



# Forest Cover

Issue no.32, December 2009

## About Forest Cover

Welcome to the thirty-second issue of Forest Cover, newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC). GFC is a world-wide coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs). GFC promotes rights-based, socially just and effective forest policies at international and national level, including through building capacity of NGOs and IPOs in all regions to influence global forest policy.

Forest Cover is published four times a year. It features reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its donors or the editors.

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## A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy

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## Guest Editorial

***Whether the upcoming climate summit in Copenhagen will become the biggest failure in trying to save humanity increasingly depends on the position of just one country, the United States of America. If the biggest polluter in the world persists in its opposition to legally binding emission reductions targets and firm financial commitments, there is no hope of Copenhagen being a success. Thus, we decided to focus this guest editorial on the position of the US, as seen through the eyes of Anna Pinto, an Indigenous activist from India.***

### **Ex Silvis: The US position on Climate Change, the G-20 and its implications**

*Anna Pinto, Centre for Organization Research & Education (CORE), India*

The G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, in August 2009, reflected a range of sentiments and attitudes currently held in the United States on a variety of issues including climate change, the shocks emanating from the economic meltdown, and the increasing intolerance of the State towards democratic protest. All this and much more were revealed. However because these issues were lumped together, they were distorted, and their comparative importance and the need for urgent action on climate change was lost, resulting in a confusion of causes and effects that had activists - all well intentioned but often at cross purposes - unable to focus their work. But all were united in their mounting anger at government obstinacy and recalcitrance.

The overall strategy of the powers that be is clear though: sell every crisis as an economic opportunity that demands more and more investment of trust and resources from a public desperate to retain hope when all else is clearly lost; and, where support is not willingly forthcoming, to extract it at the barrel of a gun. It is clear that US foreign policy has come home to roost even though many may not wish to frame it as such

On climate change, the US and the G-20 still seem to think that Mother Nature can be bought off, and that the public can be fooled by insubstantial pledges of goodwill and clever accounting, just as with the economy. The US places its faith in virtual money that is generated by Presidential or Senatorial fiat and by pandering to immoderate greed rather than real sustainable productivity that feeds need rather than consumption. So the public, including workers, are now made to believe that green jobs will revitalize their dying fiscal fantasy world, if they can just keep the oil flowing and the steel pouring (and no doubt the guns blazing) until investors find it profitable enough to switch to renewable resources.

That unfortunately was the tenor of the talk in Pittsburgh, even by trade union leaders who ought to know better. The revival of colonialism, a sort of techno-colonization, based on renewable technology and international green consultancies in exotic foreign lands, appears to give the working class decision-makers and through them the working class, unfounded yet high hope of reclaimed US ascendancy in markets and workforce security. The saddest part of it was their inability to sound convincing;



rather they gave the impression that rhetoric was being spouted because they are simply too afraid to recognize and deal with (and certainly too afraid to articulate) the realities of unsustainable economies built on collapsing eco-systems in an irate and resentful international and national social environment.

There was irony enough in the discussions. While the calamities of climate change were recognized, there was also a stern refusal to come to grips with the inevitable decline of the development paradigm of limitless economic growth and consumption that has caused climate change and exacerbates it daily. While the hegemony of the malicious and greedy elite was condemned there was a willful blindness, both to their identity (i.e. these are real, irresponsible and insatiable human beings) and to the fact that all of us are complicit in upholding this hegemony in our daily lives unless we radically alter the premises and expectations of our societies.

The party is over, and has been for some time. Understandably the revelers do not want to stop. Many one suspects, do not know *how* to stop and most, it is clear, cannot imagine what they would do with themselves or their lives in radically altered paradigms; they have little concept of what these altered paradigms might be or contain and what they will - or perhaps must - lack.

There is a word for people and societies in this condition: denial. How long and how intensely denial will last is unpredictable. What is predictable is that it will lead to even deeper resentment and anger which will be even more unpredictable in its manifestations. That these angry people hold world-annihilating technologies is one of the most frightening prospects we might add to climate change. If we further add to this, the astounding naïveté of the American social psyche and its determination to believe that 'everything will turn out well for the good, guys' (vis-à-vis Americans and their friends and allies) the prospects are truly terrifying.

Where then is the hope in America? In the same place where it is found elsewhere, in the few whom modestly and unremittingly struggle to change their personal lives and values, even though they are surrounded by a society ferociously bent upon ignoring the coming storm. I met some of them too: artists, thinkers, farmers, mostly young people but also older people who were prepared to risk switching to alternatives even though they could not yet imagine them. People on the edges, who are being pushed off the edge. Just like everywhere else.

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*Thousands of protesters took to the streets. "People's March to the G-20" in Pittsburgh, PA (U.S.). September 2009. Photo: Langelles/GJEP*



## **Selling a Dirty REDD Deal with a New Coalition of the Willing**

*Simone Lovera, Sobrevivencia, Paraguay*

The Copenhagen Summit is starting to look more and more like the chronicle of a death foretold.

Civil society observers had already noted a few months ago that the Executive Secretary of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yvo de Boer, had started to sound the way Pascal Lamy, Secretary General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) sounded two months before the collapsed WTO summit in 2006. In fact, at the end of the last pre-Summit negotiation round of the Parties to the FCCC, which took place 2-6 November in Barcelona, Spain, Yvo de Boer had already started to sound like Pascal Lamy *after* the collapsed WTO summit. He basically made it clear that nobody should expect a legally binding outcome from Copenhagen anymore, at least not in the field of what is first and foremost needed: emission reduction commitments. In light of this it is probably not accidental that a new WTO summit has been scheduled just prior to the Copenhagen Summit. Northern Governments are clearly looking for extra training in 'media messaging for collapsing summits.' The challenge: how to sell their refusal to embrace basic principles of justice and solidarity, as "those naughty developing countries were just being difficult."



*Protest against carbon markets in Barcelona.*

*Photo: Simone Lovera/ GFC*

That Copenhagen will be a big blame-game is absolutely clear. Already, the US is implementing a carefully designed strategy to make sure the media have sympathy for their position that 'we should all do something' in Copenhagen. Sounds reasonable, until one looks at the facts and realizes that the average US citizen emits more than nine times the amount of greenhouse gases that the average Indian citizen does. And this figure only concerns current emissions; one should also take into account historical responsibilities. There is no question about the fact that irresponsible consumption patterns in the US and, to a lesser extent, other Northern countries have caused the climate change that is already happening.

Asking countries like China and India to take up legally binding emission reductions in this situation is like asking your kitten to stop scratching the couch while Godzilla is destroying your entire living room. One of the ways this particular kitten is scratching the couch is by destroying forest cover. For many developing countries, deforestation and forest degradation are their main source of emissions. It also goes without saying that this forest loss is an economic, social and environmental disaster. It destroys the livelihoods of people, ravishes biodiversity, disturbs rain patterns and



devastates a potentially precious economic resource. Halting forest loss is first and foremost in the interests of forested countries themselves. It is for precisely that reason that countries with good governance systems have already banned large-scale forest conversion. Only in countries where illegal deforestation is still rampant, does it continue unabated: It has been estimated that 80% of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon is illegal.

Reducing deforestation also contributes to mitigating climate change, and the kitten has been offered a plate of milk if it stops scratching the couch, in the form of payments to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). The latest FCCC negotiations in Bangkok (28 September to 8 October) and Barcelona (2-6 November) made it clear that REDD is seen as a potential way to greenwash a Copenhagen failure by a growing "coalition of the willing" (as Sunita Narain of the Indian Centre for Science and Environment recently baptized the group of countries that are willing to accept any kind of soft deal in Copenhagen if it pleases the US).



*Graphic image calling for emission cuts. Photo: Simone Lovera/ GFC*

The fact that REDD has been classified as a 'non-controversial' issue where negotiations could continue, while most have been stalled in big battles played out in Bangkok and Barcelona should be a warning to us all. Clear recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the right of Free Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples? A strong safeguard to ensure forests cannot be converted into tree plantations? Let's not make this too controversial, folks! Let's keep it simple! After all, we all want a deal in Copenhagen, no? And even if the US won't commit to a legally binding emission reduction target in Copenhagen, which means most Northern countries will not commit to anything more than 20% reductions, we can still do something for forests! And so the REDD debate continues....

We can already see the headlines on 19 December 2009: "Regretfully there was no agreement on binding emission reductions or finance, but there was some good news: countries agreed to include forests in global carbon markets, thus making a clear commitment to protecting the world's rainforests." Of course, those headlines will not tell you that under a changing climate, forests like the Amazon are likely to die off due to increasing droughts and forest fires between 10 and 20 years from now. That probably won't make the news until 2019. This year's headlines will also fail to talk about the chaos that will be created if forests are dumped in global carbon markets: REDD-payments will disappear like snow in the sun as the carbon price crashes due to a sudden overload of worthless carbon credits. After all, without reduction targets, carbon credits are not worth the paper they are written on (not even if that paper is considered a carbon sink itself, as some in the wood and pulp-sector are proposing).



The milk for the kitten might rapidly turn sour if it has to come from a "trade without caps" system.

The post-Copenhagen headlines will not point out that a 'forest' in still uncontested FCCC language includes tree plantations, and that most of the little money that will be left after the carbon market has crashed could actually flow to the expansion of large-scale plantations, since they will find additional financing elsewhere anyway. After all, those carbon-offset funds are just a little add-on to their existing profits. The headlines will not talk about Indigenous rights, or all those existing REDD pilot projects that provided 'interesting learning experiences' for institutions like the World Bank but brought only misery to the affected Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Reducing deforestation is important for many reasons and yes, it also contributes to mitigating climate change. But the most important way to prevent massive deforestation in the coming decades is to halt climate change and, thus, the US and other real polluters will have to agree on the necessary, legally binding emissions reductions targets now. Godzilla might have received a Nobel Peace Prize this year, but he and his fellow monsters are still responsible for an estimated 300,000 deaths a year. And this number will only increase in the coming years if there is no real deal in Copenhagen.

From that perspective, there are only two potential headlines that are the right ones for the 19th of December: **"The US causes Copenhagen Collapse"**.

or, perhaps, if we are still allowed to dream: **"Obama proves that he rightfully earned peace prize" .....**

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### **Agriculture and soils in carbon trading: Ground prepared in Bangkok** **Susanne Gura, consultant for Econexus, Germany**

In the negotiations and debates leading up to Copenhagen, there has been growing emphasis on carbon credits for agriculture, and the inclusion of soil carbon sequestration in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and other similar mechanisms including REDD. Soil carbon sequestration has so far been explicitly excluded from the CDM under the Kyoto Protocol, because of major uncertainties in measuring and verifying the permanence of soil carbon stores. But there is now a major push, by agribusiness, the FAO and some governments to change this. However, if soil carbon sequestration is included in a Copenhagen agreement, as experience with carbon trading in general and the CDM in particular has shown, the benefits will go to large companies who can afford specialist carbon consultants, not to small-scale farmers, their communities and sustainable, local ecological food provision.

Industrial agriculture and plantation corporations are increasingly profiting from carbon credits. For example, in Mexico half of all CDM credits benefit industrial pig farms. In



addition, soya and palm oil plantations for biofuels and eucalyptus plantations for charcoal have recently become eligible under the CDM. Yet the industrial model of agriculture is profoundly polluting, and responsible for a very large part of global emissions. Agriculture is by far the largest source of emissions because of the potent greenhouse gases nitrous oxide (predominantly from chemical fertilizer) and methane (largely from industrial livestock production). Most significantly, land use change driven by the demands of industrial agriculture, including and combined with deforestation, leads to the production of well over 18 per cent of global emissions, through the burning of above-ground biomass and the loss of soil carbon; at the same time the ability of ecosystems to help regulate the climate is destroyed or degraded.

However, instead of reforming industrial agriculture, countries in the North want to see attention focused on carbon offsets and sequestration, through agricultural and forestry projects located in the South. But carbon offsets legitimize continued fossil fuel burning by the affluent and thus continued global warming, and in the agricultural sector would neither prevent emissions from industrial agriculture, nor support a resilient, sustainable alternative.

If offsetting through soil carbon sequestration is accepted as a principle for action on mitigation, it will incentivize the large-scale application of unproven technologies – especially no-till biotechnology and biochar. The first involves the adoption of ‘no-till’ or ‘conservation agriculture’, which means instead of tilling the fields to remove weeds, large applications of herbicide are employed. This technique in most cases combines proprietary herbicides with genetically modified (GM) herbicide-resistant crops. By tying food production to agribusiness-owned seeds and chemicals, this approach could displace small-scale farmers or place them in debt, while undermining their capacity to adopt, adapt and share locally appropriate technologies that increase climate resilience. For longer-term sustainability, the approach also makes no sense. In the United States and South America, super-weeds resistant to the herbicides have quickly developed, and soil structure and health have suffered from the use of heavy machinery and the application of chemicals. The long-term positive impact on greenhouse gases has also not been proven; and no-till GM soya is directly linked to accelerated deforestation.

A second technology with strong industrial backing is known as ‘biochar’, a technique in which fine-grained charcoal is added to the soil. Biochar research is in its infancy and the IPCC has found no scientific basis on which to recommend it. Although some charcoal carbon remains in the soil for long periods, the overall impacts on soil carbon vary, are not fully understood and in some cases have been shown to be negative – releasing carbon from soils into the atmosphere. While there are claims that biochar can improve the performance of fertilizers, the evidence from experimental plots has been mixed and inconclusive. Worse, the large-scale application of biochar paradoxically demands land clearance for plantations to produce wood for the charcoal. Biochar quantities commonly promoted for ‘climate change mitigation’ would require hundreds of millions of hectares of land. The current rate of emissions from land clearances driven by industrial plantations must be reversed rather than accelerated by any proposed mitigation strategy.



A persistent claim in debates on climate change and agriculture is the availability of so-called marginal land for the application of proposed mitigation technologies. While marginal lands may not be recognized as productive or suitable for industrial food production, they are in many cases a basis for the livelihoods of and food for marginalized communities. A lot of good arable land, savannahs and even forests are categorized by unthinking authorities as 'marginal'. Proposals for new activities on these lands could displace and impoverish local communities, as the recent upswing in large-scale land purchases by commercial interests, often government brokered, has demonstrated. Including soil carbon sequestration in carbon markets would exacerbate this trend - through land acquisition for no-till GM monocultures, plantations for biochar and biochar sequestration sites - further pushing smallholder farmers, pastoralists and Indigenous communities out of their territories and off their land.

Proponents of both no-till biotech and biochar claim they can quickly store excess carbon in soils. Their enthusiasm arises from the profits they could potentially make: a US industry body predicts that their agriculture and forestry sector could realize over US\$100 billion from domestic offsets alone. Yet far more is at stake for climate change adaptation and mitigation, food production and rural communities. Soils are complex systems with rich biodiversity, organic matter, water flows, layers and aggregates to take into account. While degradation comes fast, the rebuilding of soils takes decades through the development of soil organic matter - which consists of much more than simple inorganic carbon. Quick-fix methods for sequestering carbon may provide opportunities for commercialization and profit, but should not be confused with proven strategies for reversing environmental decline, building resilience and empowering rural communities.

Annex I-parties that have high emissions from industrial livestock, particularly New Zealand, but also France, Canada and others have been pushing for increasing agricultural offsets. They did not meet much resistance from other Annex I parties who generally want to increase offset opportunities. The biochar industry has also convinced the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to support their idea, together with a number of African governments, Costa Rica and Belize, who are hoping to finally benefit from the CDM, in the knowledge that this would invite biochar plantations. UNEP issued a very critical statement about biochar deployment in a report in June, however a more recent report, also published by UNEP, endorses large-scale support for biochar and it is not clear how far this reflects a shift in UNEP's



*Demonstration in Bangkok*

<http://agoffsets.blogspot.comAgOffsets>





position. FAO believes that “millions of farmers around the globe could also become agents of change helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” by including agriculture in REDD, ignoring the fact this may lead to land grabbing instead. The biotech industry may expect windfall profits for its existing GMO herbicide tolerant technology.

At the climate negotiations in August in Bonn, agriculture was planted into the negotiation draft in 25 places. In September, in Bangkok, a separate negotiation group prepared the text for a sectoral approach on agriculture, while it remained included in bracketed text for the Shared Vision, REDD, nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and other parts of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) as well as in the Kyoto Protocol negotiating track under Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). It was however, not easy to assess the importance of those building blocks in the future architecture of the Copenhagen agreement. Civil society successfully informed parties about the Biochar Declaration signed by more than 150 civil society organizations, and suggested that the “IPCC of Agriculture”, the International Assessment on Agricultural Science and Technology (IAASTD) should be involved. An explicit reference to biochar was removed from the text but the door was still opened for biochar as well as for no-till by mentioning soil carbon sequestration (also called 'enhanced removals' from agriculture), or, even less contentious, just 'agriculture'. Some parties became aware that there may be a downside to the landslide victory of agriculture and looked for a brake. The tools of the UNFCCC being limited, they proposed to consult the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

After the final preparatory climate talks in November in Barcelona, references to agriculture remain scattered through the 'non-papers' that constitute the negotiating texts. The aim is clearly to ensure that work to install agriculture and soils in the carbon market can continue at a later point, even if it is not achieved at Copenhagen. Nonetheless, there is still a possibility that references to agriculture in general and soil carbon sequestration in particular could be included even in a very basic new climate agreement. A simple inclusion of 'land use' within the scope of REDD would basically imply the inclusion of all the above-mentioned activities in REDD. This would also seriously diminish financial flows for forest-related activities, as some of these processes would be far more competitive than forest conservation as far as greenhouse gas reductions are concerned. Furthermore, if the previous decisions to exclude soil carbon sequestration from the CDM was reversed, this would allow the CDM Board to approve methodologies for no-till monocultures or biochar plantations without any further discussion by governments.

See also '**Agriculture and soils in carbon trading**' by Jonathan Ensor, *Practical Action, Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch; Susanne Gura, EcoNexus; Helena Paul, EcoNexus.* and '**Agriculture and climate change: Real problems, false solutions**' by Helena Paul, Almuth Ernsting, Stella Semino, Susanne Gura & Antje Lorch. *Econexus, Biofuelwatch, Grupo de Reflexion Rural and NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark, December 2009.* [www.econexus.info](http://www.econexus.info).

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## Report from the World Forestry Congress

Anne Petermann, Global Justice Ecology Project, USA

The overarching theme of the thirteenth World Forestry Congress (WFC) was how the timber industry could best use global warming to enhance profits. Many of the presentations addressed how to use the carbon market, especially REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) to increase timber industry revenue by selling the carbon that plantations supposedly store as carbon offsets.

Another major theme was identifying ways to increase the demand for wood globally. Bioenergy, in their opinion, was the most promising. The notion that burning trees for energy is carbon neutral has been recently debunked, but this did not deter the bioenergy advocates at the WFC, who insisted that increasing demand for forest products and burning trees was the best bet for reducing emissions from deforestation.

Many times, the need to increase demand for forest products followed immediately after a presentation about the critical state of the world's forests. The 'experts' insisted that expanding monoculture timber plantations was the best way to protect forests. One forestry health 'expert' insisted that forests in the future would be protected by ensuring that all timber plantations are comprised of insect and disease resistant genetically engineered trees—ignoring the obvious problems with genetic contamination of forests via escaped pollen and seeds.

Even the Forest Restoration session was focused not on threats to the world's forests and techniques to restore forests and their biodiversity, but on growing monoculture tree plantations.

Nearly every session at the WFC was first and foremost a public relations campaign designed to prove that industrial plantation forestry is our best bet for saving forests. They co-opted terminology developed by social movements and environmental organisations in their presentations for example, Capacity building and Consultations with Indigenous Peoples, Sustainable Forestry Management, Net Zero Deforestation, Forest Restoration, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation, Ending Illegal Logging, Certification, Advancing Social and Ecological Values, Environmental Stewardship, and Sustainability Criteria.



Camila Moreno (right) at the World Forestry Congress.

Photo: Anne Petermann/GFC-GJEP.



So there you have it, the WFC in a nutshell. Six thousand participants (including approximately 6 Indigenous People) and millions of tons of emissions – supposedly devoted to the goal of building the capacity to manage forests sustainably and moving towards zero net deforestation in order to restore forests.



*Protests against the World Forestry Congress.  
Photo: Anne Petermann/GFC-GJEP.*

This would, thereby reduce emissions from deforestation and end illegal logging through certified sustainability criteria and enhance environmental stewardship that advances social and ecological values.

Who could argue with that? Sadly however, it was clear that beneath the rhetoric the real goals and objectives of the timber industry are to use global warming to increase its shareholders' profits.

*For more information, please visit:*

- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/23/world-forestry-congress-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-plantations/>
- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/23/forest-protection-and-indigenous-rights-organizations-globally-denounce-the-world-forestry-congress/>
- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/22/world-forestry-congress-forum-on-forests-and-climate-change-or-why-redd-is-the-greatest-thing-since-sliced-bread/>
- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/missive-from-nutlandia/>
- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/20/the-festival-of-the-people-who-live-with-the-forest-festival-de-las-pueblas-que-viven-con-los-bosques/>
- <http://climatevoices.wordpress.com/2009/10/19/reports-from-world-forestry-congress-in-buenos-aires/>



**In 2009 five regional REDD workshops funded by Global Forest Coalition were held. The workshops discussed the relationship between the implementation of the Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity of the Convention on Biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples' Rights as they relate to REDD. The following report canvasses the discussions from the African workshops as well as the conclusions reached and the declaration that was adopted at the Asian workshop. Please see Forest Cover 31 for the reports of the regional workshops in Latin America, Oceania and North and Central Asia.**

**Report on REDD workshop: the African experience**  
***Kanyinke Sena, Dorobo Trust, Kenya***

Climate change is being experienced in various ways in Africa. Temperatures have increased, rains have become irregular, droughts are now frequent and longer and there is massive loss of flora and fauna. In addition, rivers have dried up and desertification is increasing at an alarming rate, leading to serious food security and livelihood concerns for Indigenous and forest-dependent communities in Africa. Their cultures are also under threat as a result of high rural urban migration to look for jobs and alternative livelihoods.

Unfortunately, as climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are being discussed at the global level, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups are not at the negotiating table. The proposed strategies may not therefore be relevant to Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups, and may even harm them more than help them cope with the climate change challenge. The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC) believes that the journey cannot be completed without strategizing and entrenching a strong and collective voice for Indigenous Peoples on REDD in Africa. A clear frame of understanding on climate change adaptation and mitigation activities has become a core priority for IPACC, as the world prepares to enter a new climate regime.

In view of this, two meetings were proposed and organized: an IPACC-funded climate change mitigation and adaptation workshop focusing on community vulnerabilities and coping strategies using traditional knowledge systems; and a Global Forest Coalition-sponsored meeting to discuss the future of REDD+ paying special attention to Indigenous Peoples' rights. The organizers of the workshop, Dorobo Trust and Yiaku Laikipiak Trust decided to hold both workshops back to back, in Nanyuki, Kenya.

Thirty eight participants drawn from South Africa, Mozambique, Cameroon, Uganda, Tanzania, USA, Switzerland and Kenya attended the workshop, held in Kirimara Springs Hotel, Nanyuki over a 2 day period. Over 250 community members including the 38 participants also participated in a field day held at Dol Dol, Laikipia North District. The 38 participants included representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

Day 1 of the workshop looked at the carbon cycle, sources of greenhouse gas emissions, effects of climate change and the global discourse on addressing the threat to climate change including REDD. An introduction to the Global Forest Coalition was



also given. Day 2 involved a field visit to Dol Dol, Laikipia North District, 60 km from Nanyuki, to visit the Mukogodo forest and the Yiaku community. Over 250 people participated in this important event including the local community, workshop participants and the provincial administration. Day 3 involved a recap of events of day 2, a presentation on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, REDD monitoring reports from Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Cameroon, and group work to chart a way forward.

### **Recommendations**

To arrive at these recommendations, the participants were divided into two groups in two separate sessions. The objective was to gather participants' views on climate change mitigation, adaptation and REDD. Some of the recommendations included:

#### **Mitigation and Adaptation**

- a. There is a need for awareness creation to mobilize opinions that will enable the exercise of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
- b. Mitigation and adaptation in REDD strategies should be based on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their lands, territories and natural resources found underground, on the surface and above ground.
- c. Capacity building is required, for activists and communities to be able to engage effectively in the development and implementation of various mitigation and adaptation strategies including REDD.
- d. Consultation and outreach should be the core component in the design and implementation of national mitigation and adaptation strategies. REDD for example, is an opportunity but it is still essential to ensure FPIC.
- e. Traditional mitigation and adaptation strategies should be supported by creating environments that will be conducive for their exercise.

#### **Strategies**

- Strategic partnerships with development and environment NGOs at the national level. Special attention should be given to UNDP country offices to make themselves visible in the Indigenous Peoples struggle, in conformity with best practices demonstrated by UNDP offices in Asia and Latin America.
- Identify and train key activists and make resources available for grassroots national and international level feedback.
- Form learning groups with activists and communities at national level to forge and strengthen a united front.
- Conduct outreach to determine the practices that are currently helping communities mitigate and adapt to climate change and build on them.

*For more information, please visit: <http://www.ipacc.org.za/> and <http://www.globalforestcoalition.org/img/userpics/File/publications/REDD-Africa.pdf>*



## **Report on REDD workshop in Asia: Conflict or Coherence?** **Swati Shresth, Centre for Grassroots Development (CGD), India**

An International conference on the CBD, Climate Change, UNDRIPs and Community Rights took place 24-25 September 2009, in Bangkok. Representatives from over twenty indigenous peoples' organisations, governments and civil society organisations from 6 countries in the Asian region came together for this workshop. The representatives discussed a range of issues dealing with REDD and its implications for the lives and rights of local and indigenous communities.

Most participants identified the lack of legal rights (of local and indigenous communities) over forests as one of the critical issues in implementation of REDD policies. Mr. Bhola Bhattarai from Nepal, a country which has already launched a pilot project, highlighted the importance of transferring ownership to local communities and Indigenous Peoples. The benefits of REDD projects can only accrue to the local communities if their legal rights are ensured as a precondition to introducing REDD projects in their forests.



*Bangkok regional workshop and Civil Society Actions. Photos: Simone Lovera, GFC.*

Some members felt that while 'REDD' might be a new idea, the concept was not new and followed the pattern of other such market driven policies that have resulted in disruption of livelihoods, large evictions and loss of traditional ways of life for many vulnerable communities. The experiences of most of civil society representatives working on REDD were similar: absence of clear benefit sharing mechanisms, failure to identify the primary beneficiaries, lack of information, lack of consultation with civil society and peoples directly affected by REDD policies. Participants also felt that placing such commercial emphasis on forests could generate a lot of conflict and disputes, especially where there are multiple stakeholders.

Participants felt that the absence of any concept of social and environmental standards within the formulation of REDD policies was highly dangerous. A market driven approach was likely to encourage policy makers to dilute social and environmental standards in order to maximize their profits. In any case, members noted that carbon markets are complex, volatile and corruptible. Exposing vulnerable forest communities to this market was a threat to their existence in itself.



Participants also cautioned against the tendency to view forests as carbon pools, forgetting that forests are also important for biodiversity, watershed conservation and livelihoods of local resident communities. In this context, the definition of forests currently employed is highly significant - forests must be identified as natural forest ecosystems and not plantations, especially monocultures.

**Based on the discussions over the two days, the participants drafted and adopted a statement on REDD:**

*Representatives of over twenty indigenous peoples organisations, governments and civil society organisations from over six countries in the Asian region came together in a workshop titled 'REDD: Conflict or Coherence? International conference on the CBD, Climate Change, UNDRIPs and Community Rights' 24-25 September 2009 in Bangkok.*

*Recognizing the need for rigorous emission cuts by Northern countries and their obligation to recognize their historical responsibility in repaying their climate debt,*

*Recognizing that forests should be excluded from carbon markets, and not be used as a source of offsets as this undermines sovereignty of people over natural resources,*

*Recognizing that funds for preventing deforestation should be sourced from a recognition of ecological and carbon debt and not through carbon markets,*

*We urge the concerned parties:*

- 1. To recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular land tenure rights.*
- 2. To recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other forest dependent communities and forest dwellers in the ongoing REDD negotiations, and implement them prior to negotiation of any REDD projects.*
- 3. Uphold the role, interests and rights of women, including those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.*
- 4. To develop specific and credible national definitions of what constitutes a forest, based on the concept of natural forest ecosystems and excluding tree plantations for commercial purposes, ensuring that those definitions are consistent with an internationally accepted definition.*
- 5. To explicitly exclude incentive mechanisms for monoculture and exotic plantations from any REDD architecture.*
- 6. To ensure that any reward or incentive system for forest conservation includes recognition of the social capital generated as a result of long-term community based forest management.*
- 7. To ensure inclusiveness and representative institutional mechanisms are developed at the local level and only after adequate consultations with the concerned parties; including Indigenous Peoples, community forest groups and other civil society organizations.*
- 8. To ensure any documents relating to the REDD processes are made accessible and avoid difficult jargon and are translated into local languages in order to make them community friendly.*



## Reports on other meetings:

### 7TH General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

*By Hubertus Samangun, ICTI, Indonesia*

The 7th General Assembly of the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil took place 1-4 November 2009 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and was attended by more than 150 participants, the majority of whom were representatives of palm oil companies.

The RSPO was established in 2003, bringing together many stakeholders, especially palm oil plantation companies, to make a commitment to respect human rights and maintain sustainability of the operation of large-scale companies in that sector. RSPO members have to ensure all agreed criteria and indicators are fully implemented.

However, according to the press release by Sawit Watch and Walhi-Indonesia, even though in existence since 2003, the RSPO has never resolved any human rights violations, or dealt with social and environmental issues and conflicts caused by its members or other companies. The press release observed that this 7<sup>th</sup> assembly was just another talk show, which did not resolve existing problems and conflicts nor stop members from expanding palm oil plantations into national parks and peat lands.

There are 18 palm oil plantation companies operating within the "Bukit 30 National Park" in Jambi Province, Sumatra Island, and many others have expanded their plantation areas into peat lands both in Sumatra and Kalimantan islands. On 4 November, the Sumatran Orangutan Society called for a moratorium of palm oil plantations at Bukit 30 National Park. After a long debate the participants at the General Assembly agreed to vote and the majority voted for a moratorium.

Some participants expected that the RSPO will fully implement all its principles and criteria, but seeing and experiencing their work over six years, and according to the previously mentioned press release, this General Assembly was just a continuous talk show. Despite the moratorium regarding just one national park (Bukit 30 Jambi), violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples continue to happen. One Indigenous Peoples' lawyer at the assembly said now is the time for the RSPO to put land tenure in place and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights because without secure land tenure and respect for their rights, sustainable palm oil production will never happen.

One participant, Mr Sapuan, of the Runtu Village, Kota Waringin sub Province, Central Kalimantan said to the plenary: "Now and here I meet and see the owner and high level officials of the company who rob my land. They promise to solve my problem. I gave them time until 14 of November 2009, if not; I will sue them by many ways, including this RSPO."

As the membership of the RSPO is dominated by companies, the violation of human rights including Indigenous Peoples' rights, as well as social and environmental conflicts will continue, and the RSPO will remain an annual talk to accommodate the interests of big palm oil plantation companies.





## Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings

More information on these and other intergovernmental meetings can be found at: [www.iisd.ca/linkages](http://www.iisd.ca/linkages)

The 15th Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 15) and the 5th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP5) will take place from 7 to 18 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. These meetings will coincide with the 31st meeting of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies. *For more information, please visit:*

[http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc\\_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2009](http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2009)

The fourteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity will take place from 10 to 21 May 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya. It will be followed by the third meeting of the Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity, which will take place from 24 to 28 May 2010. *For more information, please visit:*

<http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

The 32nd session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies will be held 31 May to 11 June 2010. The venue is likely to be Bonn, Germany. *For more information visit:*

[http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc\\_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2010](http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2010)

The 23rd IUFRO World Congress 'Forests for the Future: Sustaining Society and the Environment' will take place in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 23 to 28 August 2010. *For more information visit:* <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Events/CIFOR/iufro-congress.htm>

The 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will take place 18 to 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. *For more information visit:* <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

The 20th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry is expected to be convened at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy in October 2010. *For more information visit:*

<http://www.fao.org/forestry>

The Sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will take place from 8 November to 19 November 2010 in a venue to be confirmed. *For more information visit:*

[http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc\\_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2010](http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2010)

The 46th meeting of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-46) is scheduled to take place in Yokohama, Japan, from 13 to 18 December 2010. *For more information visit:* <http://www.itto.or.jp>



*Memorial to friends, colleagues, and relatives who were taken by the tragic Tsunami in Samoa and Tonga. Written with Aroha, respect and love from your Global Forest Coalition colleagues.*

*First I should say that when I was given the task of writing this memorial, it was not something I relished. For us here in the Pacific, we really are like one big family in many ways. This may be hard for other regions to comprehend and so when the tragedy struck, it hit us all with an impact we will never forget.*

*I should also say that as I write this memorial to send to my friends around the Pacific, I bring with me the recent dead from here in Aotearoa so that they can commune with the dead from your countries and form friendships and alliances that reflect the relationships we all have with each other.*

*Now let me talk on a personal level. My niece's best friend lost her grandmother in that tragedy and both those little girls' lives have been dramatically impacted by what happened. Many were the tears shed in our houses over what happened. Once however, the tears had dried, we knew there were responsibilities to our neighbours that we must fulfil on so many levels.*

*As one of the people who went to the fundraising concerts and who also gave to one of the charities, let me say that I have never been prouder of our Maori and Pacific communities here in Aotearoa. Gone were the traditional rivalries and differences as we sat in silence listening to the very best musical talent this country has to offer, all of whom had given of their time (again and again) as their contribution to the relief fund.*

*It will take a long time to heal the scars on the physical landscape of the islands and the scars on our hearts will always be there, but we are moving on as a region, partly because that is what you do and partly because the urgent need for us to do something to prevent more families from feeling this suffering will not wait.*

*On behalf of my colleagues from the Global Forest Coalition to all of our friends in Tonga and Samoa, we support you with our tears for your grief, our understanding of the sense of loss and more especially at this time with our strength for the tasks ahead as you rebuild.*

*Arohanui*

*Sandy Gauntlett, Oceania focal point, Global Forest Coalition*

***This publication was made possible through a financial contribution from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.***

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