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UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Promoting tree plantations and opening UN carbon market to REDD+



OUR VIEWPOINT

- **The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Promoting tree plantations and reducing forests to tradable carbon stores.** p. 3

UN PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE: PROMOTING TREE PLANTATIONS AND OPENING UN CARBON MARKET TO REDD+

- **The Paris Agreement Undermines the Global Campaign to Leave Oil in the Soil.** p. 6
- **The Paris Agreement: International Endorsement for Tree Plantation Companies to Start a New Cycle of Expansion.** p.10
- **Main initiatives to expand tree plantations in Latin America, Africa and Asia.** p. 13
- **Will the Paris Agreement Save Forests?** p. 19
- **REDD+ in the Paris Agreement secures funding for conservation industry while large-scale deforestation advances unhindered.** p. 23
- **Ibi Bateke tree planting project in DRC: Sold as the success it never was.** p. 26



ACTION ALERTS

- **Belgium: Field Liberation Movement Takes Action Against GE Trees.** p. 31
- **Brazil: Land for food production, not pulp for export.** p. 31
- **Chile: In reaction to the new wave of forest fires, organizations in Chile demand an end to the national policy and instruments that have been created to favor industrial tree plantations.** p. 31
- **Sign-on letter: Help us remind the FAO that it must urgently change its forest definition so the plantations industry can no longer use the definition to mislabel monoculture tree plantations as forests.** p. 31

RECOMMENDED

- **International Statement: Our Land is Worth More Than Carbon.** p. 32
- **International Statement: Marrakech Declaration against the summit of false solutions and for a fair and sustainable future for all peoples.** p. 32
- **International Declaration: Large-scale bioenergy must be excluded from the Renewable Energy definition. Declaration from February 2016.** p. 32
- **Report: Cooling the Planet: Frontline Communities Lead the Struggle. Voices from the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles.** p. 32
- **Report: Industrial Tree Plantations Invading Eastern and Southern Africa.** p. 32
- **Briefing: The impacts of industrial tree plantations on water.** p. 32



OUR VIEWPOINT



The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Promoting tree plantations and reducing forests to tradable carbon stores

The 22nd annual UN climate meeting has come and gone in 2016, with governments celebrating the ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, adopted at the UN climate meeting in 2015. In 1997, the US government did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the first UN climate agreement with binding limits on industrialized countries after having insisted that carbon trading be part of the Kyoto Protocol. The US government never ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Carbon trading, however, stayed. And carbon trading became a big distraction from the urgent task of governments negotiating at the UN climate meetings when the last barrel of oil and last tonne of coal would be dug up and burned. Such a plan is still not being discussed at the UN climate meetings, as the first article in this bulletin, 'The Paris Agreement Undermines the Global Campaign to Leave Oil in the Soil' explains.

The idea of compensation as an alternative to reduction also dominates the UN's Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Instead of setting a clear phase-out plan for burning fossil carbon, governments merely agreed to "*achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century.*" That means companies can continue to burn fossil fuel as long as they pay someone to plant trees, prevent forest from being cut or reduce emissions from agricultural production. That may be convenient for the fossil fuel industry and corporations whose profits depend on the availability of cheap oil and coal. But it's a big threat to peasant farmers and indigenous peoples for whom the forest is home. Why? Because it's the land peasant families depend on and the forests indigenous peoples have protected and guarded for generations that corporations now want to use as 'carbon forest'. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change connects initiatives such as REDD+ and 'zero-net-deforestation' with industrial agriculture and industrial tree plantations. Pressure on farming land and forests is set to rise once the Paris Agreement hits the ground. (2)



One trend that helps explain why negotiations to keep oil in the soil and coal in the ground are not on the agenda of the UN climate negotiations is the growing presence of corporate interests at UN climate meetings. For years, corporations from the oil, coal, global food and financial industries would organize parallel events at venues near the UN climate meetings and their industry associations have been present in the UN meeting halls. One newspaper noted the "unprecedented involvement of corporate interests who have fought climate action around the world" at the 2016 UN meeting in Morocco. Those are corporations with a fundamental interest in extracting and burning as much fossil fuel as possible. (3) Earlier in the year, industrialized country governments had opposed restrictions on the presence of fossil fuel corporations at the UN climate meetings when they said they found the concept of "conflict of interest" too hard to define. Australian government representatives, for example, claimed that "there is no clear understanding of what a conflict of interest is and it means different things to different people." They argued that therefore, it should be assumed there was no risk of a "conflict of interest" in representatives of companies whose business depends on selling oil and coal attending the UN climate meetings. So, in Morocco, industry associations representing fossil fuel corporations such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Peabody, BP, Shell, RioTinto etc. were holding private discussions with government representatives whose task it is to negotiate action to end the use of fossil carbon. It's through extracting and processing fossil carbon that those very companies are among the most powerful in the world. Maybe industrialized country representatives having difficulty understanding "conflict of interest" should have talked to their colleagues attending the 7th meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in India about their experience with corporate "conflict of interest" and the interference of the tobacco lobby aiming to prevent governmental action against smoking. It may have made them understand that oil and coal companies presenting their industry as a partner in the fight against climate change are applying a well-worn corporate strategy that the tobacco industry also used extensively. Oil and coal corporations attending UN climate meetings will fight for their profits, not lobby governments to take action to stop the burning of oil and coal and natural gas as fast as possible. (4)

But it's not only oil and coal industries that have put the UN climate meetings on their calendar. Plantation companies, global food corporations and the conservation industry have been regulars at UN climate meetings for years. Their hopes are pinned on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change establishing global demand for carbon credits from initiatives that are supposedly reducing emissions from deforestation – demand for their business, in other words.

In 2007, governments introduced REDD as a new way of saving forests into the UN climate negotiations. Since then, the plantations, global food and conservation industries have worked to establish the idea - both inside and beyond the UN climate talks - that payments for reducing emissions from deforestation or for tree planting are a contribution to tackling climate change. Numerous initiatives have been launched on the assumption that payments for carbon storage in trees will reduce emissions from land use. Even though the reality of the past ten years has shown that REDD and similar initiatives in the agriculture sector are false solutions that are unable to reduce large-scale forest destruction while falsely blaming deforestation on peasant farming and shifting cultivation, regional development banks and industrialized country governments keep bankrolling corporate REDD initiatives. (5)



The African Development Bank's Strategy for Agricultural Transformation in Africa 2016-2025, for example, does not mention the word "agroecology" even once. However, the document includes 12 major references to "climate-smart agriculture", a dodgy concept that mainly aims to expand control of the agrochemicals and seed industry over small-scale farming. The AfDB Strategy for Agricultural Transformation in Africa also promotes carbon trading. The document talks about promoting "green growth" and investing among others in "large-scale sustainable and climate-smart agriculture." The Bank proposes investments "in partnership with" private sector funds such as the Livelihoods Fund for Family Farming (which includes Danone and Mars among its investors) the Moringa Fund (co-founded by the Rothschild bank), or Althelia Climate Fund. The forthcoming report 'The Kasigau Corridor REDD+ Project: a crash dive for Althelia Climate Fund' by the organisations Counter Balance and Re:Common exposes what Althelia Climate Fund investments mean to local communities: historical injustices of land allocation are reinforced and those hit hardest by restrictions imposed by the REDD+ project derive few if any benefits from the project. (6)

"What does the UN Paris Agreement mean for forests and forest peoples?" – that's the central question for all articles in this bulletin. One article explores why it is that even though the talk of urgency for action to tackle climate change increases each year, the Paris Agreement does not mention the words fossil fuel, petrol or coal even once. The following two articles look at how forests are included in the Paris Agreement and who benefits from initiatives referring to this explicit inclusion of REDD in the Paris Agreement. The mislabelling of plantations as forests and the promotion of industrial plantations as a result of the Paris Agreement are discussed in two articles. Finally, the Ibi Bateke tree planting carbon project in the DR Congo connects the carbon trading mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism, with the Paris Agreement. Even before the first trees were planted, the project was marketed as the success it never was.

There is little doubt that the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change is bad news for forests and for communities and indigenous peoples for whom forests provide not just a livelihood but also the physical, cultural and spiritual home. Their struggle in defense of forests and a way of life that recognizes the value of forests far beyond the carbon price tag that REDD+ has reduced forests to, is more important than ever. Ignoring the clear evidence that industrial tree plantations create huge problems to local communities and are no solution to the climate crisis, the Paris Agreement has also opened a new door to a further expansion of monoculture tree plantations. Stepping up resistance against these massive expansion plans for industrial tree plantations, erroneously justified as a contribution to tackling climate change, will be important in the years ahead. That is also why we must continue to demand that the FAO correct its misguided forest definition. Please support the letter reminding FAO once again that plantations are not forests and that the FAO must urgently revise its forest definition! (7)

We hope you will enjoy the bulletin!

(1) More information for example in the WRM publication Trade in Ecosystem Services. When payment for environmental services delivers a permit to destroy. <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/trade-in-ecosystem-services-when-payment-for-environmental-services-delivers-a-permit-to-destroy/>

(2) Planting enough trees to soak up and store the carbon in line with the Paris Agreement's 2°C target would likely require around 10 million kilometres² of land by the end of the century. That is an area the size of the Sahara or the US. See for example, Smith 2015:



<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nclimate2870.html> Williamson 2016:

<http://www.nature.com/news/emissions-reduction-scrutinize-CO2-removal-methods-1.19318>

(3) Article in the Guardian newspaper on 6 November 2016: Marrakech climate talks: giving the fossil fuel lobby a seat at the table. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/07/marrakech-climate-talks-giving-the-fossil-fuel-lobby-a-seat-at-the-table> and Corporate Accountability International report Uncovered: Fossil Fuel Industry Has Back-Door Access to U.N. Climate Talks.

<https://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/blog/uncovered-fossil-fuel-industry-has-back-door-access-un-climate-talks>

(4) The World Health Organisation report 'Impact assessment of the WHO FCTC: Report by the Expert Group' writes that "the role and activities of the global tobacco industry remain by far the most important obstacle to action across all aspects of the FCTC."

http://www.who.int/fctc/cop/cop7/FCTC_COP_7_6_EN.pdf

(5) See for example, REDD: A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies. <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>

(6) Forthcoming Report by Re:Common and Counter Balance: The Kasigau Corridor REDD+ Project in Kenya: a Crash dive for Althelia Climate Fund.

(7) You can sign the letter urging FAO to revise its forest definition here: <http://wrm.org.uy/all-campaigns/support-the-letter-urging-fao-to-revise-its-forest-definition/>

UN PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE: PROMOTING TREE PLANTATIONS AND OPENING UN CARBON MARKET TO REDD+



The Paris Agreement Undermines the Global Campaign to Leave Oil in the Soil

Almost 20 years ago, in the Japanese city of Kyoto, the Oilwatch network along with over 200 other organizations launched the pioneering proposal of the oil moratorium, in order to put an end to the problems that occur where fossil fuels are extracted, and also as the most effective way to combat climate change. Since then the campaign to leave hydrocarbons underground has spread all over the world. Oilwatch's arguments have finally been heard and embraced by many people.

However, this large group does not include governments or those who spearheaded the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In fact, the negotiations have been a total fraud, mainly since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. The Kyoto Protocol is an international, legally-binding



instrument that contains industrialized countries' commitments to reduce their emissions. These negotiations have ended up being mere business meetings, and totally illegitimate from a democratic standpoint. The 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris, France was no different, nor was the recent meeting in the Moroccan city of Marrakech.

Since 1995, there have now been 22 Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change. In these meetings, the Parties have issued at least 400 decisions and 20 resolutions; they have drawn up a Call, a Mandate, a Guide, an Action Framework, a Roadmap and a Protocol; they have agreed to two Action Plans, two Declarations and two Work Plans; they adopted an Accord and have signed four Agreements, including the Paris Agreement.

Meanwhile, greenhouse gas emissions and their consequences on the climate have continued to increase and worsen. Anyone with common sense would wonder why the problem persists, after so much time, expenditure of resources and bulky paraphernalia? The answer is obvious: none of the international climate negotiations has addressed the main cause of climate change: the extraction and burning of fossil fuels.

Reading the Paris Agreement carefully — and with our suspicion meter on — we see that the situation will get worse. According to those who promote the campaign to leave fossil fuels in the ground, this new Agreement denies the possibility of moving toward a post-oil civilization.

At a certain moment in the implementation of the Convention on Climate Change, what should have been counted — barrels of oil, cubic meters of gas and tons of carbon that should remain underground — transformed into the amount of carbon present in the atmosphere and reduction of CO₂ emissions. The purpose was simple: avoid a radical shift in the means of production and consumption while enabling the private sector to turn the climate crisis into a business opportunity.

The Paris Agreement now sets goals like "keeping the temperature rise below 2°C..." which makes it even more ambiguous and dangerous. This is in part because the average global temperature has already risen almost one degree since the beginning of the industrial revolution in 1850, and because the temperature is not the same everywhere on the planet. For example, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Africa is probably the most warming continent and yet the continent which emits the least amount of carbon. These apparent twists of language—from climate change to mitigation and emissions reduction, from the fight against global warming to low-carbon economies, from "common but differentiated responsibilities" to "global balance," and from crisis of civilization to temperature degrees—are not accidental; they are made to confuse and evade the real problem, so that impunity reigns and true solutions are sidelined.

The Paris Agreement states that to prevent a temperature rise of more than 2°C, the so-called INDC (National Accounts Determined Contributions) will be taken into account. Almost every country has made its pledges before the United Nations, but there is no mechanism to enforce them. In many cases, such as in Ecuador, they are consultations without any societal participation and offers thrown about without any basis in reality. Simply reading some of the INDC documents is enough to realize this.



Bolivia, for example, includes the delirious "indicator of percentage distribution of the carbon budget" or "Climate Justice Index," proposing the formula $ij = \lfloor \exp(-\theta_1 j - \theta_2 r_j - \theta_3 d_j - \theta_4 t_j + \theta_5 p_j) \rfloor \ell$ (!) to calculate the index (1) or the Sustainable Life of Forest Index, using the formula $ij = \theta \tilde{f} - \theta \tilde{p} + \theta \tilde{g} + \theta \tilde{y} + \theta$, to represent the life and rights of people living in the forest.

Ecuador includes the massive distribution of 1,500,000 electric induction cookers — which by the way few people buy — 1,300,000 hectares of monoculture tree plantations by 2025, expansion of the Socio Bosque Program (2) with incentives of two million additional hectares by 2017, and other promises. Socio Bosque, the Ministry of the Environment's program considered in REDD+ plans in Ecuador, is currently paralyzed due to the economic crisis in the country. There are hopes to implement the mechanisms included in the Paris Agreement at an institutional level, and for private company to invest more in order to obtain carbon offset certificates. In order for Socio Bosque plans to fit into REDD, the areas included in the program must be threatened by deforestation. This is because REDD areas must comply with the principle of additionality—demonstrating that the emissions saved would not have occurred without the Socio Bosque program. Indeed they are threatened, since there is a clear imposition of oil and mining interests in areas under the Socio Bosque program.

The INDCs—the action plans each country presented to the UNFCCC—are only initial exercises to create a baseline of national emissions. Such baselines are necessary for a kind of global *carbon market* to work, which the Paris Agreement would be creating. They are also necessary to generate goals for 2025. Of course nobody can know this, but that does not matter. The more you play with the numbers, up or down, the more business deals are on the table. It is striking that the sum of emissions reductions promised in the INDCs would lead to a temperature rise of up to 3.7°C (the Paris Agreement says it wants to reach 2°C, and in a best-case scenario 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels). The Paris Agreement invites the whole world to cheat, turning addressing the climate problem into a global casino.



And as we say in Latin America, "once the law has been made, so has the trap." The largest trap lies in the Paris Agreement, which creates a new market mechanism "to contribute to the mitigation of greenhouse gases and support sustainable development,"



involving transactions of "*internationally transferred mitigation outcomes*" (ITMOs). In other words, the carbon market that already exists—through the nefarious Clean Development Mechanism, European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, or the voluntary carbon offsets market, among others—can now exist between countries or regions. That is, if a country claims to have done a good job in reducing its emissions vis-a-vis promises in its INDCs, this favorable difference could be sold to another country that has polluted more.

This obviously repeats history: it does not reduce global emissions. On the contrary, it allows the mining and oil frontier to expand, agribusiness to grow, loss of forest cover to continue, and the aviation industry to grow. The aviation industry plans to increase its emissions by 700% and steadily increase the global transport of goods—problems directly responsible for global warming. (3)

With the Paris Agreement, the progress of the international Leave the Oil Underground campaign could be undermined, as many organizations unfortunately believe the Paris Agreement represents a paradigm shift; going as far as to say that it marks “the end of the era of fossil fuels” (350.org, US-based organization that works on the issue of climate change) or that the Paris Agreement “will drive the global energy revolution” (the NGO Greenpeace). It will not do any of this.

For the Ecuadorian government, the Paris Agreement "represents the starting point of a world with clean energy, through effective implementation of firm strategies to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases." These words mean nothing coming from the mouths of those who have begun oil exploitation in the internationally renowned Yasuní National Park, in block 43-ITT (see the article Women and oil: The struggle for Sumak Kawsay in WRM Newsletter No. 200). This is further evidence of the government's resignation not to be a leader on climate, disappointing Ecuadorians and the world—since the Yasuní-ITT Initiative (4) was going to leave 850 million barrels of oil in the ground.

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- (1) Details of the formula are explained on page 12 of the document "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution from the Plurinational State of Bolivia," <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Bolivia/1/INDC-Bolivia-english.pdf>
- (2) The publication “REDD: A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies” includes a chapter on the Socio Bosque Program, http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/REDD-A-Collection-of-Conflict_Contradictions_Lies_expanded.pdf
- (3) For more information on the protests against the aviation industry's plans to continue growing and to "green" this growth see: <http://systemchange-not-climatechange.at/aviation-campaign/>
- (4) For more information on the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, see Acción Ecológica's webpage: <http://www.accionecologica.org/petroleo/yasuni>
In English: Towards a Post-Oil Civilization. Yasunization and other initiatives to leave fossil fuels in the soil. http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/130520_EJOLT6_High2.pdf



The Paris Agreement: International Endorsement for Tree Plantation Companies to Start a New Cycle of Expansion

Many communities in countries in the Global South are fighting invasion of their lands by large-scale tree plantations. WRM has learned a lot from them. One thing we have learned is that no plantation of this kind can exist without considerable subsidies and/or incentives from public or private institutions. In the current scenario of economic and climate structural crises, plantation companies have identified a new stimulus: to implement one of the main actions that emerged from the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement and on a territorial scale never seen before. That is, to remove "excess" carbon from the atmosphere that causes global warming and store it in trees.

In the last two decades, the area occupied by large-scale monoculture tree plantations in the Global South has expanded no less than four times, reaching 60 million hectares in 2012. (1) These eucalyptus, pine, acacia, oil palm and rubber trees are mostly for (respectively): pulp, palm oil-based products, and car tires. Major contributors driving this dramatic expansion, as compared to the North, include the cheaper land and manual labor, a more favorable climate for rapid growth and greater productivity of timber, strong media support, and political support by governments of Southern countries, including a repressive State apparatus which—instead of supporting them—have criminalized local communities' struggles to defend their territories.

But the prolonged economic crisis has slowed the pace of this expansion, and consequently corporate profits. From the standpoint of communities, companies in search of alternatives have seen the climate crisis as a new array of opportunities for years—for example, the opportunity to charge for the "service" trees provide by removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Indeed, trees absorb atmospheric CO₂ through photosynthesis as they grow, and some of that carbon is "stored" in the wood. Companies argue that their trees provide this "service" increasingly better, because the trees are growing faster than before, and the introduction of transgenic trees promises even greater productivity. Companies also believe they could receive incentives to plant trees for biomass (by transforming wood into "wood pellets"). Burning these "pellets" instead of oil or coal would be "renewable" and "green" energy. In addition, large oil palm plantation companies, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia, offer palm oil as a "biofuel" option.



Increasingly, companies are betting on a "flexible" use of their plantations, seeing opportunities to get multiple and even simultaneous uses out of their crops: on the one hand carbon "sinks," and on the other hand raw material for pulp (eucalyptus, pine, acacia), for tires (rubber tree), or for vegetable oil (oil palm). But with the obvious need to cut down the tree at some point to produce short-lived products—such as paper, tires or oil—the stored carbon is quickly emitted, long before new trees could recapture it, in the event the company chooses to replant. For this reason, in order for reforestation to be more effective at "removing" atmospheric carbon, the first step would be to make it permanent. (2)

What does the Paris Agreement say about monoculture tree plantations?

The text of the Paris Agreement does not explicitly mention tree plantations, but it indirectly creates the conditions for this to be one of the most benefited sectors. How?

First of all, plantation companies take advantage of the fact that the FAO's definition of forests includes monoculture tree plantations. Internationally, this is a more acceptable definition—including by the Paris Agreement—and is used by almost all national governments and UN initiatives, such as the UN Convention on Climate and Biodiversity. The FAO considers any area merely with trees to be a forest. Yet plantations—unlike forests—usually invade community territories, cause deforestation, pollute and dry up water sources due to their rapid growth, and require large amounts of poisonous agrochemicals. (3)

Another important part of the Paris Agreement—even as it accepts monoculture tree plantations as "reforestation"—is its highly ambitious goal to keep the temperature rise "well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C...so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century."

The expected dependency on these carbon sinks is huge. This is because governments' voluntary plans to reduce emissions would cause a temperature rise of at least 3 degrees, as they do not anticipate a drastic reduction in fossil fuel burning. Additionally, the Agreement includes a simplistic view of the climate problem: *there is too much carbon in the atmosphere and the solution is to get rid of this "excess" carbon*. This has led to speculation on possible available technologies that would be capable of preventing more CO₂ emissions by industries when they burn fossil fuels, and removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. These technologies would need to be able to filter, capture, remove, and bury and/or inject the carbon emitted; so that it would remain "stored" somewhere in the earth, the ocean or even outer space. But none of the technologies in discussion has been tested and approved. Therefore none is considered to be safe for now.

Amidst this confusion, large-scale tree plantations are emerging as supposedly the most reliable and effective option to "store" carbon from the atmosphere. Advocates argue that this mechanism "works" because trees naturally fix carbon. Tree plantation companies claim their trees can offset the CO₂ emitted when they burn oil, for example, as well as remove "excess" CO₂ from the atmosphere. Promoters of REDD projects in forest areas (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) have defended this mechanism for years.



Yet again we insist: this does not work. Although the CO₂ emitted when burning trees or oil is made up of the same chemical ingredients. But when it comes to dealing with the serious climate crisis, there are important differences between the carbon dioxide caused by burning fossil carbon and that released from trees. The carbon that forms part of the natural cycle of emission and absorption by plants and trees cannot be equated to the carbon released in large quantities from extracting and burning oil, gas or coal. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the amount of the latter has greatly increased the total amount of carbon in the atmosphere, which enters into the natural cycle. This is because it was stored underground for millions of years. Even if plants or the ocean are able to absorb part of this additional carbon, they can only do so temporarily, because when a plant dies, or when there is deforestation or a fire, the CO₂ is emitted again and returns to the atmosphere.

But the governments that signed the Kyoto Protocol years ago, and now the Paris Agreement, accepted this thesis of equating the two kinds of carbon. This is perhaps the greatest triumph of plantation companies, opening up opportunities for them to reap huge profits. Because from now on, it is valid to solve the serious climate problem by "planting more forests"—READ: tree plantations!—whether they are to "offset" the CO₂ emitted by companies that burn oil, gas or coal; to remove "excess" carbon from the atmosphere; or to produce wood or vegetable oil as "renewable" or "clean" energy. Meanwhile, this is terrible news for farming, indigenous and traditional communities in territories with fertile lands—now targeted by these companies in Latin America, Africa and Asia—as well as for communities that have to deal with REDD-type projects in forest areas.

Final Considerations

Countless communities in the world have experienced the serious negative impacts of plantations, and WRM and many other organizations have published reports, videos, primers and articles on this issue for years. Yet despite these impacts, plantations continue to expand, and they just received a new international endorsement justified by the climate crisis. This is due to the ongoing unjust imbalance of power, wherein plantation companies, with the support of states and their repressive apparatus, seek to impose themselves and continue invading communities' territories, in order to control and convert them into more plantations.

Companies also have other major allies: large NGOs on their side that create nefarious initiatives which grant a seal of legitimacy to counteract the violations these companies cause and serve as "carte blanche" to obtain incentives and subsidies. Examples of this include the WWF initiative called the "New Generation Plantations" project, and the FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) certification system (4). These initiatives "green" monoculture tree plantations, despite the harm they cause, and guarantee they have a good reputation in the eyes of investors and end consumers of products. Meanwhile, these initiatives disrespect affected communities, who are not taken into account, and who face great difficulty engaging in dialogue, given the language that these initiatives use. (5)

It is necessary to join forces to strengthen the resistance of communities in the Global South that still have control over their fertile lands—because plantation companies, governments and institutions that support them (such as the World Bank) are targeting



these communities. They are the ones threatened by this expansion of plantations, and most of all by new plans to combat the climate crisis—which are developed at an increasingly large scale and with a "landscape" approach. More safeguards or criteria will not solve this situation. It is necessary to make a radical break the large-scale globalized production-consumption model, which promotes waste and profit for some large companies, but which will destroy the livelihoods of many communities.

It is in communities, and through permanent dialogue with them, that we find answers, initiatives and alternatives that strengthen the fight against the hegemonic model. Indeed, this is essential for us to begin to see ways to combat climate change.

- (1) <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EJOLTplantations.pdf>
- (2) <https://www.tni.org/en/collection/flex-crops>
- (3) You can sign an open letter to the FAO, which Timberwatch, Salva la Selva and WRM launched on September 21st, 2016, International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations. Through this Open Letter, we argue the importance of the FAO's definition of forests, and demand that this organization take responsibility and immediately undertake a real review process of this definition. (To sign on, visit: <http://wrm.org.uy/actions-and-campaigns/an-open-letter-to-the-fao-launched-on-september-21st-international-day-of-struggle-against-tree-monocultures/>)
- (4) <http://www.wri.org/blog/2016/03/can-plantations-help-restore-degraded-and-deforested-land>
- (5) <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/new-briefing-on-fsc-certification-of-plantations/>



Main initiatives to expand tree plantations in Latin America, Africa and Asia

Years before governments adopted the Paris Agreement, international initiatives promising millions of hectares of reforestation and forest restoration were launched, supposedly to benefit the environment and local communities. Yet, not one example of reforestation at scale exists that has achieved the promised benefits for communities and the environment. The one experience that has "worked" is the planting of hundreds of millions of hectares of eucalyptus, pine, rubber and oil palm plantations — which the UN, governments and companies misleadingly call "planted forests." Analyzing international plans more carefully, is it clear that communities in countries where the "reforestation" and forest restoration plans now announced in connection with the Paris Agreement should be on high alert.



The Bonn Challenge (1) was launched in 2011 in an event sponsored by the German Ministry of Environment and the conservation organization IUCN—the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (2). According to its website, the Bonn Challenge is "a global effort to restore 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land by 2020(..)." The initiative emphasizes the importance of a "landscape approach" instead of a "limited approach." Promoters say that 124.32 million hectares have already been "pledged" for this purpose, and that the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests has endorsed the Bonn Challenge — thereby increasing its goal to no fewer than 350 million hectares and moving its deadline to 2030.

However, we cannot find a clear explanation on the Bonn Challenge's website of the kind of "restoration" that will take place. It is unclear whether this might be with monoculture tree plantations, remembering that there are no examples in the world of native "restoration" programs on the scale of millions of hectares. The only "reforestation" on this scale that "worked," has been the planting of tens of millions of hectares of monoculture eucalyptus, pine, acacia, rubber and oil palm. This expansion has occurred — almost without exception — on fertile lands, forest areas or natural pastures which were essential for communities that previously depended on them. People from these communities have become landless rural or urban workers, and their lands degraded due to "restoration" with tree monocultures. In many places, communities have managed to resist and are fighting to reclaim their lands take for initiatives mislabeled as "forest restoration".

Disturbingly, the German Ministry of the Environment interpretation is that monoculture tree plantations count as "restoration" under the Bonn Challenge if a few native trees are included throughout monoculture plantations.

According to the Bonn Challenge, "Regional platforms (...) are appearing throughout the world." In this vein, let us see what has happened in Africa, Latin America and Asia:

Africa

The African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), launched in an event parallel to the Paris Climate Conference in 2015, claims it will "restore" 100 million hectares of deforested and degraded land in Africa by 2030—almost 30% of the Bonn Challenge's entire goal. AFR100 is presented as an initiative to mitigate climate change and "benefit" populations in African countries. In the first AFR100 regional conference in October 2016, it was announced that 21 countries have joined the initiative so far, committing to restore 63.3 million hectares of forest. (3)

The World Bank is the main investor and promoter of AFR100, and has promised to invest US\$ 1 billion in 14 African countries by 2030. The German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will finance the institutional set-up of AFR100, complementing the World Bank's contribution. The FAO and World Resources Institute (WRI) are also key contributors. There are also private investors such as the Dutch Sustainable Forest Investments Fund (SFI). The total amount committed by private financiers has reached US\$ 540 million. (4)

Complementing the AFR100 is the initiative, "Forests for the future: new forests for Africa." This initiative hosted a conference in Ghana in March 2016 with the



participation of Green Resources. Green Resources, one of the leading plantation companies in Africa, has been repeatedly denounced for the negative impacts its plantations cause to local communities. (5) The *African Resilient Landscapes Initiative* (ARLI), also funded by the World Bank and the German government, states that it will "work with agricultural land, forest areas and pastures through interventions based on climate-smart agriculture, restoration of forests and ecosystems, the preservation of biodiversity, and pastures management." Another initiative worth mentioning is the African Landscapes Action Plan (ALAP), which receives support from the Dutch government. (6)

The World Bank's FIP — the Forest Investment Program — supports AFR100 and contributes financially to AFR 100. In June 2016, the Bank announced that it endorsed FIP country programmes in Mozambique and Ivory Coast. Programmes in both countries promise to reduce deforestation through REDD initiatives and to encourage "reforestation." Two points in these countries' proposed plans deserve special attention. First, World Bank-backed plans have targeted rural communities and their practices — for example nomadic agriculture or firewood collection — as the main cause of deforestation. Second, for the World Bank "reforestation" through monoculture tree plantations are an important solution. For example, the FIP Plan in Ivory Coast discusses planting of 100,000 hectares of "industrial tree plantations," while the Mozambique Plan aims to promote "commercial forest plantations." Both praise the private sector. For example, the Plan of Ivory Coast speaks of counting on the expertise of the private sector, which has promoted oil palm and rubber monoculture in Ivory Coast. Meanwhile in Mozambique, the FIP Plan aims to complete activities that led to the largest expansion of eucalyptus and pine plantations in South and East Africa in recent years, with adverse impacts on the local peasant population. In addition to further harming rural communities, another aggravating factor is that most of the World Bank financing comes from loans, thus increasing the Mozambique's national debt and placing a greater burden on people. (7)

Latin America

The 20X20 initiative was launched in 2014 to restore 20 million hectares in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2020. Today, it includes 12 Latin American countries, which together have promised to restore 27.7 million hectares in this timeframe, and have secured US \$730 million from private investors. In order to guarantee these investments, the initiative says it will "reduce risks" — at an unprecedented and ambitious level — and "*collaborate with the private sector for the development of ecologically, socially and economically sustainable investments on the ground in a variety of restoration activities, such as agroforestry, silvopasture and assisted or natural reforestation.*" In conclusion: this is a huge incentive for the monoculture tree plantation industry. (8)

In Brazil, in 2015, the government announced that by 2030, the country would "reforest" 12 million hectares and use 20% "renewable" energy sources, as well as hydroelectric power. (9) But what can we expect from the 20X20 initiative and this announcement, when we look at Brazil's recent experience in this area? In 2003, the Brazilian government created the National Forests Council which developed a National Forest Plan. Yet, instead of minimally restoring the country's vast areas previously deforested, between 2003 and 2007, the plan subsidized the construction of new pulp



mills and expanded the area of industrial tree plantations by 2 million hectares — primarily with eucalyptus trees to feed the new pulp mills. Between 2003 and 2009 the government invested US \$1.95 million through the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) for this purpose. (10)

The state of Mato Grosso plays a big role in Brazil's 20X20 initiative. It is also a key state in terms of deforestation. By 2020, the state government aims to recover no fewer than 2.9 million hectares of forest in legal reserves and Permanent Preservation Areas (PPAs). It is striking that that government announced it will increase the area of "planted forests" by 0.5 million hectares. (11) To predict what kind of "reforestation" might occur in practice, one need only recall the new Brazilian Forest Code, which now allows legal reserves to be "recovered" with monoculture tree plantations of exotic species such as eucalyptus. (12)

Regarding its goals to increase its national share of "renewable energies," Brazil's experience is directly connected to the large-scale monoculture model — for example the use of sugar cane to produce ethanol fuel, and the use of energy co-generated from sugar cane bagasse produced as a by-product (residues) in the country's dozens of sugar cane processing plants. Soybean, another monoculture, are counted toward Brazil's goals of biofuel production. Companies in Brazil and Chile want to obtain incentives and supply the European market with 'wood pellets' for biomass. Currently, plantations located in the United States and Canada dominate this market. (13)

Management of large-scale monocultures requires large amounts of fossil fuels, in the form of petrol and petrochemical products. Given this enormous consumption of agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers, and the mechanized and globalized model of production and transportation that is part and parcel of these tree monocultures, they will never be a solution to the climate crisis or industrialized countries' addiction to fossil fuels.

Asia

For years, governments of several Asian countries have been promoting plans to significantly expand tree monocultures. Thus, they welcome new international initiatives to expand plantations — in order to remove "excess" CO₂ from the atmosphere and support other actions supposedly meant to mitigate the climate crisis. Six years ago, Indonesia announced it would expand plantations as carbon sinks. In 2010, the Minister of Forestry and Environment at the time announced a target of 21 million hectares of "planted forests" to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. (14) Considering the nearly four million hectares of existing plantations for pulp and rubber, this would indeed imply a mega-expansion. The expansion would be smaller — but still huge — if the government decided to include the 10 million hectares of existing oil palm plantations. In fact, this has already occurred. In line with the FAO's "forest" definition, the Indonesian government decided to consider its oil palm plantations as forests, and not as agricultural crops.

Oil palm companies in Indonesia and Malaysia, the world's top producing countries, have been operating on the "clean energy" market for years, betting on the increasing use of palm oil as a "biofuel." This is mainly the case in Europe — where palm oil consumption increased sixfold between 2010 and 2014. By 2014, almost half of this oil



was used as fuel for land transport. (15) Meanwhile, the expansion of oil palm and other monoculture plantations is directly linked to ongoing deforestation, wherein huge forest fires occur every year in order to make way for plantation expansion — a process for which affects the population of Indonesia in many ways. (16)

Since its inception in the 1980s, Asian Pulp and Paper (APP) — one of the largest pulp companies in the world—has been considered responsible for the loss of one million hectares of Indonesian forest, and for other social violations. (17) Ironically, APP has become the leading private actor in the Bonn Challenge. The company says it is committed to restoring forests and degraded lands. (18) According to an announcement in March 2016, APP says that participation in the Bonn Challenge is in continuation with its "Forest Conservation Policy" and the "zero deforestation" commitment it made a few years ago. Of course, conserving forests is absolutely necessary for APP to begin correcting its destruction of natural forests to supply its pulp mills — actions which communities have denounced for years. What is striking however, is that — vis-a-vis the overarching goal of the Bonn Challenge to restore forests — APP did not announce any additional actions to restore part of the nearly one million hectares of forest that the company itself destroyed to date. APP annually produces over 19 million tons of pulp, paper and packaging paper, and it sells its products in 120 countries on six continents (19). Additionally, APP parent company Sinar Mas is also interested in generating "renewable energy," and in 2015 announced plans to operate wood-based biomass energy plants in Indonesia. The wood to feed these biomass power plants will come from: tree plantations. (20)

The Bonn Challenge also seems to be in line with ambitious plans in the Mekong and India. In the Mekong, large expansion of industrial rubber plantations has already been underway for the period of 2008-2018, with an expected increase of four million hectares, mainly in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. (21) In India, the Compensatory Afforestation Fund law (CAF) was approved in July 2016. In addition to violating the existing law — which recognizes use rights of forest communities and traditional peoples that live and depend on forests — this new law reinforces the permission to destroy native forests, since the destruction will be "offset." Social organizations in the country also denounce that the CAF law reinforces channeling resources toward government agencies that are incentivizing the planting of at least five million hectares of monoculture tree plantations.

Final Considerations

This brief introduction to the erroneously titled "reforestation plans," internationally promoted as an alleged solution to the climate crisis, reveals the need for more research on these international and national plans and the connections between them and towards the plantations industry. More importantly, even the cursory look at these plans reveals the need for ongoing denunciation of monoculture expansion and its known impacts.

(1) <http://www.bonnchallenge.org/content/challenge>.

(2) An important partner to the Bonn Challenge is the IUCN and its TRI initiative (The Restoration Initiative) which, with approximately US\$ 254 million in funding, aims to restore 10 million hectares in Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau Kenya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sao Tome and Principe y Tanzania. <https://www.iucn.org/news/iucn-and-partners-launch-global-effort-boost-restoration-degraded-forests>; On the New York Declaration on Forests, see



- <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/united-nations-2015-international-day-of-forests-theme-forests-climate-change-what-change/>
- (3) <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/afr100-discusses-means-needed-to-restore-100-million-hectares-of-african-forests/>
 - (4) <http://www.wri.org/our-work/project/AFR100/impact-investors#project-tabs>; y <http://www.cp-africa.com/2015/12/07/10-african-couce-the-afr-100>
 - (5) <http://wrm.org.uy/actions-and-campaigns/stop-plantations-expansion-in-mozambique/>
 - (6) <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/new-forests-for-africa-a-nice-slogan-for-promoting-industrial-tree-plantations/>; http://terrafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/resource-publications/Concept%20Note%20ARLI_Brochure_Nov%202015_Final.pdf
 - (7) <https://www-cif.climateinvestmentfunds.org/news/cif-endorsement-investment-plans-cambodia-cote-d%E2%80%99ivoire-mozambique>
 - (8) <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/initiative-20x20-landscape-restoration-movement-rises-latin-america-and-caribbean>
 - (9) <https://noticias.terra.com.br/dilma-promete-reflorestamento-e-elevar-uso-de-energia-renovavel.672d50273e2a5b46685009c92a844891az72RCRD.html>
 - (10) http://wrm.org.uy/pt/files/2012/06/EJOLT_PORs.pdf
 - (11) <http://www.hipernoticias.com.br/politica/taques-propoe-zerar-desmatamento-em-mato-grosso-ate-2020/52347>
 - (12) <http://www.canalrural.com.br/noticias/codigo-florestal/plantio-arvores-nativas-alternativa-para-recuperacao-das-areas-preservacao-permanente-34610>
 - (13) <http://wrm.org.uy/pt/livros-e-relatorios/plantacoes-de-eucalipto-para-energia-o-caso-da-suzano-no-baixo-parnaiba-maranhao-brasil/>
 - (14) <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EJOLTplantations.pdf>
 - (15) <http://www.dw.com/en/new-palm-oil-figures-biodiesel-use-in-eu-fueling-deforestation/a-19298426>
 - (16) <http://wrm.org.uy/pt/artigos-do-boletim-do-wrm/secao1/temporada-de-queimadas-na-indonesia-o-que-as-plantacoes-industriais-e-o-estado-indonesio-fizeram-as-florestas-das-ilhas/>
 - (17) <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EJOLTplantations.pdf>
 - (18) <https://www.iucn.org/theme/forests/our-work/forest-landscape-restoration/bonn-challenge>
 - (19) <https://www.asiapulppaper.com/news-media/press-releases/asia-pulp-paper-participates-bonn-challenge-develop-forest-restoration>
 - (20) <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/01/08/sinar-mas-develop-biomass-power-plants.html>
 - (21) <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EJOLTplantations.pdf>
 - (22) <http://wrm.org.uy/actions-and-campaigns/india-support-forest-dependent-communities-against-plantations-expansion/>



Will the Paris Agreement Save Forests?

In December 2015, the Paris Agreement was celebrated with great fanfare. This agreement, part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), establishes new measures to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, which are responsible for global warming.

Almost a year after celebrating it, the Agreement came into force on November 4, 2016. A few days later, the 22nd UNFCCC Conference of the Parties commenced in Marrakech, Morocco, supposedly to move forward with the details of implementing the Paris Agreement. (1)

After the Paris Agreement and the discussions in Marrakech, do forests and communities that depend on them have anything to celebrate? The answer is NO. Let's go step by step.

The Paris Agreement is really just another example of how corporations interested in continuing and expanding their businesses have co-opted the Climate Summit and governments' agendas, which will inevitably only exacerbate the climate crisis. An example of this is that the Paris Agreement does not mention fossil fuels, the main contributors to global warming. Furthermore, there is no mention in the Agreement of the corporations that profit from extracting and selling these fuels.

Without explaining how it will do so, the Agreement aims to "to maintain the average global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." (2)

In order to reach the Agreement's less ambitious goal, i.e. to limit the temperature rise to below 2°C, each country sent their National Climate Action Plans to the UNFCCC, in which they outline their contribution toward achieving that goal. However, the - voluntarily - contributions to which each country has committed, are not sufficient to reach this goal. (3) We are off to a bad start.

For the second and more ambitious goal — to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C — the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) technical calculations linking greenhouse gas concentrations and temperature changes conclude that it is necessary to stop consuming fossil fuels by 2025-2030. They say it is also necessary to use a new



technology on a massive scale to absorb carbon dioxide — increase in the concentration of this gas in the atmosphere is causing global warming — through various land sinks, such as trees and the soil. This new proposed technology is known as Negative Emissions. (4) Estimated figures say that to avoid a 1.5°C increase using Negative Emissions technology with trees, it would take 1 billion hectares of land to cover with trees, an area equal to the United States. (5)

Despite repeated warnings, the Agreement does not mention the crucial need to immediately cut emissions from burning fossil fuels down to zero (see also the article 'The Paris Agreement Undermines the Global Campaign to Leave Oil Underground' in this bulletin). It is estimated that in order to avoid a fatal outcome for many of the planet's inhabitants, 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must stay underground. (6) Yet the Paris Agreement, and thus the governments that have signed onto it, do not insist on this point. So how do they plan to make sure temperatures do not rise by more than 2°C?

One of the Agreement's central considerations — or problems — is that the focus is not on reducing emissions but "to undertake rapid greenhouse gas emissions reductions in accordance with best available science, so as to achieve a **balance** between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century." (7) Solutions focus on the creation of so-called land sinks — including forests. This opens the door to carbon offset mechanisms that claim to compensate fossil carbon emissions with increased uptake and storage of carbon in these so-called sinks. Offset mechanisms allow companies or countries with a certain limit on emissions to continue polluting beyond that limit, as long as they pay someone elsewhere to reduce emissions for them. The most well-known emissions offset mechanism is the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol. (8) The message here is very misguided, and also very dangerous for the millions of people who depend on their territories for survival.

Precisely in this proposal lies the central problem of the Paris Agreement: the negation of the difference between fossil carbon and biotic carbon. However for the climate, there is a very important difference between these two kinds of carbon. On the one hand there is carbon emitted from deforestation, for example; this is part of the natural cycle of carbon emitted and absorbed by plants and oceans and which has been circulating in the atmosphere for millions of years. On the other hand, there is carbon released from extracting and burning oil, natural gas or coal. This carbon — which was stored underground for millions of years — once released, increases the total amount of carbon (dioxide) in the atmosphere. Even though plants and oceans can absorb some of this additional carbon introduced into the atmosphere, they do so temporarily. For example, when there is a fire, or when a tree dies, the CO₂ is emitted again and returns to the atmosphere. (9)

Forgotten Arguments

Forests were excluded from the Kyoto Protocol's carbon offset mechanisms (mainly the CDM) for several reasons: (a) it is impossible to accurately measure how much carbon is stored in forests, and this amount changes constantly, (b) the carbon market failed to address the factors driving deforestation; carbon offset projects only push the destruction to other locations outside the project area, (c) the CDM rules would create



perverse incentives, among others because the FAO definition of forests was used. This definition confuses forests with plantations and thus, the inclusion of "forests" would have created a new subsidy for the expansion of monoculture tree plantations; (d) forests only store carbon temporarily and this carbon can be released at any time due to natural or social processes. This non-permanence of carbon in trees causes many complications for the carbon market: if the carbon in trees is released, the carbon credit buyer can no longer say their fossil fuel emissions have been offset. (10)

The arguments which so far have been valid to exclude REDD projects (**R**educing **E**missions from **D**eforestation and **F**orest **D**egradation) from carbon offset mechanisms like the CDM are still valid. Nonetheless, governments seem to have forgotten them.

Despite the fact that governments excluded forests from the Kyoto Protocol's carbon trading mechanisms, those interested in doing business with REDD made sure it got on the official agenda of the UNFCCC. Because they wanted to offset their emissions or because they had REDD projects to offer, they created a voluntary market, parallel to the formal negotiations of the UNFCCC. With this voluntary market for REDD projects, governments and polluting companies, along with large conservation organizations, created pressure for REDD to be included in the "official" UN mechanisms. There is sufficient evidence that these voluntary projects and initiatives, financed by the World Bank's carbon market and by the UN itself (UN-REDD), have been a bad idea; a bad idea for the climate, since emissions continue to increase; a bad idea for forests which continue to be destroyed; and a bad idea for communities who depend on forests. The Paris Agreement eliminates the separation between voluntary markets and the carbon market created by the UNFCCC.

Ignoring all this evidence showing that including forests in carbon markets is a bad idea, REDD was recognized in the Paris Agreement, including as part of the new carbon trading mechanisms the Paris Agreement includes. The purchase and sale of carbon credits can now occur between countries in the North and the South but also between two countries in the global South. The consequences of this decision are worsened by the fact that now, under the Agreement, countries in the global South — with their large forest areas—have reduction goals to meet (voluntarily). Many have included reducing forest loss in their national plans to reduce emissions. Each country must now develop a transparent and reliable mechanism to guarantee that the reductions accounted for in the national carbon balance that all countries now have to prepare under the Paris Agreement, are not counted twice. Such double-counting could happen if provinces, municipalities or states within the country have accepted private REDD+ projects or programs that sell carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market. Counting the same reduction twice would mean the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will be higher than the UN accounting balances suggest. In addition to the risk of counting the same reduction twice, the reality is that reductions from such carbon offset projects are always hypothetical: it is neither possible to predict what would have happened to the forest, nor is it possible to adequately calculate the amount of carbon contained in a forest. (11)



An Uncertain Future for Forests and Communities

REDD projects implemented to date have shown not only that REDD is a false solution to climate change, they have created a number of problems for local communities that have traditionally lived in forests. These problems include: lack of consultation, lack of information prior to the setting up a REDD project, and the imposition of severe restrictions on communities' use of the forest. These REDD projects also undermine communities' rights and control over their forests. This is exposed in a review of over 24 REDD activities implemented in Latin America, Asia and Africa. (12)

REDD has been unable to curb the climate crisis and the causes of deforestation. REDD has also been unable to improve the lives of forest-dependent communities. But those who signed onto the Paris Agreement remembered none of this.

- (1) The UN climate talks in Marrakesh brought no significant progress in defining a road map for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Rather, there were closed discussions on the central issues that arise from the adoption of the Agreement. Among them, the creation of a possible carbon market, the risk of double-counting of emission reductions that each country will enter into their national carbon balance sheet if these can also be sold on carbon markets and on the topic that is on the agenda each time, the financing needed for the countries in the global South and the reluctance of industrialized countries to make that financing available. See "Forest highlights from Marrakech" at <http://www.fern.org/node/6209>
- (2) Paris Agreement http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf
- (3) http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris_en
- (4) <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2015/12/07/scientists-1-5c-warming-limit-means-fossil-fuel-phase-out-by-2030/>
- (5) Going Negative, How carbon sinks could cost the Earth. FERN. <http://www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/Going%20negative%20version%202.pdf>
- (6) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jan/07/much-worlds-fossil-fuel-reserve-must-stay-buried-prevent-climate-change-study-says>
- (7) See article 4 of the Paris Agreement at: http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf
- (8) More information at Carbon Trade Watch: Carbon Trading – How it works and why it fails. <http://www.carbontradewatch.org/publications/carbon-trading-how-it-works-and-why-it-fails.html> and in the Friends of the Earth International brochure: Financialization of Nature: Creating a new definition of nature. <http://www.foei.org/resources/publications/publications-by-subject/forests-and-biodiversity-publications/financialization-of-nature>
- (9) (10) To read more: 10 Things Communities Should Know About REDD. <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/10-things-communities-should-know-about-redd/>
- (11) [The introduction to the publication '10 Things Communities Should Know About REDD'](#) explains why we must talk about hypothetical emissions reductions in the case of carbon calculations in forests, rather than real and verifiable reductions.
- (12) REDD: A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies. http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/REDD-A-Collection-of-Conflict_Contradictions_Lies_expanded.pdf



REDD+ in the Paris Agreement secures funding for conservation industry while large-scale deforestation advances unhindered

The "conservation industry" – groups such as The Nature Conservancy, WWF, Conservation International, consultants and auditors of REDD+ projects – and funders like the World Bank celebrated the formal recognition of REDD+ in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015. They have been lobbying for an inclusion of REDD+ into global carbon markets established by the UN's Kyoto Protocol for nearly a decade. For communities affected by REDD+ projects and programmes, however, the news will have been no reason to celebrate. Faced with harassment, tenure insecurity and restrictions on their traditional forest use, forest peoples and traditional forest users have been on the sharp edge of the REDD+ experiment that has seen the conservation industry pocket hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars, Norwegian kronor and euros for the unfulfilled promise to turn REDD+ into a successful forest conservation tool that will halt deforestation.

In reality, REDD+ is not designed to protect forests or reduce deforestation but to enable corporations and industrialized countries to continue burning fossil carbon even longer. Instead, REDD+ falsely singles out small-scale farming and shifting cultivation as the main cause for the destruction of tropical forests. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that the result of 10 years of conservation industry experimenting with REDD+ is an increase in forest loss in several areas where REDD+ projects have been implemented - REDD-Early Movers programme in Acre, Brazil and the Mai N'dombe REDD+ project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to name just a few (1). Worse than that, REDD+ implementation on the ground has resulted in severe restrictions on forest peoples' traditional land use while large-scale cattle ranching, mining, hydro-dam and infrastructure developments continue unabated, destroying large swaths of tropical forests. Thus, REDD+ has shown to be the wrong tool for tackling the drivers of large-scale destruction. (2)

Yet, despite the dismal track-record of REDD+ over the past 10 years, corporate and institutional investors and their partners from the conservation industry keep announcing new REDD+ initiatives. The European Investment Bank, Conservation International and an investment fund called 'Althelia Climate Fund', for example, received a total of US\$53.5 million (US\$ 35 million investment and US\$ 18.5 million as grant) from the UN Climate Convention's Green Climate Fund (3) for a REDD+ programme in Madagascar. Norway, corporations from the global food industry (responsible for deforestation and substantial greenhouse gas emissions) and the World



Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF) announced a new "tropical forest and agriculture focused fund" at the World Economic Forum 2017 in the Swiss luxury ski resort Davos. The new fund is said to use a 'jurisdictional approach', (see below), and mentions Brazil and Indonesia as initial countries where projects are to take place. Global food companies that are said to be interested in supporting the fund include Carrefour, Mars, Nestlé, and Unilever – the latter having announced an investment of US\$25 million over a five year period into the fund.

But do these global food corporations really want us make believe they care about forests and forest peoples' rights? The motive of protecting market shares – and therefore, profit margins - in industrialized countries and urban centers where consumers increasingly demand 'deforestation-free' products seems more plausible. It would also explain why these corporations are not presenting initiatives to reduce corporate control of the international food system and a strengthening of the less carbon-intensive peasant farming models. Expecting such measures from global food corporations would be like expecting that fossil fuel corporations lobby the UN to adopt a strong climate agreement that clearly spells out an end to fossil carbon burning in the near future.

Why do governments such as Norway and Germany, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and corporations such as Unilever keep pouring new money into REDD+ despite the initiative having "fallen far short of what was hoped"? (4) A recent academic article provides some explanation. 'Promising Change, Delivering Continuity: REDD+ as Conservation Fad' explains that for the conservation and development industry, REDD+ serves to help them ensure "to generate value and appropriate financial resources." (5) A fad is a "form of collective behavior that develops within a culture, a generation or social group and which impulse is followed enthusiastically by a group of people for a finite period of time". And usually, effectiveness or suitability of the fad to the solving of the actual problem matters little.

The article notes that a recent study of "23 of the 300 sub-national initiatives showed that only 4 had managed to actually sell carbon credits and found that funding is a key challenge to sustain the initiatives." The article also mentions technical "challenges", and explains that "marketing of carbon credits under the voluntary carbon standard systems involves complex technical procedures and requirements."

The authors explain that while the language and arguments change when the conservation industry comes up with a new proposal to save forests - that "REDD+ implies change at the discursive level." One such recent change in the REDD+ discussion is the term 'jurisdictional REDD+'. It means that governments and development banks are moving away from funding individual REDD+ projects and instead aim to put REDD+ activities in place at the level of a whole province, state and ultimately, an entire country. The German government's REDD Early Movers programme is an example of a 'jurisdictional' REDD+ programme where the German government pays the government of the Brazilian state of Acre if Acre can provide evidence that deforestation in the state has not exceeded an agreed maximum of forest loss. The new tropical forest fund mentioned above that was announced by Norway and others in Davos, also announced it would focus on 'jurisdictional' projects.



Despite such changes in terminology, the authors of 'Promising Change, Delivering Continuity' say that in practical terms, REDD+ - like previous 'conservation fads' - above all stands for "continuity and repetitiveness in terms of the initial promises and expectations leading to substantial donor financing, pilot project activities, and policy development and implementation processes." The authors also say that REDD+ promises and expectations "have achieved little in terms of changing actual forest management and use on the ground outside selected pilot project sites, but have sustained the livelihoods of actors within the development and conservation industry, including academics.

It is unfortunate that those responsible at the European Investment Bank, the Green Climate Fund or in the governments of Norway and Germany keep ignoring the growing evidence showing that if the goals are reducing forest loss and tackling the root causes of climate change, continued funding for REDD+ is counterproductive. That evidence will not change just because the conservation lobby has succeeded in having REDD+ mentioned in the UN's Paris Agreement, or banks and governments keep pouring more money into new regional, 'jurisdictional' REDD+ initiatives.

The 'Promising change' article concludes that REDD+ above all is "a discursive commodity that is carefully promoted in particular ways that allow actors within the development and conservation industry access to financial resources." Because there are still many who look to REDD+ in the hope of addressing global climate change and protecting forests and forest peoples' rights, the authors urge a questioning of the uses of funding allocated to REDD+. Add to that the severe restrictions, criminalization and tenure insecurity for forest peoples and traditional forest users affected where REDD+ projects are implemented (2), it is time to replace the failed REDD+ experiment with support for the struggles and initiatives of forest peoples and traditional forest users who have protected forests for generations. Several studies have shown that where indigenous peoples' territories are recognized and demarcated and where the rights of traditional forest communities are respected, deforestation rates are lower than in surrounding areas not under control of indigenous peoples or traditional forest communities. (6)

- (1) See among others, 'Deforestation is increasing in the Mai N'dombe REDD project area. And the project still sells carbon credits' at: <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2016/02/18/deforestation-is-increasing-in-the-mai-ndombe-redd-project-area-and-the-project-still-sells-carbon-credits/>; The virtual economy of REDD: Conflicts of interest, hot air, and dodgy baselines at: <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2016/06/02/the-virtual-economy-of-redd-conflicts-of-interest-hot-air-and-dodgy-baselines/>;
- (2) For examples, see [REDD Collection of Conflicts](#) and reports on the website www.redd-monitor.org
- (3) See the Green Climate Fund information about the approval of the funds here: <http://www.greenclimate.fund/-/sustainable-landscapes-in-eastern-madagascar>
- (4) See also the extensive CIFOR study 'REDD+ on the ground: A case book of subnational initiatives across the globe.' Published in 2014.
- (5) Promising Change, Delivering Continuity: REDD+ as Conservation Fad. Article by Jens Friis Lund et al. Published in the journal World Development (2016).
- (6) See graph 'Indigenous groups are good forest stewards', pg. 17 in the Fern et al. report 'Going Negative'. <http://www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/Going%20negative%20version%202.pdf>



Ibi Bateke tree planting project in DRC: Sold as the success it never was

Advertised as "ground-breaking" and the first CDM (1) project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Ibi Bateke tree planting project promised to use loans and up-front carbon payments to plant acacia, eucalyptus and pine trees on ca. 4,000 hectares of savannah and restore 230 hectares as "ecological area" through planting of native tree species. (2) After 5 to 7 years, the plantation trees would be cut and turned into charcoal to be sold on the lucrative charcoal market in the country's capital Kinshasa. In the early years, before the tree canopy closes, revenue was also to be generated from the sale of cassava planted beneath the acacia plantation trees. The project owner, a company called Novacel, expected these three activities – the sale of charcoal and cassava, along with revenue from carbon credit sales - to generate enough money so the project could cover project costs, pay back the loans and replant the trees cut down to make charcoal. (3) Novacel describes the charcoal as "sustainable" because of the promise to replant the trees that are turned into charcoal.

Replanting is also required because the project sells carbon credits, among others to the World Bank BioCarbon Fund. (4) Carbon credits are a promise: Ibi Bateke plants trees that store carbon and which the project claims would not have been planted without revenue from carbon credit sales. This allows investors in the BioCarbon Fund like Sumitomo Chemicals or Tokyo Electric Power Co., two Japanese companies who receive carbon credits in return for their investment to claim that their emissions do not harm the climate because they have paid the Ibi Bateke project to plant extra trees. Project consultants have calculated that these trees are soaking up 54,511 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year during the 30-year life of the project - 2.4 million carbon credits over 30 years, in other words. The consultants also claim to know that the trees would not have been planted and that the carbon would not have been stored without the project. To keep that promise to store carbon that otherwise would have remained in the atmosphere, the trees cut for making charcoal need to be replanted.

Why? Because when the charcoal is burned, the carbon that was stored in the trees is released back into the atmosphere. The buyer of the carbon credit, however, paid the Ibi Bateke carbon project to keep the carbon out of the atmosphere so the buyer himself could emit more carbon without violating a legal emission limit. So, in order to keep the carbon credit promise of compensating for those emissions made somewhere in an



industrialized country by the buyer of the carbon credit, the project needs to replant the trees that were turned into charcoal.

The Ibi Bateke project also promised to use a part of the income from selling carbon credits for community projects. "Congo community to use carbon payment to put kids through school" was the headline of a World Bank press release in March 2011, when the BioCarbon Fund announced it would be buying carbon credits from the project. (5)

Who is behind the Ibi Bateke carbon tree planting project?

Novacel is a private company created by the late Paul Mushiete Mahamwe, Minister of Finance in DRC under former President Mobutu. His three children own the company, with his son Olivier Mushiete acting as the company's director. Olivier Mushiete, a long-term resident in Belgium, launched the Ibi Batéké project in 1995. He also presents himself as a traditional chief of the land included in the Ibi Bateke carbon project, and several World Bank documents refer to Novacel as a company founded by 'natives of the Bateke region'. Olivier Mushiete also created a non-profit organization, GI-Agro, which manages funds allocated to 'community development' projects' for Novacel.

Olivier Mushiete and his siblings claim to have personally inherited 22,000 hectares of land from their late father. Olivier Mushiete is said to have titled 8,000 hectares of the land under his name and registered it as a concession (*contrat d'emphyteose*). The land rented to Novacel for the Ibi Bateke carbon tree planting project is a portion of these 8,000 hectares of land O. Mushiete turned into privately-held land. A report about the land rights in the project area (6) states that therefore, "legally, Olivier Mushiete is the primary beneficiary of all revenues generated by the Ibi-Batéké project". The study further notes that by "obtaining a legal title over the 8,000 ha of project activities, in addition to having the land recognized by the Chefferie as privately-held land, Olivier Mushiete seems to have effectively extinguished any competing customary claims over Ibi estate by other clan members." The report does not say whether there were other claims to this land or how those people reacted who may have seen their customary rights to the land effectively extinguished. Another question not addressed in the report is how the late Paul Mushiete Mahamwe acquired the land. The report 'The Impacts of the "Carbon Sinks of Ibi-Batéké Project on the Indigenous Pygmies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo' suggests that indigenous 'Pygmy' people hold customary claims to the land appropriated by Mushiete Mahamwe. (7)

Who funded the project?

The BioCarbon Fund was one of the first funders of the Ibi Bateke project. In addition to making an up-front payment for the carbon credits the BioCarbon Fund promised to buy, the fund also provided technical support for the registration as a CDM project. A World Bank report states that the presence of the BioCarbon Fund as an early investor led to the French company Orbeo (a joint venture between chemicals company Rhodia and the French bank Société General that has since been bought by Belgian company Solvay Energy Services) making an up-front payment for an equal amount of carbon credits to that of the BioCarbon Fund. The UN Environmental Programme, UNEP, covered some of the costs for technical documents required to prepare a carbon offset project. Two French companies, UMICORE (active in the mining sector) and Suez (an energy corporation), are mentioned as having provided 7-year loans of EUR 250,000



each (charcoal sales were expected to generate revenue from year 7, enabling the repayment of the loans). Several reports also note that two individuals invested a total of EUR 550,000 in the project.

In 2012, the BioCarbon Fund significantly reduced the number of carbon credits it would buy from the Ibi Bateke project, from the 500,000 carbon credits announced in 2009 to 80,000. The French company Orbeo announced it would buy an equal amount as the BioCarbon Fund, and also reduced its purchase to 80,000 credits. The carbon credits, bought by the BioCarbon Fund and Orbeo at a price of USD 4 per credit, are to be delivered by 2017. (8)

Despite the scaled-back carbon credit purchase from the World Bank and Orbeo, Novacel had access to at least USD 1.5 million of external funding plus technical and financial support from UNEP and the BioCarbon Fund for the preparation of project documents and planting. Yet the company had planted a mere 1012,42 hectares by May 2013, the latest date for which information about the area planted is publicly available.

The Ibi Bateke project has been registered as a CDM project since 2011 but it has not been issued any carbon credits yet. In December 2016, the CDM database did not show any information about a date for a planned verification audit in 2017. Without such a verification audit, however, the project will not be able to deliver any carbon credits to the BioCarbon Fund by the end of 2017.

Ibi Bateke project owner "undercapitalized" despite generous loan arrangements and carbon credit pre-payments from the World Bank

It seems, that the generous start-up funding available to Novacel was still not sufficient to fulfil the promise to replant some 4,000 hectares of acacia, eucalyptus and pine plantation. "Undercapitalized, NOVACEL is facing recurrent difficulties in financing its activities, although it benefited from loans (Suez, Umicore) and prepayments (BioCF, Orbeo) of carbon credits to be received over the period 2008-2017. Today, only the sale of cassava (chips, flour) ensures the survival of the company. As a result, only 1012.42 hectares were planted to date since 2008, resulting in a net balance (sequestration - emission) of CO₂ across the project close to zero at the end of 2012", a BioCarbon Fund evaluation report notes in 2015. (9)

Novacel is again looking to the World Bank to provide a financial lifeline. This time, the company is hoping to tap into funds provided by the World Bank Forest Investment Program (FIP). A 2015 BioCarbon Fund report on the status of implementation of the Ibi Bateke project suggests that the FIP's 'Improved Forested Landscape Management Project' in the DRC might be able to provide an additional loan to Novacel. Such a loan might solve the problem the BioCarbon Fund might face by the end of 2017 if / when no carbon credits have been delivered and Novacel has already spent all the money received as pre-payment for later delivery of the carbon credits.

However, a new loan does not address the question of why the project needs another loan. Did the BioCarbon Fund underestimate the cost of planting trees on the Bateke plateau so much that the generous up-front funding and loans were sufficient for only a quarter of the planned planting?



Publications about the project differ on the contribution that carbon credit revenue is expected to make to the project. One report states that carbon credit sales are expected to account for around 30 percent of project income, with charcoal sales bringing in 20 percent and the sale of cassava around 45 percent while another chart attributes only 1 percent of project revenue to carbon credit sales, 30 percent to charcoal and 68 percent to cassava sales. What contribution does the World Bank expect to come from carbon credit revenue? The public relations material of the World Bank describes the Ibi Bateke as a carbon finance project. If carbon credit sales make up only an insignificant amount of project revenue, is it not misleading to call the project a carbon offset project?

Also, the charcoal market in Kinshasa is very lucrative, and demand for charcoal is high. Does the project not yet sell any charcoal – or is replanting of the trees that were cut to make charcoal not a priority for the use of revenue generated from the sale of charcoal? Tree plantation companies in Brazil, for example, tapped into the CDM carbon market to finance their replanting when state subsidies for replanting were cut. Instead of saving the funds needed to replant their ageing eucalyptus plantations at the end of the 21-year rotation, companies had preferred to pocket their profits during the 20 years the eucalyptus trees were re-growing from stock after being cut. In Brazil, companies like Plantar (also a BioCarbon Fund project, (10)) and Vallourec used CDM carbon credit income to finance replant their eucalyptus plantations, claiming that otherwise they would have to switch from charcoal to burning mineral coal in their iron smelters (see [WRM bulletin 163](#), February 2011). Will they set aside funds to replant in 21 years, when the eucalyptus trees need to be replaced again? It seems as (un-)likely as Novacel setting aside sufficient funding to replant the acacia trees on the Bateke plateau after they are cut a last time for making charcoal at the end of the Ibi Bateke carbon project's 30-year lifetime. But failure to replant will increase the negative climate impact of the project because the carbon credit – once sold – would justify additional emissions elsewhere that would not be compensated if the trees are not replanted.

BioCarbon Fund projects like Plantar and Ibi Bateke show: carbon plantations are a false solution for climate, energy crises and for communities

Yet, the UN Paris Agreement calls for an expansion of these false solutions. The UN Paris Agreement and many national and regional climate action plans are directly or indirectly promoting tree plantations for biomass (see article in this bulletin), and funds such as the BioCarbon Fund continue carbon markets as a way of funding such plantations. The experience of social movements and local communities affected by large-scale tree plantations shows that tree plantation carbon offset projects are a false solution that tends to make the problem worse.

The Ibi Bateke project has thus far been a failure from a climate and financial perspective. It also shows why carbon offset projects tend to reinforce historical injustices of land allocation. It is not the only example of a carbon offset projects which changes land use on a large scale reinforces historical injustices of land allocation. (11) The owner of the company behind the Ibi Bateke project, Novacel - set up by members of the Mobuto-era political elite - has turned customary land (acquired under questionable circumstances) into privately-held property. This effectively extinguished



any other customary rights other members of the Ibi clan may have to this land. The Ibi Bateke tree planting project in DRC has been sold as a success it never was.

- (1) CDM stands for "Clean Development Mechanism", one of three schemes through which the UN's international climate agreement of 1997, the Kyoto Protocol, aimed to promote carbon markets. The CDM allows industrialized countries and companies in these countries to overshoot their greenhouse gas emission limits at home if they buy CDM carbon credits instead. These credits are sold with the (unverifiable) promise that the project issuing these CDM credits has saved emissions that otherwise would have been released into the atmosphere. The rapid increase in greenhouse gases is the main cause of climate change.
- (2) See a short description and links to further documents at Eject Environmental Justice Atlas: <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/ibi-bateke-carbon-sink-plantation-drc>
- (3) Another World Bank document, the FIP Investment Plan for the Democratic Republic of Congo, explains why the carbon credit payments were so important for the financing of the tree plantations: "In the initial phases, the cassava revenue stream allows the project entity to finance the transaction costs, but not the investment costs. Hence, the project entity needed to leverage resources from other sources, **which was possible as the expected revenues from carbon credits could [be] used as guarantees [for] international private equity.**" Pg. 35, https://www-cif.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/default/files/meeting-documents/fip_4_dcr_ip_0_0.pdf
- (4) The BioCarbon Fund is one of the funds the World Bank set up in the early 2000s to promote global carbon markets.
- (5) World Bank News Release 'Congo community to use carbon payment to put kids through school'. 8 March 2011.
- (6) Analysis of institutional mechanisms for sharing REDD+ benefits. Study published by USAID. 2012 https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/USAID_Land_Tenure_Analysis_of_Institutional_Mechanisms_for_Sharing_REDD_Benefits_Case_Studies.pdf
- (7) Report 'The Impacts of the "Carbon Sinks of Ibi-Batéké Project on the Indigenous Pygmies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo' by Sinafasi Makelo Adrien. 2006. From page 45. <http://no-redd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Ibi-Bateke-REDD-type-servitude-Case-Studies1-2.pdf>
- (8) Before a CDM project can sell carbon credits, two different auditing firms (paid for by the project) need to visit the project area. The first audit is called a validation. Only validated projects can be registered as CDM projects. The validation confirms that the project documents comply with the CDM rules and that the estimates made about reducing emissions are credible to the auditing firm (the booklet [10 things communities should know about REDD](#) explains why these estimates are not verifiable and make carbon offsets a false solution to the climate crisis). The second audit is called verification. The verification auditors compare the estimated reductions from the validation report with the actual reductions that the project has made and decide how many carbon credits the project can actually sell. The Ibi Bateke project has been validated but it has not yet passed a verification audit. It therefore does not yet have any carbon credits to sell or deliver to the BioCarbon Fund and others who paid for such credits in advance in 2011.
- (9) BioCarbon Fund Implementation Status & Results Report May 2015. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/355501468233080724/pdf/ISR-Disclosable-P096414-05-26-2015-1432640393642.pdf>
- (10) A list of projects from which the BioCarbon Fund bought carbon credits can be found here: <https://wbcarbonfinance.org/Router.cfm?Page=BioCF&FID=9708&ItemID=9708&ft=ProjectsT2>
- (11) See the article 'Roots of Inequity' by Susam Chomba et al. for an example of how the Kasigau Corridor REDD+ project in Kenya reinforces historical injustice of land allocation.



ACTION ALERTS



Belgium: Field Liberation Movement Takes Action Against GE Trees. At the end of the climate summit in Marrakesh in December 2016, 20 activists from the *Field Liberation Movement* in Belgium planted a “**permit to cut**” in a field of GMO poplar trees belonging to the Flemish Institute of Biotechnology. The permit was given symbolically to the Flemish Minister responsible for climate policy.

The Minister became infamous for her statement regarding forest management that “Trees have always had the function to be cut.” With this in mind, activists encouraged her to cut the field of GMO trees.

See: <https://stopgetrees.org/field-liberation-movement-takes-action-ge-trees-belgium/> (available in English only)



Brazil: Land for food production, not pulp for export. In the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo, the Landless Peasant Movement MST is occupying some 400 hectares of land appropriated by pulp and paper company Fibria (formerly Aracruz Celulose). 190 families have already established a camp and are preparing the land for the cultivation of food free of pesticides.

For more information, see: <http://www.mst.org.br/2017/01/13/mst-ocupa-area-apropriada-indevidamente-pela-fibria-em-aracruz-es.html> (available in Portuguese only)



Chile: New wave of forest fires. Organizations in Chile demand an end to the national policy and instruments that have been created to favor the development of tree plantations. The large-scale pine and eucalyptus monoculture forestry model has caused, in addition to other impacts, the fire crisis that is being experienced in the south-central area of the country.

For more information see: <http://olca.cl/articulo/nota.php?id=106668>



Sign-on letter: The UN has declared the 21st of March 'International Day of Forests'. We will use the occasion to remind the FAO that it must urgently change its forest definition so the plantations industry can no longer use the definition to mislabel monoculture tree plantations as forests. We are hopeful that one day even the FAO will accept that plantations are not forests and change its misleading forest

definition! Please sign on if you have not done so yet and circulate the links to the sign-on letter!

Spanish: <http://wrm.org.uy/es/todas-las-campanas/apoye-la-carta-reclamando-a-la-fao-que-revise-su-definicion-de-bosque/>

French: <http://wrm.org.uy/fr/toutes-les-campagnes/souscrivez-la-lettre-qui-exhorte-la-fao-a-revoir-sa-definicion-de-foret/>

Portuguese: <http://wrm.org.uy/pt/todas-as-campanhas/apoie-a-carta-chamando-a-fao-a-rever-a-sua-definicao-de-floresta/>

English: <http://wrm.org.uy/all-campaigns/support-the-letter-urging-fao-to-revise-its-forest-definition/>



RECOMMENDED



International Statement: Our Land is Worth More Than Carbon. The Paris Agreement enshrined the principle of compensation in dealing with the climate crisis. This means that emissions actually do not have to decrease but that emissions and absorption of carbon in vegetation and soil can cancel each other out. This approach has already begun with forests through the highly controversial REDD+ mechanism and, to an increasing

degree, is now targeting farming land. Because the Paris Agreement focuses on compensation, not reduction, agriculture is becoming a unit of accounting permitting fossil carbon emissions to continue or even increase.

English: <https://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/actions-and-events-mainmenu-26/-climate-change-and-agrofuels-mainmenu-75/2184-our-land-is-worth-more-than-carbon-civil-society-statement-cop-22>

French: <https://viacampesina.org/fr/index.php/actions-et-nements-mainmenu-26/changements-climatiques-et-agrocarburants-mainmenu-71/1408-cop-22-nos-terres-valent-plus-que-leur-carbone>

Spanish: <https://viacampesina.org/es/index.php/acciones-y-eventos-mainmenu-26/cambios-climcos-y-agro-combustibles-mainmenu-79/2835-nuestras-tierras-valen-mas-que-el-carbono>



International Statement: Marrakech declaration against the summit of false solutions and for a fair and sustainable future for all peoples. For real alternatives to preserve environmental balances and recognise climate justice, For a fair and sustainable future for all peoples.

English: <https://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/actions-and-events-mainmenu-26/-climate-change-and-agrofuels-mainmenu-75/2213-marrakech-declaration-against-the-summit-of-false-solutions>

French: <https://viacampesina.org/fr/index.php/actions-et-nements-mainmenu-26/changements-climatiques-et-agrocarburants-mainmenu-71/1432-cop-22-contre-le-sommet-des-fausses-solutions-pour-un-futur-durable-et-equitable-pour-les-peuples>

Spanish:

http://www.biodiversidadla.org/Principal/Secciones/Documentos/COP22_Contra_la_cumbre_de_las_falsas_soluciones_por_un_futuro_justo_y_sostenible_para_todos_los_pueblos



International Declaration: Large-scale bioenergy must be excluded from the Renewable Energy definition. Declaration from February 2016. The EU is provoking a global expansion in industrial bioenergy use and the rapid development and expansion of a global trade in biofuels and wood-based bioenergy. The EU already bears great responsibility for the climate and biodiversity crises currently facing the planet. Claiming more land for



bioenergy production, under the false premise that this is a contribution to climate protection, can only increase the already unacceptably high land footprint of the EU. See also the report *Bioenergy Out: Why bioenergy should not be included in the next EU Renewable Energy Directive*.

Declaration: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BioenergyOut-Declaration-3.pdf> (also available in Spanish:

<https://www.salvalaselva.org/noticias/7063/la-bioenergia-a-gran-escala-debe-excluirse-de-la-definicion-de-energia-renovable>)

Report: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/files/EU-Bioenergy-Briefing2.pdf> (available in English only)



Report: Cooling the Planet: Frontline Communities Lead the Struggle. Voices from the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles. Small-scale food producers and consumers – the frontline communities – are increasingly confronted by the grabbing of land and systematic violations of human rights. Frontline communities additionally face increasingly frequent weather extremes and impacts caused by the climate change – and the inability of governments to agree

to real solutions. Peoples' access to and control of land and water is essential to peace, to stopping climate change, as well as to fulfilling fundamental human rights and guaranteeing a dignified life for all, the report notes.

English: https://viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/en/Cooling_the_Planet-EN.pdf

Spanish: https://viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/sp/Cooling_the_Planet-ES.pdf

French: https://viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/fr/Cooling_the_Planet-FR.pdf

WRM publications:



Report: Industrial Tree Plantations Invading Eastern and Southern Africa. What is driving the expansion of industrial tree plantations in 11 eastern and southern African countries, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe; Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho; and Madagascar. The publication identifies probable drivers and discusses the consequences for local communities confronted by tree plantation companies in search of fertile land to establish their

tree plantations. The report also gives examples of communities that have already experienced the invasion of their lands and lives by industrial tree plantations.

English: <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016-10-Plantations-in-ES-Africa-TW-WRM-med-screen.pdf> (soon also available in Portuguese and Swahili)



Briefing: The impacts of industrial tree plantations on water. When communities denounce the water shortages they experience as a result of tree monocultures, the empirical evidence they present is often discredited and ridiculed in public by proponents of monoculture tree plantations who claim that there is no scientific evidence to back up the communities' demands. The Briefing combines empirical evidence based on community



experience with evidence derived from Western science that reinforces what communities already know and have long been saying about the impacts large-scale monoculture tree plantations have on water resources.

Available in Spanish only: <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Impactos-en-el-agua-de-las-plantaciones-industriales-de-%C3%A1rboles-1.pdf>

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