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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' BIOCULTURAL CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

CREATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL INDIGENOUS BIOCULTURAL REALITIES AND COMPLEX GLOBAL SYSTEMS

DECLARATION OF MEMBERS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' BIOCULTURAL CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT (IPCCA) INITIATIVE

Durban, South Africa, November 26th

The participants of the workshop on REDD and Biocultural Protocols organized by the Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment (IPCCA), from Ecuador, Panama, India, Nicaragua, Peru and Samoa met on 24 and 25 November 2011 in Durban, South Africa to share emergent findings and analyse how REDD is affecting our territories in order to respond through our assessments. We discussed strategies for addressing climate justice.

We, the Indigenous Peoples denounce the serious situation we are facing; the harmonious relationship between humans and Mother Earth has been broken. The life of people and Pachamama has become a business. Life, for Indigenous Peoples, is sacred, and we therefore consider REDD+ and the carbon market a hypocrisy which will not impact global warming. For us, everything is life, and life cannot be negotiated or sold on a stock market, this is a huge risk and will not resolve the environmental crisis.

Through our discussions and dialogue we identified the following inherent risks and negative impacts of REDD+, which we alert the world to:

1. REDD+ is a neo-liberal, market-driven approach that leads to the commodification of life and undermines holistic community values and governance. It is a neo-liberal approach driven by economic processes such as trade liberalization and privatization and by actors like the World Bank whom have been responsible for the destruction of forests and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples all over the world. The concept of "Green Economy" is a vehicle for promoting trends of commodification of nature. It is a vehicle to impose neo-liberal environmental strategies on developing countries, which undermines traditional communal land tenure systems. Indigenous Peoples have well-performing and self-sufficient economies, but these economies are ignored. Indigenous Peoples have used their wisdom for thousands of years to manage forests in a way that cannot be quantified and is priceless. Meanwhile, Northern countries and their economic policies have destroyed the climate and planet and, therefore, have a significant ecological debt to pay.
2. REDD+ policies and projects are directly targeting Indigenous Peoples and their territories, as this is where the remaining forests are found. Corporations, conservation organizations and powerful state agencies will capture the benefits by grabbing forest land and reaching unfair and manipulated agreements with forest-dwelling indigenous peoples. REDD+ is triggering conflicts, corruption, evictions and other human rights violations. Calculating how much carbon is stored in forests (monitoring, reporting and verification) is a very complicated and expensive process, and indigenous knowledge is being ignored within it. As a result, the overwhelming majority of REDD+ funding will end up in the hands of consultants, NGOs and carbon brokers like the World Bank.
3. Indigenous Peoples and local communities use their own governance systems, which include laws, rules, institutions and practices, to manage their forests and territories, many of which are implicit and part of oral or otherwise unwritten traditions. REDD+ policies and projects are undermining and violating indigenous governance systems. Through developing REDD+ readiness programs national Governments are creating new institutions, which will further concentrate control over forests into the hands of State institutions, and violate the rights and autonomy of Indigenous Peoples. These new institutions, however, fail to address the drivers of forest loss.
4. REDD+ locks up forests, blocking access and customary use of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their forests. This impacts negatively on traditional forest-related knowledge, food sovereignty and food security, and traditional health care systems, which are lost as communities are manipulated or forced to sell their rights to access and use of their forests.
5. The drivers of forest loss and forestland grabbing will not be addressed by REDD+. Governments that are elaborating REDD+ policies are also promoting economic sectors such as cattle ranching, bio-energy, mining, oil exploration and agro-industrial monocultures that, ironically, are the main drivers of forest loss. In countries like Ecuador, governments are promoting massive oil exploration schemes in forest-protected areas.
6. The focus on carbon in REDD+ policies promotes the establishment of monoculture tree plantations,



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including genetically modified trees, and ignores the social and cultural values of forests. Institutions like the Forest Stewardship Council legitimize this trend by certifying plantation establishment as 'sustainable forest management'. Corporations take over lands that, within shifting cultivation systems, are fallow, and destroy them through tree plantation establishment. In a country like India, REDD+ is becoming a tree plantation expansion program that triggers land grabbing on a massive scale, undermining the Forest Rights Act.

7. National biodiversity and carbon-offset schemes, especially in large countries like India and Brazil are a vehicle for implementing REDD+. Large polluting corporations, such as mining and dam companies, are allowed to compensate the environmental damage they cause by planting trees. Indigenous Peoples and local communities suffer two-fold; they suffer from the environmental damage caused by their pollution, as well as from the negative impacts of projects that compensate them. Furthermore, conservation organizations profit from such compensation projects, and will thus be tempted to turn a blind eye on the negative impacts of such industries.
8. Due to problems with reference levels, leakage, permanence, monitoring, reporting and verification, problems which policy makers are not inclined and unable to solve, REDD+ is undermining the climate regime. REDD+ violates the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. It creates major inequities and grants the right to pollute to developed countries and their industries. Climate change is today one of the biggest threats to the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples, and for that reason, false solutions such as REDD+ form a direct threat to the survival of Indigenous Peoples.

REDD+ threatens the survival of Indigenous Peoples. We emphasize that the inherent risks and negative impacts cannot be addressed through safeguards or other remedial measures. We insist that all actors involved in REDD+ fully respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular, the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). We caution, however, that adherence to the principle of FPIC is not a means to solve these negative impacts and this principle should not be used to justify REDD+. The right of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples should not be used to justify the destruction of our territories. Indigenous peoples should not commit themselves to a process that does not respect them. We denounce the hypocrisy of REDD+ and the many false financial promises that have been made. REDD+ is a market-based approach through which outside actors try to commodify what is sacred to Indigenous peoples: the heritage of our ancestors and the guarantee of life for future generations, not just Indigenous Peoples, but for all of humanity. Many Indigenous Peoples and communities are not aware of the threats and impacts of REDD+, which is a political trap, and will lead to enhancing climate change. We call upon these communities to maintain their integrity in this respect.

We call upon all people committed to climate justice to support life, and we implore the global community to take responsibility for reducing emission of green house gases at the source and to reject REDD+ as a false solution that breeds a new form of climate racism.

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