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Forest Cover

About Forest Cover

Welcome to the thirty-ninth issue of Forest Cover, the 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 inter-governmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs, and a calendar of future meetings.

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Graphic by Abel Bellido, Bolivian cartoonist



Ex Silvis: Will Green Capitalism Kill Off the Kyoto Protocol in Durban?

Fiu Mataese Elisara, Chairperson, Global Forest Coalition



The outcomes of the COP-16 climate change negotiations held in Cancún in 2010 constituted another very definite step towards the complete takeover of the UNFCCC by developed countries, stripping it of the UN's supposed democratic structure in which all states get a say. In particular, the introduction of duplicitous World Trade Organization (WTO)-style negotiating tactics allowed a number of countries spearheaded by the US to force through the Cancún Agreements, which set the scene for the catastrophic demise of the Kyoto Protocol at the next summit, COP-17 in Durban (28 November – 9 December).

Certain industrialised countries - namely the US, Canada, Japan and Russia - are determined to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol's legally binding emissions reductions commitments are replaced by weaker 'voluntary pledges'. The US has been an opponent of the Kyoto Protocol since its inception, and never ratified it, meaning that the world's most profligate emitter of greenhouse gases exempted itself from the legal commitments that other industrialised countries took on board.

But Japan, Russia and Canada have now switched allegiances, stating that they too want to ditch the Kyoto Protocol. Durban could thus become the cemetery where we bury our hopes of getting developed countries to commit to a new tranche of targets that are ambitious enough to save our planet from the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

If other countries do not take a stand in Durban, it will be tantamount to accepting the fact that multilateralism no longer has a part to play in our efforts to address climate change. It will be akin to accepting a seismic shift of rights and responsibilities for climate change, from the developed world to the developing world (even though the latter is not responsible for the current crisis). This is in stark contrast to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

As part of this shift new disciplinary measures are already being forced on the developing world, requiring them to submit plans for national mitigation targets which have to be compiled in registers and national schedules similar to those used in the WTO. They will also be obliged to ensure national 'monitoring reporting and verification' (MRV) every two years, which will be subjected to 'international consultations and analysis' (ICAs). This will require a huge investment in terms of experts and resources, but there is uncertainty as to where these resources will come from. The Green Climate Fund agreed in Cancún might be one such source, but it is far from clear whether it could or would really meet all these costs.

There is also an expectation that a decision on technology will be made in Durban but this could be another empty and hollow framework, since current texts fail to address ready access by developing countries and affordability. Key to this will be a system of intellectual property rights designed to deliver a public good rather than private financial gain.



It is also important to note that the current development and promotion of potentially dangerous technologies by countries such as the US and the UK fly in the face of the globally agreed moratorium on geo-engineering experiments that attempt to generate 'quick fixes' to climate change, which was agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya in October 2010. This dictates that no geo-engineering activities should take place until the risks to the environment and biodiversity and associated social, cultural and economic impacts have been properly considered.¹

Much of the Durban meeting will focus on finance, rather than the critical job of agreeing sharp emissions reductions. This will include the design and funding of the new Green Climate Fund (GCF), which governments agreed to set up in Cancún. But even this has been a highly controversial topic, with governments unable to reach consensus in the four dedicated meetings held over the course of the past year. Financing is further complicated by the fact that it is increasingly clear that donor governments expect much of the climate finance promised to come from private sources, not the public purse. They are also planning to channel funds to the private sector: Green Climate Fund proposals on the table include a special facility within the fund dedicated to financing the private sector.

In terms of REDD+, NGOs and Indigenous Peoples' Organisations have expressed their profound concern about the way funds for forest conservation and restoration and poverty eradication are being misdirected towards REDD+ projects and policy processes, which may include finance being channeled to logging and plantation companies. Many civil society organisations continue to advocate halting the continued loss of the world's forests, and addressing the impacts forest loss has on the rights and needs of forest-dependent peoples as well as on our climate. REDD+, however, is a mechanism that suffers from inherent risks and problems, which cannot be remedied.

This heavy reliance on market-oriented solutions thus seems to be pushing us in the direction of a world in which the rich continue to get richer and the poor poorer. As well as being a high-risk strategy (given the volatility of the private sector and the likelihood that private finance will only flow to the most profitable areas of the climate change 'sector') this is deeply inequitable. It is the opposite of climate justice.

It is also deeply disturbing that questionable WTO-styled methods might resurface in Durban, overriding legitimate objections and being used to gavel through decisions that have not been agreed by all the countries present. This could also cause the whole conference to collapse, which would be a further nail in the climate change coffin.

Overall, it seems that there is a high likelihood that 'green capitalism' will dominate negotiations in Durban generally, just as it has in all the negotiations that have taken place since Copenhagen. This could undo the many years of painstaking and democratic negotiating that have taken place in the UNFCCC, and trash the spirit enshrined in the Bali Action Plan agreed at COP-13 in 2007. This must not be allowed to happen.

All in all, NGOs and IPOs who are engaging in COP-17 will need to have a unified voice on the future of Kyoto, sources of funding, and how to deal with the intransigence of the US and its allies. Without our powerful movements holding governments accountable and contesting state power, the climate negotiations will continue to be stacked in favour of capital; and we, as climate justice movements, indigenous peoples and environmental organisations will be held to account for our failures.

¹ <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/resurgence/2010/242-243/cover03.htm>



Forest Loss in Tanzania – Getting to Grips with a Dilemma

Wally Menne, Timberwatch Coalition, South Africa

Long before climate change made it all the rage to be involved in the global debate around deforestation and forest degradation, the decline in the extent and health of forests had been recognised as a threat to the global ecology. Environmental and social struggles often revolved around impacts related to the extraction of mineral resources found in forests, especially high-value substances like petroleum, gold and copper. Demand for other commodities, such as rubber and tea, also caused forest loss in developing countries. However, the scale of the problem was not as great a cause for concern as it is now.

An escalating problem

In recent times a growing population with greater spending power has led to exponential growth in demand for a vast range of products, which in turn requires more raw material for their manufacture. These include paper and packaging materials derived from forest trees, and more recently forest biomass as a substitute for fossil fuels in electricity generation. This demand has not only affected existing resources: it has also led to an escalating phenomenon commonly referred to as 'land-grabbing' where consumer nations appropriate tracts of fertile land in developing countries in order to establish plantations of food or agrofuel crops.



Foreign land grabs for plantations appear to have triggered more deforestation on community land -
Photo by Wally Menne

In Tanzania, most attention has been focussed on deforestation driven largely by local demand for timber. This timber is used for furniture and construction, and for the production of charcoal, which is the major source of household energy in the country. Shifting agriculture has also been partly to blame. But attempts to address these drivers have failed, simply because alternative sources of food, timber and energy have not been available.

Finding solutions

Building on the 'Underlying Causes of Forest Loss' project completed in 2010,² the Global Forest Coalition held a workshop in Dar es Salaam on 23 September to tackle the thorny topic of how to deal with less obvious causes of forest loss and deterioration in Tanzania. It was attended by 25 representatives of organisations including NGOs, church groups and government.

² Getting to the Roots - November 2010, <http://www.globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Report-Getting-to-the-roots1.pdf>



Participants identified underlying or 'root' causes of forest loss including issues related to forest governance, community involvement and economic matters. Specific concerns raised included food and energy security, land tenure, demographic trends (urbanisation), farming systems, industrial agriculture, export-driven logging, mining impacts, poor community education, limited political commitment, a lack of support from government, and the need to control foreign investments.

In the afternoon participants formed three discussion groups tasked with finding ways to solve the identified issues. Reports back from the groups highlighted the complexity of the problem, and identified a number of ways that particular aspects could be addressed:

Governance

- Laws should be harmonised to avoid misunderstandings.
- Communities should be more aware of applicable laws and regulations.
- A professional body for foresters should be formed in Tanzania.
- Local NGOs are too quiet and must speak out about problems.
- The Tanzania Forest Service needs more resources and better governance.

Economic

- Biofuel projects that cause deforestation and degrade the landscape must not be allowed.
- Poverty, which causes dependence on charcoal for energy, must be overcome.
- The issue of rapid population growth needs to be addressed.
- All illegal trade in timber must be stopped, as Tanzania is losing money.
- Community woodlots and other alternative sources of energy are needed to replace unsustainable charcoal production.
- Community-based forest management (CBFM) and Participatory Forest Management (PFM) must be promoted.
- Better agricultural projects and systems such as permaculture should be introduced.
- Effective steps must be taken to counter bribery and corruption.

Community

- Access to cheap and clean alternative energy is a major priority.
- Problems with land-grabbing need to be addressed urgently.
- The value of land and natural resources must be fully appreciated.
- Alternatives to unsustainable construction materials are needed.
- Community ownership of forests and land must be resolved.
- The role of women in protecting forest resources must be supported.
- The value of traditional medicines produced from forest plants must be recognised.

Other pertinent issues

Successful landscape restoration work undertaken in Shinyanga could be used as a model for other parts of Tanzania. It is important that community knowledge is enhanced in order to empower communities to take control of their forests. The Mpinga project could also be used as a model to develop community forestry. Security of tenure combined with an appreciation of the value of intact forests would be beneficial to all concerned.

It will be necessary to take a fully integrated approach to reducing forest loss in Tanzania if the situation is ever to improve. Creating more protected areas or forest reserves will not resolve the problem if the high global demand for forest resources continues.



Indigenous Peoples' Proposals to Ensure Protection of their Rights in Climate Change Solutions

Onel Masardule, Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena, Panamá and Marina Apgar, Asociación ANDES, Perú

Unsurprisingly the outcomes of the UNFCCC climate talks in Panama City, 1-7 October, left a lot to be desired. Sticky issues such as the future of the Kyoto Protocol, agreements on emissions reductions, and long-term finance remain challenging, and the prospects for reaching an agreement on real and effective solutions to the climate crisis at COP-17 in Durban look dim.



Left to right - Atencio Lopez, Aresio Valiente, Onel Masardule, Anibal Escada and Marina Apgar at the IPCC, FPCI and GFC joint side event on biocultural protocols - Photo by Onel Masardule

peoples, organisations and programmes discussed their ongoing efforts to participate effectively in climate change science and policy development, especially with respect to REDD/REDD+ strategies and policies, both nationally and locally.

CONAPIP (Panama's national indigenous peoples' coordinating body) held a side event on indigenous participation in the development of the Panama REDD strategy and a national indigenous strategy for climate change. Alexis Alvarado, CONAPIP's legal advisor, outlined indigenous peoples' rights over territory and their right to self-determination, as the basis for the development of any REDD or climate change-related strategy in Panama.

The debate over who owns the forests in Panama (and therefore who owns the carbon which is to be traded through REDD and carbon markets) emerged in several events, with an obvious divergence of views between the government, as represented through ANAM (Panama's National Environmental Agency), and indigenous peoples. ANAM still seems to be unclear about 'who owns the carbon' yet is aiming to implement REDD in 2013, mainly in indigenous territories. For indigenous representatives of

Locating the talks in Panama, however, did allow for the participation of indigenous leaders from across Latin America and the rest of the world, including a large number of indigenous participants from Panama, who came together in the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus on Climate Change. This Caucus tracked the negotiations and provided inputs, urging governments to continue with the Kyoto Protocol as a necessary step towards mitigating climate change and redressing climate injustices.

During several side events, participants from indigenous



Panama, the answer is very clear – the forests and therefore the carbon belong to the indigenous peoples who hold collective ownership over their territories and all of the resources found within them.

A further demand of indigenous peoples in Panama is that government-led initiatives comply with the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) when approaching REDD in indigenous territories, and that management of potential REDD mechanisms be driven by indigenous peoples themselves. The Abya Yala Indigenous Forum on Climate Change also organised a side event, using practical examples to reflect upon how FPIC, safeguards and REDD can be addressed with indigenous peoples. The discussions and debates over who stands to benefit from REDD/REDD+ and how it may be implemented and regulated continue, alongside efforts to ensure that in the case of an eventual REDD initiative within indigenous territories, the rights of indigenous peoples as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other national and international legal frameworks are respected.

The Indigenous Peoples' Biocultural Climate Change Assessment (IPCCA) initiative also co-organised a side event, together with the Global Forest Coalition and the Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena, on the innovative use of biocultural protocols for developing safeguards for REDD. The first example of such a process is underway in Kuna Yala, Panama, where past experience in the use of biocultural protocols for access and benefit sharing with respect to biodiversity and traditional knowledge is underpinning the REDD-related work.

Atencio Lopez, Aresio Valiente and Onel Masardule explained how, in Kuna Yala, a biocultural protocol specific to REDD is being developed through their traditional governance processes. Biocultural protocols provide parameters for engagement within and among communities, and between communities and other actors, on the use of natural resources and associated knowledge. As the Cacique of Kuna Yala, Anibal Escada shared, the Kuna have a close relationship to the forests in their territory. This relationship is based on a spiritual connection to all beings, and management and use are guided not by its ability to mitigate climate change, but rather by Indigenous Peoples' responsibility as guardians of the territory. The biocultural protocol of Kuna Yala uses this starting point to create clear processes for mediating the interaction between the forest, the peoples and REDD programs.

Through the IPCCA initiative, forest-dwelling indigenous peoples are also establishing biocultural protocols for ensuring free, prior and informed consent; monitoring, reporting and verification; and the distribution of benefits from REDD/REDD+ in their territories. Where safeguards developed by international REDD programs and other external actors fall short, local biocultural protocols can ensure that the rights of communities are protected and promoted. The IPCCA-led biocultural protocol initiative is an innovative example of how indigenous peoples are taking matters into their own hands, and was met with enthusiasm and interest by members of the audience, including UN-REDD representatives.

These examples illustrate how indigenous peoples are proactively engaging with the challenge that both the impacts of climate change and proposed solutions pose to their rights and self-determination. Whether real and meaningful solutions are agreed to in Durban or not, and regardless of whether REDD becomes a reality or not, the Panama talks provided an opportunity to share how the guardians of the world's forests are working to strengthen their resilience.



Will Indigenous Peoples Benefit from ‘the Green Economy’?

Hubertus Samangun, Ikatan Cendekiawan Tanimbar Indonesia (ICTI Tanimbar), Indonesia

Sometimes, very different meetings trigger very similar questions. One such question is whether Indigenous Peoples will benefit from the ‘Green Economy’. This was one of the central concerns expressed during the ‘Contribution of Forests to a Green Economy’ Conference, which was organised from 4 to 7 October in Bonn, Germany. It was also a central question at the ‘Forests Indonesia’ conference, which was held at the Shangri-La Hotel, Jakarta, on 27 September 2011. The full title of the conference was ‘Forests Indonesia: alternative futures to meet demands for food, fibre, fuel and REDD+’.

This conference in Jakarta was hosted by CIFOR (the Centre for International Forestry Research) and the Government of Indonesia, with financial support from several governments and institutions. The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, officially opened the conference, which was attended by more than 1,000 participants. In his opening speech, the president vowed to dedicate the last three years of his administration to safeguarding the remaining Indonesian rain forests. In this respect, Frances Seymour, the Director General of CIFOR, observed in her welcoming statement that, “Analysis by the research institute CIFOR shows that planting trees can make only a small contribution to reducing the country’s net emissions.”

The participants were mostly from the business sector and NGOs; there were only two participants representing indigenous peoples and local communities. However, the many panelists did include Abdon Nababan, the Secretary General of Aman (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, Indonesia's Indigenous Association). He clearly stressed that indigenous peoples are maintaining their position on ‘No rights, No REDD’.³

Organizations like the UN Environment Program are actively promoting REDD and other forest carbon offset projects as an example of ‘the Green Economy’. There are some 40 REDD+ demonstration activities all over Indonesia, but with respect to benefit sharing, there is no clear mechanism linking the central and provincial governments, the developers, and the indigenous peoples and local communities. Both central and provincial government regulations relating to forests and REDD+ fail to recognise and respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

It is also the case that the government, NGOs and investors are not implementing the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in reality. FPIC is certainly mentioned on paper, and in briefings and meetings with indigenous peoples, in which the government, the investors and NGOs have committed to recognising and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and implementing FPIC before developers obtain permits. But on the ground this is not happening.

Developments at the conference in Bonn, which was a country-led initiative within the framework of the UN Forum on Forests, provided an extra reason for concern in this respect. The key objective of the conference was to provide conclusions and recommendations on how to ‘realise the potential of forests to help build a green economy’ and hence contribute to the preparatory process for Rio+ 20 and the tenth session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). Remarkably, the conference was organised by three European countries, Germany, Austria and Finland, thus breaking the UNFF tradition of initiatives led by a Northern and a Southern country.

³ You can listen to Abdon Nababan’s conference presentation (in Bahasa Indonesia) here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM4Tuf0g0YI>



The draft outcome of the meeting, which was adopted as a ‘chair’s summary’ only, strongly promoted the kind of market-based solutions that are currently popular amongst European environmental policy-makers, including forest certification and payment for environmental services systems. It also claimed, without reservation, that the forest sector would be able to satisfy growing markets for food, feed, fibre and fuel, through innovations in, amongst other things, process technologies, and new forest and bio-based products. The fact that growing demand is already having a devastating impact on forest biodiversity was simply ignored. The draft outcome of the conference also included the remarkable conclusion that investments in the forest sector would provide stable and long-term rates of return, which denies both the impacts of climate change on forests and the volatility of forest carbon offset markets.

Meanwhile, only a small group of participants, almost all from developing countries, were interested in the question of whether these markets would benefit people. The breakout group on ‘benefiting people’ highlighted the need to create employment and generate income from forest products and services at the local level, and asked for resources to be channeled to local stakeholders. They also urged governments to recognise local and customary practices in law or in policy, and take them into account in the practice of sustainable forest management. They emphasized that national governments should explore options to develop clear and appropriate forest tenure arrangements benefiting people. Last but not least, they urged governments to fully implement Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge and to implement the Free Prior and Informed Consent principle as recognised by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Sadly enough, the United States asked the chair to remove this last point from the chair’s summary, which was not even a consensus document. If this reference is indeed removed, one might seriously wonder whether the ‘green economy’ as promoted by the forestry sector will benefit indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities.

European Commission Decides to Ignore Evidence on Indirect Impacts of Agrofuels

Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch, UK

In September 2011, an EU Commission decision to ignore all evidence about the serious indirect impacts of agrofuels was leaked to the media, some two months after it was reached.⁴

When the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) was approved in late 2008, it allowed few possibilities for countering the serious effects of agrofuel targets and subsidies. It did, however, require the European Commission to report on the effects on Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC) resulting from biofuels production, and to recommend ways of mitigating those changes.

A large and growing number of studies have since confirmed what civil society organisations and others had been warning for years: that the worst impacts of agrofuels are indirect ones. Even if the deeply flawed EU ‘greenhouse gas and sustainability standards’⁵ could be monitored and enforced – which is not the case – the indirect impacts of biofuel production would still render those standards

⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/08/us-eu-biofuels-idUSTRE7874NP20110908>

⁵ Under the Renewable Energy Directive, biofuels which are either subsidised or counted towards renewable energy targets must meet minimal greenhouse gas and environmental standards. However, these have been criticised as flawed and insufficient by large numbers of organisations, e.g. <http://www.transportenvironment.org/News/2009/11/EU-biofuel-rules-likely-to-cause-more-harm-than-good/> Under EU



meaningless. Diverting feedstock produced on existing plantations to agrofuels will inevitably lead to new plantations being established elsewhere, in order to supply existing markets. This would most likely be at the expense of forests or grasslands.



Workers at a sugar cane plantation in Colombia
Photo CENSAT Agua Viva

The European Commission, however, has decided to ignore the advice coming from a large volume of EU-funded studies, government advisory bodies, international institutions and scientific bodies⁶, all of which have stressed the need to address the indirect impacts of agrofuels, and most of which have recommended feedstock-specific 'ILUC factors'.

An 'ILUC factor' is a numerical deduction from the assumed 'greenhouse gas savings' of any particular agrofuel, which is intended to give an indication of the impacts that ILUC will have on the greenhouse gas savings of that agrofuel. Given the strong evidence that agrofuels result in even higher greenhouse gas emissions than the

fossil fuels they replace⁷, once all direct and indirect impacts are considered, genuine science-based ILUC factors (rather than agreed through political compromise) could be expected to stop agrofuels from passing the EU's requirement for 35% greenhouse gas savings⁸ from supported biofuels.

In reality, however, it has long been clear that any decision made would be based on political considerations, rather than science-based ILUC factors. While the European Biodiesel Board lobbied against ILUC factors, the European ethanol industry supported them.⁹ This reflects the fact that both lobby groups, as well as other observers, had expected that the European Commission might recognise the serious indirect impacts of palm oil, soya and rapeseed oil (i.e. the main biodiesel feedstocks) but that there was no realistic prospect of them acknowledging that ethanol, including sugar cane ethanol, has serious indirect impacts, too. This almost certainly had more to do with successful pro-ethanol lobbying rather than with the science.¹⁰

Still, many had hoped that ILUC factors would at least lead to an end to EU support for agrofuels from palm oil, and possibly from soybean and rapeseed oil too. Instead the Commission opted to delay using ILUC factors for at least seven years, supposedly because of 'uncertainties' with respect to the scale of land use change caused by agrofuels. A more convincing reason is the Commission's stated

standards, all impacts on people, including on human rights, land rights and the right to food, are ignored, as are all impacts on soil and water, and there is no independent auditing of company claims.

6 Transport and Environment Federation briefing: Review of independent studies on biofuels and land use change, updated September 2010, www.transportenvironment.org/low-carbon-fuels/

7 e.g. www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2008/lcas-for-agrofuels/

8 'Savings' are compared to a set figure for 'average emissions' from fossil-fuel based transport fuels.

9 www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/05/us-eu-biofuels-industry-idUSTRE7941NK20111005

10 After all according to a 2010 study both sugar cane ethanol and soya biodiesel from Brazil led to a carbon debt of around 250 years, due to indirect impacts on deforestation. Lapola, David et al, Indirect land-use changes can overcome carbon savings from biofuels in Brazil, PNAS, 2010, www.pnas.org/content/107/8/3388.abstract



concern to 'avoid problems' with EU trading partners. Media reports suggested that the Commission had taken the decision to “*protect EU farmers' income and existing investments in the bloc's 17 billion euro-year (\$24 billion) biofuel sector*”.¹¹ In reality, however, under the RED, existing investments would have been exempt from ILUC factors until 2018 anyway.

Instead, the Commission recommended raising the level of mandatory 'greenhouse gas savings'. But this is meaningless precisely because indirect emissions are being ignored, and these tend to be the largest ones.¹² The Commission's decision was immediately condemned, not just by NGOs but also by nearly 200 scientists worldwide,¹³ while the European Environment Agency's Scientific Committee issued a highly critical opinion about the EU's greenhouse gas accounting for agrofuels and bioenergy in general.¹⁴

Meanwhile it should also be taken into account that there are serious problems with the idea that ILUC factors alone can 'solve' problems with agrofuels (even ILUC factors which do not derive from a political compromise). Firstly, the idea behind ILUC has always been to account for just one type of indirect impact: immediate hectare-for-hectare displacement. It ignores the wider climate impact of infrastructure investments, such as roads, ports or river diversion schemes, and the effect of legislative or policy changes which facilitate land-grabbing linked to agrofuels.

Secondly, ILUC factors only address greenhouse gas emissions. They entirely ignore the effects of agrofuels production on communities and their livelihoods, on forests and biodiversity, and on hunger and malnutrition. A recent FAO report provided yet more evidence of the key role that agrofuels have played in recent food price rises.¹⁵ Furthermore, a separate scientific report says, “*effective controls on land conversion would ... result in less additional cropland and higher prices as markets seek equilibrium. In that event, more greenhouse “benefits” would stem in reality from reduced food consumption.*”¹⁶ This suggests that, in the unlikely event that the EU could somehow curb ILUC emissions from agrofuels while maintaining agrofuel targets and subsidies, impacts on food prices and on hunger would become even worse.

In addition, some scientists' claims about agrofuel production on 'abandoned' and 'marginal' lands being a solution to ILUC emissions is also being used by companies and governments to justify land-grabbing of farmlands across the global South. In addition, converting grasslands and set-aside lands over to agrofuel production will release far more carbon emissions than can be saved.¹⁷

While the EU Commission's decision to ignore indirect land use change should be roundly condemned, it will hopefully underpin the case for stopping the targets and subsidies, which are currently driving the production of agrofuels.

11 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/09/08/us-eu-biofuels-idUKTRE7874NP20110908>

12 There are other serious problems with the greenhouse gas calculations under the RED, too. For example, whilst negative 'indirect land use change' emissions are ignored, 'positive land use change' impacts are calculated for co-products.

13 www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/solutions/forest_solutions/EU-ILUC-Letter.html

14 www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/governance/scientific-committee/sc-opinions/opinions-on-scientific-issues/sc-opinion-on-greenhouse-gas

15 Price volatility and food security, a report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, July 2011, www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE-price-volatility-and-food-security-report-July-2011.pdf

16 Use of U.S. Croplands for Biofuels Increases Greenhouse Gases Through Emissions from Land Use Change, Timothy Searchinger et al, Science, 7th February 2008

17 <http://www.econexus.info/publication/agrofuels-and-myth-marginal-lands>



Latin American and Caribbean Rio+20 Prepcom Emphasizes Equity and Sustainable Development

Vivienne Solís Rivera, CoopeSoliDar R.L, Costa Rica

The Latin America and Caribbean Preparatory Meeting towards Rio+20 took place in Santiago de Chile from 7 to 9 September, at a meeting space provided by CEPAL (the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe). As part of the process leading to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20), participants debated sustainable development and the main challenges that will be faced in the future.



Latin America and Caribbean Prepcom towards Rio+20

Photo by Vivienne Solís

Representatives from 28 countries in the region and organisations working on environment and sustainable development issues gathered together with great expectations, to see if they could reach a regional consensus on two major subjects that are expected to be discussed in Rio+20: the 'green economy' within the sustainable development and poverty eradication context; and the institutional framework needed for sustainable development.

One of the cornerstones of the first Rio Summit in 1992 (the UN Conference on Environment and Development, or UNCED) was that equitable development, sustainability and conservation were a shared responsibility, and that a multiple stakeholder approach involving all aspects of civil society, as well as states and the multilateral system, was necessary for success. Based on this agreement, the process towards this new Rio encounter aims to include civil society and state representatives throughout the official spaces of the main working groups. This should integrate women, children and youth, workers, unionists and farmers, the private sector, indigenous peoples, scientists, and NGOs.

In Santiago, these various participants expressed their concerns with respect to the forthcoming Rio+20 Summit. The women's group insisted that the Rio+20 assessment focus on an evaluation of the implementation of the original Rio principles and Agenda XXI, this time using clear indicators assessing gender differentiation and equity issues in general. These evaluations must be the basis for further discussion at Rio+20. What has been accomplished and what has not, and why? What is the role of the banks' and other financial institutions? Why has the implementation and financing of a sustainable development model involving women been so difficult?



The women's group also demanded guaranteed access to the land, the sea, and the control of natural resources; to education and information; to environmental justice and social security; and to reproductive health. This entails proper financing. The group stated, *"We do not want development without equity, not even the "green" kind. We strongly support policies ensuring sustainable production and consumption but we firmly say NO to a 'green economy' that impoverishes, segregates and hurts the most vulnerable sectors on the planet."*

Indigenous peoples insisted on their wide participation in the Rio+20 process and conventions relating to sustainable development, including the UNFCCC. They advised that each topic to be discussed during the Rio+20 conference be revised wherever needed, in light of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and indigenous peoples' experiences. Their rights to ecosystems, lands, resources and traditional knowledge must be established and respected as a prerequisite for the development and planning of any adaptation and mitigation measure in response to climate change. They insisted on their own concept of 'Sustainable Development' and 'Buen Vivir' (Good Living). In addition, they proposed that a 'Cultural Pillar' be added to the economic, environmental and social pillars, so that it is adopted in Rio+20 as sustainable development's '4th missing pillar'.

The youth group asked for the creation of a specialised youth agency and pointed to the importance of decent jobs. They emphasised that they are themselves incorporating a more sustainable way of living into their lives, as a demonstration that these new paradigms are feasible.

NGOs expressed worries that the 'green economy' concept, which there was no consensus about, would still be viewed as central to the Rio+20 conference, even though the sustainable development paradigm needs to be reinforced and commitment to the original Rio Declaration renewed: there is a tangible gap between the commitments made in Rio in 1992, and their effective implementation. In this regard, participating NGOs recognised that we can improve on implementation and follow-up, thus ensuring greater commitment, mutual trust and effective mechanisms for accountability. NGOs also proposed a regional agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean to address access to information, participation in public decision-making and access to justice; and the establishment of multilateral mechanisms for the social and environmental evaluation of new technologies.

Farmers insisted that people's food security must be prioritized over and above neoliberal interests and worldwide consumption levels. They pointed to their right to education and technical capacity; the sustainable use of natural resources; and watershed and environmental protection.

Overall, this Latin America & Caribbean 'prepcom' exposed the need for greater and broader dialogue and the importance of creating spaces for reaching consensus. However, in spite of having a proposal for a declaration, and a document concerning the current situation, both prepared by CEPAL, the region that will host Rio+20 did not achieve consensus, and the document witnessing the meeting is simply entitled, "Conclusions of the regional preparatory meeting for Latin America & the Caribbean".¹⁸

Rio+20 has been called in order to ensure a renewed political commitment to sustainable development. It is expected that it will assess progress to date, and identify remaining gaps regarding the implementation of outcomes from major summits, in terms of sustainable development and new and emerging challenges. During the Latin America & the Caribbean prepcom however, it was clear that countries agreed to the call for participation, but their approaches still diverge upon the two major issues being considered for discussion.

¹⁸ The final document can be downloaded here:
http://www.eclac.cl/noticias/paginas/5/43755/Conclusiones_reunion_prep_Rio+20-2011-esp.pdf.



Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings & Events

November

- November 25, International REDD+ Partnership Meeting, Durban, South Africa.
- November 28 - December 9, 17th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, Durban, South Africa.

December

- December 3, Global Day of Action, Durban, South Africa.
- December 4, Forest Day 5, Durban, South Africa.
- December 4, Fake Forest Day, Durban, South Africa (www.timberwatch.org).
- December 5, International Food Sovereignty Day to Cool Down the Earth, Durban, South Africa
- December 14 – 15, 2nd intersessional meeting for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, New York, USA

2012

- March 26 – 27, 3rd intersessional meeting for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, New York, USA
- April 30 – May 4, 16th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biodiversity, Montreal, Canada
- May 7 – 18, 11th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York, USA
- June 20 – 22, UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- July, 5th session of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- October 8 – 19, 11th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity, Hyderabad, India

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