commitments and obligations, remain unfulfilled. Flagrantly unsustainable practices continue, unfair, unregulated and unpunished."

Greenpeace positions on WSSD are available at: <http://archive.greenpeace.org/earthsummit/>

* International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The IUCN focuses on the "urgent need to understand that pro-poor forest conservation can contribute to poverty eradication in a number of ways, including protecting and expanding the asset base of the poor, improving governance, ensuring a more equitable distribution of costs and benefits and safeguarding livelihoods against economic shocks and natural disasters."

In order to link the social and environmental consequences of forest conservation, IUCN stresses that "practical approaches are needed that reconcile how forests are used to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits on an equitable basis. If this cannot be done, forest issues may slip further down the international agenda, including at the WSSD."

IUCN positions on WSSD are available at: http://www.iucn.org/wssd/policy_programmes_forest.htm

* Oilwatch

Oil extraction in the tropics results in both deforestation and forest degradation. The entire forest ecosystem --and forest peoples livelihoods-- are deeply affected: drinking water is poisoned; the air becomes polluted; wildlife becomes scarce; human rights are violated; local cultures are destroyed.

Taking into account those and other impacts associated with oil exploitation in the tropics, Oilwatch has encouraged, in various international fora, to call for a moratorium on new oil and gas explorations in the tropics. "We believe that the substitution of fossil fuels for renewable, decentralised and clean sources is an unconditional requirement ... if we want to talk seriously about doing something about Climate Change and about sustainability. Countries that are oil exporters should break their economic dependence with oil and gas and diversify their economy."

* International Network of Forests and Communities

The INFC summarises the current situation by stating that "national and international initiatives and

negotiations have repeatedly failed to achieve "sustainability" for the world's forests and communities and that it is therefore "time for a different approach." This different approach is detailed in the "10 discussion points that the International Network of Forests and Communities is taking to Johannesburg. These '10 Points for Forests' might serve as a basis for exploring how we can build a stronger global forest movement --a movement towards sustainability designed and implemented by grassroots actors focused on the 'root' causes of forest loss and degradation."

The full 10 Points for Forests are available at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/WSSD/INFC.htm>

* Mangrove Action Project

MAP highlights the plight of one of the less publicised and more threatened forest ecosystems: mangroves.

After stating that less than 50% of mangroves still remain, and that of this remaining forest, over 50% is degraded, MAP details the causes leading to the current situation, among which "the consumer demand for luxury shrimp, or 'prawns', and the corresponding expansion of destructive production methods of export-oriented industrial shrimp aquaculture."

MAP therefore concludes that "any talk of conserving the Earth's biodiversity must include ways to ensure the restoration and conservation of mangrove forest ecosystems!"

The full MAP position is available at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/WSSD/MAP.htm>