

## **CALL TO ACTION**

### **TO REJECT REDD+ AND EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TO CONFRONT CAPITALISM AND DEFEND LIFE AND TERRITORIES**

**COP20, Lima, December 2014**

On the occasion of the UN climate change negotiations in Lima, Peru – known as COP20 – we reaffirm that rejecting REDD+ and ‘environmental services’, two manifestations of the so-called ‘green economy’, is a central part of our struggle against capitalism and extractive industries and the defence of territories, life and Mother Earth.

The United Nations’ climate agreements have failed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the mechanisms and policies that have emerged from these agreements – including REDD+ – have allowed for the continuation, legitimization and intensification of destructive activities such as mining, oil, gas and carbon extraction, tree plantations and agroindustry, among others. These industries, which are the main causes of the climate crisis, have adopted discourses on ‘sustainability’, ‘zero deforestation’, ‘socio-environmental responsibility’, ‘decoupling’ or ‘low-carbon projects’ under the umbrella of the “green” economy. But we know that despite the propaganda used to doctor their image, the extractivist model and institutionalized global capitalism always result in the pillaging of Mother Earth, as well as the violent eviction and criminalization of communities and peoples, as well as the destruction of land and territories.

Advocates of the ‘green’ economy try to make us believe that ‘sustainable economic growth’ is possible and can be ‘decoupled from damage to nature’ under capitalist forms of production; or that it is feasible to ‘compensate’ or ‘mitigate’ contamination or destruction in one place by ‘recreating’ or ‘protecting’ another. Using an unjust and colonialist framework, the ‘green’ economy subjugates nature and autonomous peoples by imposing restrictions on the use of and control over their territories in order to fill the pockets of a few, even when communities possess the deeds to their land.

One of the fundamental pillars of the new global capitalism is ‘environmental services’. This involves the further financialization and commodification of nature, and signifies subjugating and enslaving it to capital. The carbon market, biodiversity offsets and water markets are part of this kind of capitalism. ‘Environmental services’ are dependent on the hegemonic economic model.

There are many kinds of environmental services, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), commodified conservation, ‘sustainable forest management’ and programs to increase carbon ‘reserves’ (REDD Plus or REDD+) and more recently, so-called ‘climate smart’ agriculture. The promoters of REDD+ hope that COP20 in Lima will establish the basis for its inclusion in the next international climate agreement in 2015 during COP21 in Paris. Such projects and programs have existed for years and are in constant expansion. Numerous corporations, NGOs and governments, as well as the World Bank and the UN’s carbon funds are committed to advancing this business.

In practice, given that forests are found mainly on indigenous lands and the lands of the peasants who feed the world, such schemes turn indigenous territories and agricultural lands into both carbon dioxide ‘sinks’ and water or biodiversity ‘banks’.

From the perspective of those who defend forests, such mechanisms are absurd: the more deforestation and threats to forests there are, the greater the number of REDD+ projects that can be

justified and implemented with the goal of selling 'scarce' carbon and other 'nature' commodities. With REDD+, forests' and soils' capacity to absorb carbon and retain it, and plants' capacity to grow, photosynthesize, conserve water, grow and generate biodiversity are being quantified, monetized, appropriated, privatized and financialized, just as with any other commodity. The 'environmental services' trade also fuels the impunity of polluters and destroyers: instead of complying with laws that prohibit polluting and deforestation, they can 'compensate' for these ills. This trade also diverts attention from combatting climate change, as it does not address the cause. The urgent need to stop extracting fossil fuels and halt industrial agriculture and monoculture plantations, and to guarantee respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, dependent forest people and peasants to manage and control their territories, is not on the negotiating table. As a result, the spiral of destruction continues and grows.

One clear example of how harmful REDD+ projects can be is the agreement signed between the states of California in the United States, Chiapas in Mexico and Acre in Brazil, which aims to allow industries in California to continue polluting in exchange for carbon credits purchased through REDD+ projects in Acre and Chiapas. Although Acre is usually presented to the world as a 'model for the green economy', the reality is different: carbon trading which facilitates timber exploitation has been devastating territories and violating the rights of forest peoples (1), as the DHESCA human rights network has reported, following its 2013 mission to Acre (2). Other examples include the case of the N'hambita community in Mozambique that signed a contract with the British corporation Envirotrade on the trade of REDD+ carbon credits. According to the contract, the inhabitants of the community will have to 'cultivate carbon' on their territories, instead of food, for 99 years (3). Other examples in Kenya (4), Congo (5), Papua New Guinea (6), Cambodia (7), Brazil (8) and elsewhere, illustrate how REDD-type projects can lead to forced evictions, arrests and the dispossession of territories.

Numerous communities have been pressured or tricked into signing contracts that involve the loss of their rights over their land and ancestral territories (9). Moreover, REDD-type projects do not guarantee that extractive corporations do not enter their territories. For example, 'Socio Bosque' (Forest Partner), the REDD-type program in Ecuador - where the communities are obliged to take care of forests for 20 or 40 years so that the State can ensure that 'environmental services' are conserved and can be traded - allows oil or minerals to be extracted in these areas (10).

REDD+ claims its objective is to combat deforestation, guarantee local participation, improve forest management, improve the local population's living conditions and contribute to their development, and, occasionally, even implement territorial rights. It also alleges that it will fight climate change. Yet, the numerous national and subnational programs, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and REDD+ projects developed worldwide increasingly show that these are lies and that the real objective is to accumulate more capital and control territories. Communities affected by REDD+ projects either directly or indirectly - by the polluting companies that benefit from the carbon credits generated by such projects, by the State or by other agencies - have not truly been informed what this kind of contract means. REDD+ projects are already defined by their promoters before they are presented to communities - which, in practice, takes away the communities' right to accept or reject the project. At other times, communities are simply tricked and fall into the 'REDD' trap. Promises are often not kept.

Likewise, instead of being a solution to climate change, so-called 'climate smart' agriculture is just another attempt by biotechnology and agribusiness corporations to patent and control seeds and farmlands.

This mechanism, promoted by the FAO and the World Bank, among others, tries to get peasants to adopt certain cultivation practices and use 'climate ready' genetically-modified seeds, dispossessing

farmers of their fields, autonomy, food sovereignty and ancestral knowledge. *La Vía Campesina* denounced 'climate smart' agriculture as the continuation of a project that began with the Green Revolution in the 1940s and continued on in the 1970s and 1980s through the World Bank's poverty reduction projects. These projects decimated peasant farmer economies, especially in the South, which provoked the loss of food sovereignty and made these countries dependent on the North to feed their population (11). Today, a World Bank program in Kenya seeks to generate carbon credits by demanding 'sustainable land management practices', which include the use of a hybrid variety of corn seeds sold locally by Syngenta, pressuring peasants to abandon their native species (12). Supporters of this dangerous false solution want to convert fields, soils and crops into carbon credits, which will lead to an increase in land grabbing and dispossession.

Even tree monoculture plantations are being camouflaged as 'climate smart'. The advance of large-scale eucalyptus, pine, acacia, rubber and oil palm plantations is, in fact, a part of process to advance capital accumulation driven by corporations. The plantations are considered carbon 'sinks' and therefore, eligible for carbon credits. In Aceh, in the north of Indonesia, a REDD+ project covering 770,000 hectares was developed by the International Fauna & Flora NGO, the Carbon Conservation carbon broker company and the then governor of Aceh. The project's document affirms that one way to 'compensate' for the loss of forests in the area designated under REDD+ was through oil palm plantations, whose 'capacity to absorb carbon' has been estimated in order to anticipate how many carbon credits the project can generate. As for the local communities in the project's area, they have affirmed on several occasions that they were not duly consulted on the project and have not received any benefit from it. On the contrary, the tenure of their land continues to be a serious problem that has yet to be resolved (13).

Corporations like Shell Oil or Rio Tinto mining corporation; tree plantations and pulp and paper producers like Green Resources and Suzano; agribusiness firms like Wilmar, Monsanto and Bunge; multilateral agencies like the UNDP and FAO; conservation transnationals like Wildlife Works, WWF, The Nature Conservancy or Conservation International; consulting firms, public and private banks and many governments elaborate, support and fund REDD+ and 'climate smart' agriculture projects and programs. These mechanisms undermine the real solutions to climate change, as they serve as a distraction from changes to the modes of production and consumption and towards economies and societies that are free from fossil fuels.

We must not allow ourselves to be fooled by the lies of vulgar propaganda. We know that climate negotiations, which are increasingly controlled by corporate power, do not try to save the climate, nor protect forests and soils, eradicate poverty or respect indigenous peoples' rights. On the contrary, they cravenly protect predatory corporations and reinforce a destructive and patriarchal model. What is worse, they manipulate information to put the blame on small farmers and the peoples who depend on the forests. They accuse them of being the main cause of deforestation and climate change, since they create parcels of land for subsistence agriculture. In reality, however, the traditional inhabitants of the territories are precisely the ones who have guaranteed the conservation of the forests, water sources and ecosystems.

We cannot allow false solutions to climate change - including REDD+ and the so-called 'climate smart' agriculture - destroy the balance on Mother Earth.

We must oppose these types of programs and 'environmental services' that seek to perpetuate capitalism regardless of the damage they cause.

We must continue pushing for the transformation of the current production model and fighting against policies imposed on the peoples that prioritize the reproduction of capital over the reproduction of life. The struggles of indigenous peoples, peasants, urban dwellers, fisherfolk,

pastoralists, women, men and youth to defend their rights and territories lead the way. It is the peoples' opposition to oil extraction and mining, environmental services, industrial agriculture projects and monocultures which are taking the right steps on climate change. These people must be respected, and not criminalized, and their efforts to contribute to global change must be recognized.

We must organize to support the defence of indigenous territories and forest dependent communities, their autonomy and control over their territories and the protection of Mother Earth.

**For these reasons, we say YES to the defence of territories,**  
to the defence of the peoples and communities who depend on, live in and are part of the forests,  
to their autonomy over their territories and  
the defence of the rights of nature!

**NO MORE EXTRACTIVIST PROJECTS!  
NO TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES!  
TO FIGHT AGAINST REDD+ IS TO ALSO FIGHT CAPITALISM!**

**NO TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE PEOPLES WHO DEFEND THEIR TERRITORIES!**

**JOIN THE PEOPLE'S SUMMIT MARCH!**

Initial signatories:

Acción Ecológica, Ecuador  
Aliança RECOs – Redes de Cooperação Comunitária Sem Fronteiras  
Alternativa Intercambio con Pueblos Indígenas, Estado español  
Asamblea Nacional de Afectados Ambientales, Mexico  
Bia'lii, Asesoría e Investigación, A.C., Mexico  
Carbon Trade Watch  
Ceiba / Friends of the Earth, Guatemala  
Censat / Friends of the Earth, Colombia  
Centro de Investigación, Documentación y Asesoría Poblacional (CIDAP), Peru  
Centro de Mujeres Aymaras Candelaria, Patacamaya, Bolivia – South America  
Cesta / Friends of the Earth, El Salvador  
Coeco Ceiba / Friends of the Earth, Costa Rica  
Colectivo de Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, Ecuador  
Colectivo Voces Ecológicas (COVEC), Panama  
Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (Copinh), Pueblo Lenca, Honduras  
Conselho de Missão entre Povos Indígenas (COMIN), Acre e Sul do Amazonas, Brazil  
Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI), Brazil  
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)  
Friends of the Earth, Latin America and the Caribbean (ATLAC)  
Friends of the Earth, Brazil  
Fórum Mudanças Climáticas e Justiça Social, Brazil  
GroundWork / Friends of the Earth, South Africa  
Grupo de Estudos em Produção do Espaço Amazônico (UFAC)  
Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (MPA), Brasil  
Movimento Mulheres pela P@Z!  
Núcleo de Pesquisa Estado, Sociedade e Desenvolvimento na Amazônia Ocidental (UFAC)  
Observatorio ciudadano de servicios públicos, Guayaquil, Ecuador

Oilwatch Latin America  
Oilwatch International  
Otros Mundos Chiapas / Friends of the Earth, México  
Red de Ambientalistas Comunitarios de El Salvador (RACDES), El Salvador  
Red Latinoamericana contra los Monocultivos de árboles (RECOMA)  
REDES / Friends of the Earth, Uruguay  
Redmanglar Internacional  
Regional Latinoamericana de la UITA  
Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras Rurais de Xapuri – Acre, Brasil  
The Corner House, UK  
Transnational Institute (TNI)  
World March of Women  
World Rainforest Movement (WRM)

**To join this call, send the name of your organization or group and country to**  
[NoREDDCop20@wrm.org.uy](mailto:NoREDDCop20@wrm.org.uy)

**NOTAS:**

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