

## **UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES STATEMENT ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AGENDA ITEM 4.5)**

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23 May 2008, CBD 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties, Bonn, Germany**

For indigenous peoples, the inextricable link between biodiversity and climate change is unquestionable. Therefore, we welcome the inclusion of this in the CBD Agenda Items. We also thank the CBD Secretariat for the reports they made on the links between biodiversity and climate change.

The need to show these links was one reason why the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues adopted the theme "Climate Change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: The stewardship role of Indigenous Peoples" in its 7<sup>th</sup> Session which was held from April 23-May 2, 2008. In this session we prepared a Special Report which looked into the "Impact of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples and on their territories and lands".<sup>1</sup> This report established that indigenous peoples are among those who contributed the least to the climate change crisis because of their traditional livelihoods and sustainable lifestyles. Yet, they are the ones who are suffered and continue to suffer the worst impacts of climate change. They were the ones who made the first clarion call on climate change as they felt the impacts of this on their lands and waters. The indigenous peoples of the Arctic witnessed the unprecedented thawing of permafrost and the melting of their glaciers 30 years ago, even before the world talked about climate change.

Indigenous peoples have demonstrated their resilience and their capacity to adapt to changes happening in their communities and they have accumulated substantial experiences and knowledge in this process. They are the ones who also have contributed significantly in keeping the carbon under the ground because of their struggles to stop oil, gas and mineral exploitation. They save the the carbon in the trees because of their fights against loggers and deforesters. Thus, their contributions to lowering greenhouse gas can reach hundreds of gigatons which can be much more compared to what has been achieved from the mitigation measures undertaken under the Kyoto Protocol. Unfortunately, these contributions are not counted and indigenous peoples are not even rewarded for this. Albeit, they are arrested and tortured and even killed because of their resistance to the wanton exploitation of the last remaining resources of the earth.

What adds insult to injury is that, indigenous peoples do not only suffer from climate change impacts but also from the effects of climate change mitigation measures which are mainly market-based mechanisms. The establishment of carbon sinks, emissions trading, the expansion of biofuel plantations, the building of more mega-hydroelectric dams and geothermal dams,

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<sup>1</sup> See UN Doc. E/C.19/2008/10, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Aqaaluk Lyngé. *Impact of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples and on their Territories and Lands*. 20 March 2008. This with the Final Report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues can be downloaded from [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii) or from [www.tebtebba.org](http://www.tebtebba.org).

which are considered renewable energy sources, are now having disastrous impacts for indigenous peoples. These include, massive land grabs of indigenous lands, displacement from their traditional territories, erosion of their biodiversity and traditional knowledge, undermining of cultural diversity and the destruction of their traditional livelihoods. We were able to document various cases of human rights violations of indigenous individuals including arbitrary arrests and killing of indigenous activists and leaders who are refuse to leave their territories which are carved to be carbon sinks.

We also receive reports that indigenous peoples whose lands are disappearing because of the rising seawaters and massive erosion of their lands have not received a single cent from the governments nor from the Adaptation Fund of the Climate Change Convention. We now see a phenomenon called environmental refugees, many of which are indigenous peoples, who are forced to leave their sinking islands, such as the Cateret people of Bougainville. Countries like Australia are still discussing whether they will accept the Cateret in the country or not. We have seen videos of whole Inuit communities disappearing in Alaska, because of the erosion of their lands as a result of the melting of the sea ice. We received reports from the pastoralists in Africa who are now increasingly being deprived of grazing lands for their cattle because of the call to increase protected areas, many of which are their traditional lands. These protected areas are now being included as carbon sinks. In 2006, we presented a report<sup>2</sup> on how expansion of oil palm plantations for biofuels in Indonesia and Malaysia are leading towards displacement of the Dayak peoples from their own traditional forests and lands.

On the basis of the reports we made and the statements from indigenous peoples, UN bodies and States, we came up with recommendations on how to address some of these. I would like to present some of these.

We regret that the participation of indigenous peoples in the UNFCCC processes is very inadequate compared to how it has been in the CBD. We called on the UNFCCC to establish a working group on local adaptation measures and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples so that the contributions of indigenous peoples can be presented and further strengthened. We believe that their contributions in mitigating climate change and the knowledge that they possess related to their resilience and adaptation to climate change should be included in the debates here in the CBD as well as the UNFCCC. They are the ones who can substantially link climate change and biodiversity as this is what their experiences, worldview and science tells them.

We are urging indigenous peoples to document their experiences in terms of their resilience, the adaptation and mitigation measures they themselves are taking and their traditional knowledge. These reports will be compiled by the Forum to be submitted to the UNFCCC. These will include reports on how climate change is affecting their bio-cultural diversity as well as how they are using their biodiversity and traditional knowledge to cope with climate change. For instance their efforts to

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<sup>2</sup> See UN Document E/C.19/2007/CRP.6. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Parshuram Tamang, *Oil Palm and other Commercial Tree Plantations, Monocropping: Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' Land Tenure and Resource Management Systems and Livelihoods.*, May 7, 2007. UN Document E/C.19/2007/CRP.6. Download from [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii) or [www.tebtebba.org](http://www.tebtebba.org).

develop crops which can be used for areas subjected to droughts, floods and soils which became sandy or which are destroyed from salt intrusion are precious contributions to biodiversity which should be documented.

Together with indigenous peoples, the Permanent Forum will help develop a roadmap of indigenous peoples from Bali to Copenhagen and beyond. This will integrate the human-rights based approach and the ecosystem approach in addressing the climate change crisis.

We also called on UN bodies like the UNU-Institute of Advanced Studies, university research centers and other relevant UN Bodies like the CBD, to conduct further studies on the impacts of climate change and climate change responses on indigenous peoples who are living in highly fragile ecosystems such as low-lying coastal areas, small-island states, semi-arid and arid lands tropical and sub-tropical forests and high mountain areas. These should be done jointly with indigenous peoples.

As far as REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) is concerned, we noted that the current framework for REDD is not supported by most indigenous peoples. This is because the design of present REDD proposals has not involved indigenous peoples, at all, and it reinforces centralized top down management of forests, undermine indigenous peoples' rights and benefits more the deforesters and loggers, rather than indigenous peoples and therefore can lead to further exclusion of indigenous peoples from their forests and the criminalization of their practice of their traditional livelihoods.

We believe if REDD is to benefit indigenous peoples there must be a thorough redesigning of it so that global and national policy reforms, guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, will take place which respects the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources. With the renewed political focus on forests stimulated by the current policy debates on REDD, the sustainable management of indigenous peoples of forests and their historical and continuing stewardship role in the conservation and sustainable use of forests should be brought in as an integral aspect of these debates. According to the right to self-determination and the principle of free, prior and informed consent, indigenous peoples must not be excluded, and should be centrally involved and benefit from forest policies and programs at all levels.

We support the work of the CBD in establishing the links between biodiversity and climate change and we are submitting to the CBD to final report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum and related special reports on climate change and indigenous peoples for your consideration.

We welcome the initiatives of indigenous peoples to organize regional summits on "Climate change and indigenous peoples" which will converge into a Global Summit on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change, which will be held in Alaska in April 2009. The results of these conferences will be submitted to the COP in 2010 and the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Thank you.