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About Forest Cover

Welcome to the forty-fourth 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 the international and national levels, 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 inter-governmental 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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Ex Silvis: Free Trade trumps Climate: Why the revival of the WTO is a threat to the planet as well as the people

By Mary Louise Malig, Board Member of GFC, and works as staff for La Via Campesina in Asia

Once hailed as the pinnacle of globalisation, the World Trade Organization (WTO) was and remains the only multilateral trading system with the legal capacity to enforce its trade rules. Shortly after its launch in 1995, however, the WTO fell into a quagmire, which it was unable to get out of for most of the two decades that followed. This was because of the sheer weight of its ambition, the intransigence of those who wanted trade to remain unequal, and the resistance of some developing countries who wanted to protect their economies and societies from powerful external commercial interests. Most importantly it was also because of mobilisations by social movements around the world, as people became increasingly concerned about the impacts of trade liberalization on both people and the environment. By the time former WTO Director General Pascal Lamy declared the 2011 Ministerial a “housekeeping exercise”, several analysts had already written the WTO off as dead.

In 2013 however, several factors combined to not only revive the WTO, but put it back in business. These included a new Director General from Brazil, a changed economic and political landscape, and a new strategy for moving the negotiations forward. At the Bali Ministerial in December 2013, the WTO produced a Ministerial agreement that was limited but notable for being the first since its establishment 19 years ago. Big business, free trade pundits and WTO supporters all hailed the Bali Package as a success for the WTO and for free trade in general. However, this historic deal has very clear beneficiaries and losers and worse still, has opened the door for a further expansion of the WTO into new areas such as the environment, as it gave renewed political momentum to the negotiating branch of the WTO.

The Bali Package for TNCs

The centre piece of the Bali Package is a comprehensive, legally binding agreement on Trade Facilitation. Simply put, it is the relaxing and speeding up of customs procedures to cut the time it takes for goods to cross borders, facilitating faster trade flows. This is highly relevant to transnational corporations (TNCs) since one of the defining features of today’s global economy is international trade based on ‘global value chains’ (GVCs). *“A large share of 21st century trade requires integrated global supply chains that move intermediate and finished goods around the world. Intermediate goods account for 60 percent of global commerce, and about 30 percent of total trade is conducted between affiliates of the same multinational corporation.”* Less time at borders dealing with customs procedures means faster flows between GVCs.

Trade Facilitation is the only legally binding agreement in the Bali Package. The deal it reached on Agriculture is a paltry ‘peace clause’ that falls far short of the original demand from developing countries to amend the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). They wanted to ensure that developing countries such as India and Indonesia could promote food security and provide support to their poor farmers and citizens reliant on subsistence farming, including by public stockholding of commodities, without breaching the limits established by the AoA. However, the ‘peace clause’ jeopardises governments’ future ability to guarantee food security to their people as it prohibits any future food security programmes after the Bali Ministerial.

Finally, the deal that the Bali Package delivered for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is worthless. Empty declarations on special and differential treatment are made along with the commitment to have “dedicated discussions” on the issue. Clearly, the TNCs have come out as big winners and the poor of the world have again been left with the raw end of the deal.

Free Trade versus Mother Nature

The bigger threat however is the political momentum that the WTO has gained from the success of the Bali Package, which allows it to open the door to new areas such as trade in environmental goods and services. This would add to the tremendous power that the WTO already has with respect to the environment.

The WTO, with its all-powerful Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM), is legally mandated to compel sovereign states to withdraw public policy that runs counter to WTO trade rules. It has always had this ability, and this is what makes the WTO such an influential institution, even though its negotiating arm has been failing for the past



19 years. The 60+ agreements under the WTO were and continue to be strictly enforced, as evidenced by the 460+ disputes that have been filed under the WTO DSM.

In a recent ruling, the WTO proved to all that free trade will always trump policies in favour of the environment. The Dispute Settlement Body ruled against Canada when Japan and the EU challenged the province of Ontario's renewable energy programme. This programme was designed to promote the development of renewable energy, mitigate climate change, and create jobs. Specifically, Ontario required 25 percent of the content of all wind projects and 50 percent of the content of all solar projects to be produced by workers in Ontario. It also guaranteed a 20-year purchase price per kilowatt-hour for electricity produced from wind and solar generators for companies that had a certain percentage of costs originating in Ontario. This generated 20,000 climate-related jobs in its first two years of implementation. Although local groups had certain concerns about its implementation, it was generally seen as a positive step in terms of transitioning away from dirty energy to clean renewable energy. In 2010 and 2011, however, Japan and the European Union filed complaints with the WTO DSM citing that Canada violated the WTO's rules on National Treatment (which state that countries should not discriminate between domestic and foreign companies) and Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS), because of domestic content requirements and the guaranteed purchase price for clean energy. In 2013, Canada announced that it would follow the DSM ruling and withdraw its program.ⁱⁱ

Climate change and the 'green economy' approach, —which focuses on commodifying and trading in nature and ecosystem services—also creates huge potential for big business to generate profits out of natural 'goods' and 'services' including a broad range of technologies and sectors. Although it is still at a proposal stage, it is evident that the goal is to bring this all under the WTO so as to ensure that trade rules will be enforced and most likely trump genuine environmental concerns.

Governments ignore real solutions that would mitigate climate change

By Simone Lovera, Sobrevivencia/Friends of the Earth-Paraguay

The news from the latest round of climate negotiations that took place 10-14 March in Germany (the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) can be succinctly summarised as 'no news'. Once again, hundreds of diplomats from all over the world used yet more air miles to fly to Bonn, to dance around possible options for a future climate agreement and engage in lengthy filibustering discussions about agendas and procedures.

Northern countries continue to hold back on firm commitments to reduce their emissions, or provide the financial resources that would allow other countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including through forest conservation. This is quite astonishing when one considers that just a few weeks later the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working Group 3 on mitigation published a report on mitigation options for climate change, showing that the situation is becoming increasingly stark.¹

The current situation is untenable. A concrete, ambitious agreement to address the rapidly accelerating climate crisis is nowhere in sight, even though another firmly agreed 'deadline' is looming: the 21st Conference of the Parties in December 2015 in Paris. How will they hammer out details and commitments in time? On the other hand, how many deadlines can they miss without the process losing all legitimacy?



**Protest at the COP19, Warsaw, Poland
Photo by Isis Alvarez**

No wonder many people are looking at other possible avenues to address the many injustices caused by climate change. For example, the UN Secretary General has decided to organise a high-level Climate Summit focused on "catalyzing action" back-to-back with the next UN General Assembly in September in New York.² Yet, it has already become clear that the 'BKM' (Ban Ki-Moon) Summit will probably be nothing more than 'business as

¹ <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/cutting-greenhouse-gases-summary-ipcc-report-46228.pdf>

² <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit2014/>



usual' because it's likely to suffer from the same problem that has caused more than 20 years of stalemate in the UNFCCC: the massive influence of big business.

The UN, which is now the beneficiary of millions of dollars of corporate sponsorships it does not even have to report on³, has warmly welcomed its corporate friends and partners to use the BKM Summit to showcase their public-private partnerships. These large-scale partnership initiatives promote, for example, climate smart agriculture (read: GMOs and soil carbon offsets), renewable energy (read: industrial bioenergy) and so-called 'carbon neutral' projects (read: grabbing community lands to plant monoculture tree plantations as compensation for your carbon emissions).⁴ All these 'solutions' to climate change have one thing in common. They suit the business-as-usual agendas of their corporate and institutional sponsors and supporters.

It's not that corporate dominance of the global climate negotiations goes un-noted. At the last big round of climate talks in Warsaw (COP 19), hundreds of observers walked out of the negotiations united by the slogan "corporations talk, we walk". Sadly, it has become clear that the UN prefers the bucks and babble of its generous corporate sponsors, like the fossil fuel industries that sponsored the Warsaw Climate talks, over the outcries and realities of Indigenous Peoples, women, many NGOs, and other major groups.

The saddest thing of all is that addressing climate change does not have to cost so much money and effort, or the watering down of core principles and values. In fact, the redirection of subsidies that currently promote and prop up polluting industries could generate billions of dollars for sustainable development, mitigating climate change at the same time (the real 'win-win' option that should be pursued). Redirection of subsidies to coal and other dirty energies is one clear example. An equally promising measure is the redirection of subsidies for unsustainable livestock production, which, according to some studies, causes an astonishing 51% of global greenhouse gas emissions if all impacts are taken into account.⁶

Beef and Veal	18
Milk	15.3
Pigmeat	7.3
Poultry	6.5
Soybeans	2.3
Eggs	1.5
Sheep	1.1



Deforestation for cattle ranching in the Paraguayan Chaco.
Photo by Miguel Lovera

A recent report on livestock production in Paraguay, by Global Forest Coalition and Brighter Green, documents unsustainable livestock production, including the cultivation of soybeans, a key global feedstock. Unsustainable livestock production is the main cause of deforestation in Paraguay and indeed Latin America, the continent that suffers the highest deforestation rates in the world.⁷

In 2011, Paraguay received a generous US\$4.7 million contribution from the UN to 'get ready' to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). Three years later, deforestation rates have increased – and

in the Chaco region they are now higher than in any other country. In addition, Paraguay's

³ See for example http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/GPFEurope/Corporate_influence_in_the_Post-2015_process_web.pdf

⁴ For examples of false solutions to climate change see 'Hoodwinked in the Hothouse: False Solutions to Climate Change', Rising Tide America North America and Carbon Trade Watch, 2010, <http://www.grassrootsonline.org/news/blog/hoodwinked-hothouse-false-solutions-climate-change>

⁵ Chemnitz, C. and Becheva, S., 2014. Meat Atlas, Facts and figures about the animals we eat. Heinrich Boell Foundation and Friends of the Earth Europe.

⁶ R. Goodland and J. Anhang, "Livestock and climate change: what if the key actors in climate change are cows, pigs, and chickens?", World Watch, November/December 2009. The FAO tends to use an estimate of 14,5% (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Livestock Impacts on the Environment, Spotlight, 2006. <http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0612sp1.htm>) but this figure does not take into account all direct and indirect land use change triggered by livestock production.

⁷ http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/paraguay_case_study_final-compressed-1.pdf



environmental impact assessment legislation with respect to land use change has been weakened. Both cattle ranching and soy production for livestock fodder (feed) are expanding unhindered, including on Indigenous territories.

Few people in Paraguay know the destination of the REDD 'readiness' funds received so far, or whether any concrete positive results like formal plans or programmes have been generated. But the Paraguayan government is still applying for yet another multi-million grant to make itself even more 'ready' for REDD, this time from the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Pumping money into countries that clearly have no interest in reducing forest loss makes little sense. We would be better off redirecting the more than US\$ 50 billion in annual subsidies (in OECD countries alone, see Table 1) that are paid over to the livestock sector to better, climate-cooling purposes.

That would really be something to put on the agenda for the BKM climate summit, and to include in an ambitious, binding agreement in December 2015.

UNEP's First Environmental Assembly: Let us wait and watch!

By Meena Bilgi, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, India and Steering Committee Member of the Gender and Water Alliance

All eyes are waiting to witness the outcome of the landmark meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), a body designed to place environmental issues in the heart of global agenda, which is to be based in Nairobi, Kenya, the home of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

UNEA will strike new ground as it is intended to give environmental issues a similar status to the issues of peace, security, finance, health and trade. Mandated to determine policy, promote a strong science-policy interface and catalyze international action, UNEA represents the '*world's political and strategic vehicle for driving global work on environmental priorities, ensuring a common vision in setting the path for global sustainability towards a life of dignity for all*'. This reflects the commitment of world leaders at Rio+20 to strengthen and upgrade UNEP "as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda and by establishing universal membership in its Governing Council."⁸

The first ever UNEP Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) replaces the Governing Council (GC) which used to be a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and, together with the Global Ministerial Forum (GMF), they used to submit a report highlighting diverse environmental issues for the consideration of the [General Assembly](#) and the Economic and Social Council.⁹ In its first version, 97 countries attended in Nairobi in March 2014; it can also be looked at as the preparatory committee for UNEA. This is the first time that Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) have been permitted to participate in UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives¹⁰. This opportunity is both unique and timely, because a key topic within OECPR is how UNEP can better engage with Major Groups (MGs). For MGs this new openness as an important opportunity for change. Suggestions offered included encouraging a new approach to addressing key environmental challenges, strengthening the institutional framework and programmatic platform for the environmental dimension of integrated sustainable development, as mentioned in Rio+20 by Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director. The Ministers also believe that civil society can provide substantial assistance – a reaffirmation to the importance of MGS.¹¹

Issues of concern during OECPR included Environmental Rule of law which lays the foundation for demographic governance and the right to a healthy environment. It was noted that many countries still have no legislation on environmental law and this is critical. Groups such as small-scale producers, indigenous people and women face increasing difficulties in accessing natural resources which are becoming scarcer and more costly. In particular, forests are a lifeline for many poor and for women around the world since they provide shelter, jobs, and security and have cultural relevance. Furthermore, respect for basic human rights and equality of opportunity for all including with respect to economic policies that are designed to avoid environmental degradation, calls for the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, and placing environmental stewardship at its heart.

⁸ <http://www.unep.org/unea/about.asp>

⁹ <http://www.unep.org/newyork/IntergovernmentalPolicyCoordination/UNEPGoverningCouncil/tabid/52273/Default.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.iisd.ca/unep/cpr/cpr126/>

¹¹ Read the final statement of MGs on Stakeholder Engagement presented at the event <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/meetings/oepr2014/Common%20statement%20on%20UNEPs%20draft%20policy%20on%20Stakeholder%20Engagement.pdf>



However, the OECPR agenda did not include the post-2015 and SDGs process in it. As a result CSOs issued a statement¹² where these main points, among others, were brought up. These included:

- Emphasizing that the environment and human rights cannot be an after-thought in the design of the SDGs, rather they must be a central element in the post-2015 development framework;
- Warning against harmful 'new' technologies;
- Addressing sustainable consumption and production;
- Calling for accountability and transparency with a special attention to public-private partnerships, and lastly,
- Requesting a more active role of UNEP in this process.



Photo by Simone Lovera

In addition, civil society and other stakeholders called for the strengthening the science-policy interface; contribute with resources for structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; prioritize people-centered development; address natural resources management including illegal trade in wildlife and timber (an issue that is generating increasing global attention due to its adverse impact on forests and other ecosystems); seek peace and security; and secure finance and partnerships in order to ensure sufficient funding to meet its objectives.

There were also calls for results-based management; improved quality of monitoring and reporting; investments in new systems and partnerships; increased sensitivity towards social and economic safeguards; and sharpened communications and knowledge management strategies. These were all discussed as important mechanisms for solutions.

The needs of the planet's growing population is putting all the more pressure on an already shrinking resource base, and this is being aggravated by inefficient and wasteful resource use. Political commitment, moving away from perverse incentives, and social accountability are required to leverage a shift towards sustainable consumption and production. For this, we need an enabling environment that focuses on changing, reforming and reorganizing governance structures at all levels for greater integration, transparency and accountability, prompting multiple stakeholders to take rigorous action.

We are hoping that the outcomes from UNEA and expansions within UNEP will stress efficiency and effectiveness and encourage broad based participation to strengthen delivery of goals. Unless, this is done – all this talk of “*dignity for all*” remain a lip service. We all need to wait and watch!

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals – Ecosystems & Biodiversity **By Isis Alvarez, Global Forest Coalition, Colombia**

Following the Rio+20 negotiations in 2012, the processes of creating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a 'post-2015 agenda' started. These two streams of negotiations, which were initially separate, have now been integrated into one process. In its current format, discussions are taking place in Open Working Groups (OWGs) where governments, civil society and other stakeholders, hold a 'dialogue' on the different priority areas. Every day morning hearings are organised, where Major Groups and other stakeholders get to present their positions and concerns to the co-chairs and other relevant actors within the UN system (namely the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)).

The different OWG sessions started having thematic debates around the 4th OWG in June 2013, and at the 8th session, in February 2014, there was a special point on the agenda concerning 'Oceans & Seas, Forests, Biodiversity'. Initially, the proponents of the working documents/co-chairs separated forests and biodiversity into

¹²<http://www.unep.org/civilsociety/Portals/24105/documents/meetings/oepr2014/Common%20statement%20on%20UNEPs%20draft%20policy%20on%20Stakeholder%20Engagement.pdf>



two different categories; in fact, the United Nations Technical Support Team (TST) issued two separate issue briefs touching upon each of the themes. However, for the Women's Major Group (WMG), Civil Society and other groups, these two themes should not be separated; they are inextricably linked (the full position paper by the WMG on this theme can be viewed here: <http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/WMG-Biodiversity-ENG.pdf> in English / <http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/WMG-Biodiversity-SP.pdf> in Spanish).

The increasing rate at which our forests and other ecosystems, and thus biodiversity, are being damaged is an urgent matter and must be addressed. In particular the impacts of climate change cannot be ignored. It is critical that politicians snap out of their constant state of lethargy and stop hiding behind long-winded political discussions. It is time to translate negotiation into action. For example, although governments and other policy-makers have frequently recognized the importance of forests and biodiversity, this forum was yet again the scene of long discussions focused on process rather than content including, for example, whether protecting forests and biodiversity should be left as stand-alone goals, whether they should be clustered, or whether they should be cross-cutting issues. However, it was at least interesting to see that the conclusions for OWG8 in this thematic area included an acknowledgement of the fact that we "need to recognize the living value of species beyond their commodity values".¹³

Two other sessions of the OWG passed and 5-9 May saw the eleventh session of the OWG take place. At this point, the different thematic areas have been divided into Focus Areas (which seem to be the proposed goals). Ecosystems & Biodiversity appeared on the agenda (as Focus Area 14), so these themes were merged and also left as a 'stand-alone' goal, as previously proposed. In this session, the co-chairs requested specific input on targets, saying that they already had the goals and the background.

Surprisingly, in the proposed Focus Area document there was hardly any direct or specific acknowledgement of any other international agreement and it was particularly odd to see proposals for targets under Ecosystems & Biodiversity that neglected the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Targets. However, many governments also noted this and some even asked for more ambitious targets than those set by the Aichi Targets. At one point the co-chair also asked if FA 13 (Oceans and Seas) should be merged with FA14 given the fact that they don't want to have more than 16-17 FAs in total. But governments were very divided on this one, some agreed, some did not. What quite a number of governments did agree on was reducing the percentage of deforestation and the wider inclusion of local communities and indigenous peoples in conservation practices. Eliminating perverse subsidies was also a popular concern amongst governments.

For a summary of statements on this and other Focus Areas by some CSO's and other stakeholders see <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3758mgsummary11.pdf><http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3758mgsummary11.pdf>

Later on, after OWG11 ended, it was decided that they would keep the format for the remaining two OWGs. However, there will also be 'informal-informal' meetings a week prior to the official sessions. This was agreed to because there are still a lot of different country positions on issues such as:

- Peace and the rule of law – many countries do not want any interference in their national security policies, especially those countries with conflict, and they don't want to be rated on corruption;
- The goal on climate change – this one might even get deleted as many countries think that there is already a special forum that deals with climate issues (the UNFCCC);
- The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) – yet again, developed 'vs.' developing countries, Many developed countries understand the universality of SDGs to mean that the goals will be universally applicable to all countries, but many developing countries argue that the agenda should not treat all states alike;¹⁴
- A human rights framework – which is nowhere to be found;
- Limits to economic growth and the question of planetary boundaries;
- Tax justice, redistribution, fairer trade regimes, technology assessment; and
- Women's rights including sexual health and reproductive rights, among others.

¹³ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3195cochairconcluding.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb3211e.pdf>



The last OWG will take place 14-18 July and we can expect a complex landscape. This reminds many of the difficulties in reaching agreement back in Rio...however, since these meetings are derived from Rio, it is perhaps not so strange that the meetings are unfolding similarly.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Sascha Gabizon from the Women's Major Group for her valuable contributions to this article.

Major groups' views on the current and future International Arrangements on Forests **By Andrey Laletin, Chair of GFC Board, and Chairman Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia**

The first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG1) on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was held 24-28 February 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was opened by Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Chair of the Bureau for the eleventh session of the UNFF. He then invited the experts to formally elect the nominated candidates — Mr Charles Barber (USA) and Mr Raymond Landveld (Suriname) — as the Co-Chairs of the AHEG1, which they did.

AHEG1 was composed of 176 government-designated experts, from 71 countries, experts designated by member organisations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other international and regional organisations and Major Groups. Urs Dieterich, focal point for the Children and Youth Major Group, made a presentation on behalf of all the Major Group representatives during the panel devoted to Major Groups and Regional Processes.

He explained that Major Groups have so far achieved the following in the UNFF process: They have provided an extended platform for stakeholder consultations, participated in all UNFF sessions and in many country-led initiatives, organised Major Group-led initiatives and established 'public speech time' during multi-stakeholder dialogues. They have also contributed background papers and joint position papers and founded the Major Group Partnership on Forests (MGPoF).

However, there are limitations on civil society participation in the IAF. Firstly civil society participation is a low institutional priority. For example, there is little institutionalised Major Group engagement and no mechanism to foster and monitor implementation of civil society recommendations. Also, there is no way of engaging broad Major Group networks in contributing to monitoring country commitments

Secondly, there is little political relevance of this participation. During UNFF sessions, plenary presentations are only possible during the three-hour multi-stakeholder dialogue. There is little opportunity for feedback from negotiators, there is little direct interaction with policy makers and joint policy papers and recommendations are not reflected in the political agenda. In general, activity is fragmented and there is little cross-sectoral exchange.

In addition, support for Major Group intersessional activities and biennial sessions is erratic: Intersessional activities rely on *ad hoc* funding and session participation is only financed for the first week of UNFF meeting and not financed for the second week.

Major Groups proposed that the following recommendations could help overcome these failures:

- Strengthen the UNFF Secretariat
- Institutionalise cross-sectoral alliances
- Engage Major Groups at all political levels
- Allocate targeted resources to enable and leverage Major Group activities
- Build partnerships to 'outsource' costs while increasing scope and competence
- Build a strategic funding network
- Reinstigate the practice of regular Major Group meetings with the Bureau
- Include/invite Major Groups to briefings of UN bodies
- Urge Member States to invite Major Groups for consultations
- Facilitate Major Group meetings with intergovernmental organisations and other relevant actors
- Support MGPoF
- Promote and support Major Groups with respect to awareness raising activities
- Require Major Group reporting of the status of their constituencies
- Establish transparent means of communication with constituencies
- Acquire new organisational partners
- Reactivate and encourage Major Group focal point contributions



- Develop a strategy with respect to representing forests in the Sustainable Development Goals and post-2015 development agenda

Many of the above points were included in the Co-Chairs' summary which will be available at the AHEG2 meeting in January 2015. Also, in the closing session the Co-Chairs urged the continued engagement and cooperation of all countries, organisations and Major Groups at UNFF-11, where a decision will be taken on the International Arrangement on Forests, taking into account the outcomes of the two meetings of the Ad Hoc Expert Group.

Having participated in many sessions of the UNFF and in AHEG meetings I think that the Major Groups are gradually becoming more and more influential in these meetings. As focal point for the NGOs Major Group I noticed that active cooperation between NGOs and discussions with representatives of other Major Groups is helping us to prepare stronger positions for civil society; and that these are being taken seriously by governments and intergovernmental organisations. Let us hope that this tendency will continue and many views of Major Groups will be also included in the Co-Chairs' summary of AHEG2 and decisions of the UNFF-11.

The Mandate of Guayapes

By Marcial Arias, GFC Latin American Indigenous Focal Point and Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena, Panama

The organizations that form part of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) met for the II Amazonian Regional Summit 13-15 December 2013, in the village of Guayapes, in Villavicencio, Colombia. A political mandate was adopted, which aims to fight in favor of La Vida Plena Amazónica (literally translated, the holistic approach to life in the Amazon) and against the policy of 'economic development at all costs', which includes IIRSA (the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America).¹⁵

Amazonian Indigenous Peoples and national organizations from nine different countries—Bolivia (CIDOB), Brazil (COIAB), Ecuador (CONFENIAE), Colombia (OPIAC), Guyana (APA), French Guyana (FOAG), Peru (AIDSESP), Venezuela (ORPIA) and Suriname (OIS)—in dialogue with allies representing different social, national, human rights and environmental organizations, analyzed four key themes and proposed the following:

1. To replace the predatory extractivist and 'economic development at all costs' mentality
2. To denounce IIRSA (the regional infrastructure initiative for South America) and promote a form of integration that does not destroy Life
3. To respect the Amazonian Indigenous Peoples' plans for La Vida Plena
4. To undertake activities and create alliances for a Living Amazonia in defense of humanity



**COICA IX Congress, Guayapes, Colombia
Photo by Isis Alvarez**

Regarding international policy, they decided to maintain a brotherhood amongst Indigenous organizations, including COICA, CAOI, CICA, AMPB, and to campaign together at the international level on the following issues:

¹⁵ The mandate can be downloaded here: <http://laboratoriosdepaz.org/vida-plena-amazonica-frente-al-iirsa-y-el-desarrollismo-declaracion-de-la-ii-cumbre-regional-amazonica-de-los-pueblos-indigenas/>



1. Indigenous participation in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process, within the framework of paragraph 248 of “The Future We Want”, Rio+20
2. To again address human rights as dealt with by the UN Human Rights Council, especially in regard to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the process of ‘Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system’¹⁶ that is also underway.
3. To establish a School for Amazonian Studies, to study our own knowledge and train skilled leaders in international Indigenous diplomacy.
4. To establish a communications strategy concerning: experiences with megaprojects, dealing with conflicts, and climate change projects or initiatives.
5. To develop alliances with governments sympathetic to our proposals, such as the Amazonian Indigenous REDD+ proposal.
6. To create alliances with other allies that support the Indigenous movement (e.g. local communities, NGOs, civil society).

We also proposed to focus international efforts on the following international processes and arenas:

- Potential joint work on issues such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (May): Promotion of Indigenous Peoples’ rights and the Indigenous Amazon REDD+.
- Participation in the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum (FSPA using its Spanish acronym) to encourage alliances between Indigenous People and social movements in the South American Amazon basin.
- The Annual World Indigenous Games in French Guyana (July).
- The pre-COP of the UNFCCC in Venezuela (October): Indigenous proposals on land, Indigenous rights and climate change,
- Convention on Biological Diversity: work on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), concerning Indigenous rights and intellectual property, and the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefits-Sharing
- Climate Change COP-20: Amazonian Indigenous REDD+ presentation, proposals for a Mechanism for Loss and Damage, Indigenous pavilion.
- Cairo+20: Promotion of Indigenous Women’s Vision within the Cairo Action Plan
- Review of the World Bank’s Policies and Safeguards 2014-2015
- UN Forum on Business and Human Rights: presentation of cases such as the IIRSA. Direct dialogue with businesses, states and Indigenous Peoples.

Moreover, the IX COICA Ordinary Congress took place from 16-18 December, partially renewing its Steering Committee. The new Steering Committee is structured as follows:

- General Coordination: Edwin Vásquez (AIDSESEP), Peru
- Vice-coordinator: Jocelyn Therese (FOAG) Guiana Francesa
- Area for Climate Change and Biodiversity: Jorge Furagaru (OPIAC), Colombia
- Area for International Affairs and Cooperation: Nelly Romero (CIDOB), Bolivia
- Area for Territories and Natural Resources: Guillermo Arana (ORPIA), Venezuela
- Area for Gender, Women and Family: Josien Tokoe (OIS), Suriname
- Area for Policy and Human Rights: Michael McGarral (APA), British Guyana
- Area for Education, Science and Technology (no candidates were nominated)
- Area for Communications and Health (no candidates were nominated)

Judith Rivero Burgos, of CIDOB in Bolivia, and president of the IX COICA Congress, took the oath for the new Steering Committee. The conclave also discussed various political, economic and structural concerns relating to the organization. Henry Cabria Medina, president of OPIAC, the host organization—which is a national organization that comprises 56 Amazonian villages in Colombia—expressed his satisfaction regarding the development of the events, which were attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous NGOs, including the Global Forest Coalition, which was represented by Isis Alvarez and Marcial Arias.

Colombia’s Minister of Internal Affairs, Aurelio Iragorri, visited the COICA Congress and eloquently observed that: “we are the devastating ones, the white people, contrary to the centuries-long preservation carried out by Indigenous Peoples”. In front of the leaders and wise men and women of the Amazon, Iragorri committed to establishing pacts that are not hostile to ecosystems, and to promoting policies to preserve and protect the Amazon.

¹⁶ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/>



Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings & Events

May

- 25-30 May, 46th GEF Council Meeting and GEF Assembly, Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico, <http://www.thegef.org/gef/news/mexico-host-5th-assembly-global-environment-facility>

June

- 4- 15 June, United Nations Bonn Climate Change Conference, https://unfccc.int/meetings/bonn_jun_2014/meeting/8031.php
- 16 June, UNECE/FAO Forests and Sustainable Development Goals - Second Workshop, Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland, <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35313>
- 16-20 June, 12th Session of the Open Working Group on SDGs, New York City, US, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1300>
- 16-20 June, CBD WGR15, Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGR1) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Montreal, Quebec, Canada, <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>
- 23-27 June, Eighteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-18>
- 23 – 27 June, 22nd session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, Rome, Italy, <http://www.fao.org/forestry/57758/en/>
- 23 – 27 June, United National Environment Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya, <http://www.unep.org/unea/>

July

- 4 - 5 July, International strategy meeting on advocacy strategies to promote appropriate support for ICCAs, Geneva, Switzerland.
- 7 – 11 July, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, Switzerland, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ipeoples/emrip/pages/emripindex.aspx>
- 14-18 July, 13th Session of the Open Working Group on SDGs, New York City, US, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1300>
- 15 – 18 July, Preparatory meetings to the Social Pre-COP of the Climate Convention, Caracas, Venezuela

September

- 22-23 September, World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, , New York City, US, <http://wcip2014.org/world-conference-on-indigenous-peoples-september-2014>
- 23 September, Climate Summit 2014: Catalyzing action, New York City, US, <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/>
- 29-September to 3rd October, Seventh meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties serving as Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Republic of Korea, <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/e-doc/?notification=2036>

October

- 5-11 October, IUFRO World Congress - "Sustaining Forests, Sustaining People: The Role of Research, Salt Lake City, <http://iufro2014.com/>
- 6-17 October, Convention on Biodiversity COP-12: 6-17, PyeongChang, South Korea, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=cop-12>

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- *Isis Alvarez, Colombia*
- *Coraina de la Plaza, Netherlands*
- *Ronnie Hall, UK*
- *Swati Shresth, India*
- *Simone Lovera, Paraguay*
- *Wally Menne, South Africa*

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ⁱ Hufbauer, Gary and Schott, Jeffrey (2013). "Report to the ICC Research Foundation: Payoff from the World Trade Agenda 2013", Peterson Institute for International Economics, April, http://www.iccindiaonline.org/reports/Peterson_Report.pdf

ⁱⁱ Malig, Mary Louise (2013). "Tailored for Sharks: How rules are tailored and public interest surrendered to suit corporate interests in the WTO, FTAs and BITs trade and investment regime" Transnational Institute and Serikat Petani Indonesia. Bali and Amsterdam. December, <http://www.tni.org/briefing/tailored-sharks>