
Mozambique: A warning against the promotion of monoculture tree plantations

In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was formalized within the United Nations Convention on Climate Change to limit carbon emissions causing global warming. Although since then the situation has become more acute due to the accelerated impacts of climate change, during the Conferences talk mainly addresses the “opportunities” of this catastrophe, understood as business.

During the latest Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, last November, one of the “opportunities” that was most emphasized referred to the possibility for impoverished countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America obtaining profits through “CDM projects” (what they call the Clean Development Mechanism and we call the Carbon Dealers’ Market). Among the projects are those known as Forestation and Reforestation for Carbon Sinks (see WRM bulletin No. 37), and the establishment of crops for biofuels (see WRM bulletin No. 112). In neither of these cases are the emissions causing global warming reduced – they are just profit-making dodges that do not solve the real causes of climate change.

Many governments of impoverished countries trapped in debt and dependency, view these “opportunities” favourably. Such is the case of Mozambique, which on 20 November was host in Maputo to a United Nations delegation on its way back from the Nairobi conference. Following this visit the Mozambique authorities enthusiastically announced the benefits for the country of accepting such projects.

That same day the South African organization, GeaSphere, which has a long track record of struggles against monoculture tree plantations, organized an event with the participation of delegates of local organizations to discuss the negative impacts of large scale monoculture tree plantations. The Coordinator of this organization, Philip Owen, a representative of the SCAPEI organization, Nhlanhla Msweli and a WRM representative, Ana Filippini, provided details during this event of the negative social, economic and environmental impacts already identified in many communities caused by the establishment of large scale monoculture plantations.

The participants, aware of the intention of the Mozambique government to promulgate a law promoting plantations, resolved to establish a coordination group with the GeaSphere representative in Mozambique, Vera Ribeiro, and to send out a warning to the population of Mozambique not to accept proposals for promoting monoculture plantations.

For this objective to be successful regional coordination with other organizations is essential. The experiences of South Africa and Swaziland can provide a fundamental input to creating awareness about the negative impacts of monoculture tree plantations.

