"Mainstreaming biodiversity" in extractive industries: Concealing devastation and land grabbing

*A compilation of articles from the World Rainforest Movement Bulletin on the occasion of the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, to be held 17 - 29 November, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.* Download the compilation.

Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will gather to discuss, among others, proposals to "mainstream biodiversity in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing sectors."

The focus of the meeting is not a surprise. **The reality is that these industry sectors are responsible for large-scale destruction of biological diversity; and policy makers, conservation NGOs, multilateral and donor organizations and the industries themselves are looking for tools to conceal this devastation**.

In the case of biodiversity offsets, the requirement for allowing destructive operations in places where environmental regulation would otherwise not allow it is that the biodiversity destroyed at the site of interest to the company be recreated or replaced elsewhere. The lost biodiversity is supposed to be 'equivalent' to the alleged protected or (re)created area. Yet, in addition to no two places really being equivalent, **the manufactured 'equivalence' in fact silences important contradictions and issues of power, territorial rights, inequalities and violence**.

Predictably enough, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank, changed its Performance Standard 6 in 2012. Any company wishing to access an IFC loan for a project that will destroy what the IFC considers to be 'critical habitat,' must present a plan stating that the biodiversity destroyed will be compensated elsewhere. Accordingly, **governments mainly from the Global South are increasingly relaxing their environmental laws by including provisions for biodiversity offsetting, to follow the 'rules' established by financial institutions and their corporate allies**.

It is imperative to halt the underlying causes of biodiversity and forest loss and degradation. The CBD and its allies, however, seeking ways for corporate destruction of biodiversity to continue – or, in their words, to mainstream biodiversity within these sectors - is steering policy, funds and discussions towards a dangerous path. The idea of offsetting is fundamentally flawed. **With its promise to compensate the corporate destruction of biodiversity, it does nothing to stop the destruction caused in the first place!**

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