

Indigenous Peoples Condemn Climate Talks Fiasco and Demand Moratoria on REDD+

by Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities against REDD and for Life
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Indigenous leaders returning from Durban, South Africa condemn the fiasco of the United Nations climate change talks and demand a moratorium on a forest carbon offset scheme called REDD+ which they say threatens the future of humanity and Indigenous Peoples' very survival. During the UN climate negotiations, a Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities against REDD+ and for Life was formed to bring attention to the lack of full recognition of Indigenous rights being problematic in the texts of the UN climate negotiations.

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It was very disappointing that our efforts to strengthen the vague Indigenous rights REDD safeguards from the Cancun Agreements evaporated as the Durban UN negotiations went on. It is clear that the focus was not on strong, binding commitments on Indigenous rights and safeguards, nor limiting emissions, but on creating a framework for financing and carbon markets, which they did. Now Indigenous Peoples' forests may really be up for grabs," says Alberto Saldamando, legal counsel participating in the Indigenous Environmental Network delegation.

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Berenice Sanchez of the Mesoamerica Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network says, "Instead of cutting greenhouse gas emissions 80% like we need, the UN is promoting false solutions to climate change like carbon trading and offsets, through the Clean Development Mechanism and the proposed REDD+ which provide polluters with permits to pollute. The UN climate negotiation is not about saving the climate, it is about privatization of forests, agriculture and the air."

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Tom Goldtooth, Director of Indigenous Environmental Network based in Minnesota, USA does not mince words. "By refusing to take immediate binding action to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gas emissions, industrialized countries like the United States and Canada are essentially incinerating Africa and drowning the small island states of the Pacific. The sea ice of the Inupiat, Yupik and Inuit of the Arctic is melting right before their eyes, creating a forced choice to adapt or perish. This constitutes climate racism, ecocide and genocide of an unprecedented scale."

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Of particular concern for indigenous peoples is a forest offset scheme known as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). Hyped as a way of saving the climate and paying communities to take care of forests as sponges for Northern pollution, REDD+ is rife with fundamental flaws that make it little more than a green mask for more pollution and the expansion of monoculture tree plantations. The Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities against REDD+ and for Life, formed at the Durban UN climate negotiations, call for an immediate moratorium on REDD+-type projects because they fear that REDD+ could result in "the biggest land grab of all time," thus threatening the very survival of indigenous peoples and local communities.

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"At Durban, CDM and REDD carbon and emission offset regimes were prioritized, not emission reductions. All I saw was the UN, World Bank, industrialized countries and private investors marketing solutions to market pollution. This is unacceptable. The solutions for climate change must not be placed in the hands of financiers and corporate polluters. I

fear that local communities could increasingly become the victims of carbon cowboys, without adequate and binding mechanisms to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples and local forested and agricultural communities are respected," Goldtooth added.

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"We call for an immediate moratorium on REDD+-type policies and projects because REDD is a monster that is already violating our rights and destroying our forests," Monica González of the Kukapa People and Head of Indigenous Issues of the Mexican human rights organization Comision Ciudadana de Derechos Humanos del Noreste.

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The President of the Ogiek Council of Elders of the Mau Forest of Kenya, Joseph K. Towett, said "We support the moratorium because anything that hurts our cousins, hurts us all."

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"We will not allow our sacred Amazon rainforest to be turned into a carbon dump. REDD is a hypocrisy that does not stop global warming," said Marlon Santi, leader of the Kichwa community of Sarayaku, Ecuador and long time participant of UN and climate change meetings.

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