

## Groups call for Action on 21 September: International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations

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Large-scale monoculture tree plantations cause serious environmental, social and economic impacts on local communities. These impacts have been amply documented around the world, and include the depletion of water sources due to changes in the hydrological cycle; deterioration of rivers and streams; air and water pollution due to the use of pesticides and other agrochemicals; the displacement of entire communities when their land is occupied by plantations; violations of human, labour and environmental rights; differentiated impacts on women; the deterioration of cultural diversity; widespread violence; and the critical loss of biodiversity. For that reason, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples' Organisations and social movements all over the world will commemorate the International Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations this weekend by organizing actions, demonstrations, marches and sending out joint letters to express their concerns. (1)

Sandy Gauntlett of the Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, states: "Tree plantations are not forests. A plantation is a highly uniform agricultural system that replaces natural ecosystems and their rich biodiversity. The trees planted are geared to the production of a single raw material, whether it is timber, pulp, rubber, palm oil or others. Nevertheless, international institutions like the FAO and the World Bank, as well as government agencies in countries like New Zealand, incorrectly define plantations as forests, despite abundant documentation which proves that the only thing they have in common is the presence of trees. By calling them forests, these institutions and governments help to impose and perpetuate an unsustainable monoculture plantation production model."

"Plantations form part of an industrial model for the production of abundant and cheap raw material that serves as an input for the economic growth of the industrialized countries. What the producer countries get are environmental degradation and rising poverty, which are the 'externalized costs' of this cheap raw material," stressed Simone Lovera of the Global Forest Coalition.

"On the lands currently occupied by plantations, there used to be or could be agricultural crops that would help ensure the people's food sovereignty, managed by peasant communities. Or these communities and indigenous peoples could use the land for sustainable activities that would improve their quality of life, such as community forest management," added Isaac Rojas of Friends of the Earth International. (2)

The struggle waged by local communities against tree monocultures has become a part of daily life in countries around the world. It is a struggle that none of these communities asked for, but one that has been imposed on them. In Asia and the Pacific, local communities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are fighting against oil palm plantations. In Africa, there are struggles against plantations that produce rubber, palm oil and wood pulp in Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, Swaziland and South Africa. And in Latin America, countries like Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay are suffering the impacts of 'green deserts' of pine and eucalyptus trees, while Colombia is now facing the rapid expansion of palm oil plantations for agrofuel production, as are Venezuela and the countries of Central America.

To make matters worse, large-scale tree plantations are being promoted — falsely — as a solution for climate change. On the one hand, the European Parliament and other institutions are promoting the so-called second generation of biofuels (3) produced from wood, which would lead to the rapid and wide expansion of tree monocultures,

including transgenic trees. (4) On the other hand, some southern countries view a potential fund under the Framework Convention on Climate Change as a possible source of financing for large tree plantations as carbon sinks to compensate for the loss of forests. As a result, mechanisms like REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries) could be turned into a massive subsidy scheme for plantations.

“All ‘international days’ refer to problems of global importance that need the world’s attention. The expansion of large-scale tree monoculture plantations is one of these problems. That is why this 21 September will give greater visibility to the great many struggles being waged around the world and demonstrate the negative impacts of this model, and the world will have the opportunity to join in this struggle,” explains Ricardo Carrere of the World Rainforest Movement (WRM). “21 September is also the International Day of Peace, and this is what the people waging this struggle are fighting for: Peace, so that the communities affected can recover their way of life in harmony with Nature and with other people.” he added. “This 21 September, we will also celebrate the fertile resistance that is growing in so many communities every day of the year, in pursuit of a world with justice and without these destructive plantations.”

#### NOTES:

(1) All of these impacts have been documented in many publications, case studies and declarations made by the communities themselves. For more information see the World Rainforest Movement website: [www.wrm.org.uy](http://www.wrm.org.uy)

(2) Community forest management has been documented as a sustainable livelihood initiative by Friends of the Earth International. For more information see their website: [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)

(3) For a more thorough analysis of the problems associated with agrofuel plantations see the Global Forest Coalition website at: [www.globalforestcoalition.org](http://www.globalforestcoalition.org)

(4) More information on transgenic trees is available at [www.wrm.org.uy](http://www.wrm.org.uy), [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org), [www.globalforestcoalition.org](http://www.globalforestcoalition.org)

For more information, contact:

Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement, Uruguay: (+598) 2 413 2989 [rcarrere@wrm.org.uy](mailto:rcarrere@wrm.org.uy)

Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition, Paraguay: [simonelovera@yahoo.com](mailto:simonelovera@yahoo.com) 595-21-663654/ 595-981-407375

Isaac Rojas, Friends of the Earth International, Costa Rica: (+506) 8338-3204, gavitza@ice.co.cr