



**Communities Resist Land Grabbing and  
 Tree Plantations  
 2021 Climate Summit will Cause More of Both!**



Indigenous Tupinikim recovering their land, in Brazil.

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*The articles in this Bulletin are written by the following organizations and individuals:*

*Two Tupinikim indigenous leaders from Brazil; SUHODE Foundation, Tanzania; four activist women from Brazil who from different spaces are related to the articulation "Agro é Fogo" (Agribusiness is Fire); declaration and sharing of experiences from the Mesoamerican Network Against Oil Palm; and from Mozambique contribute ADECRU - Acção Académica Para O Desenvolvimento Das Comunidades Rurais, JA! - Justiça Ambiental/Friends of the Earth – Mozambique, AJOCME - Associação de Jovens Combatentes Montes Errego, and Missão Tabita*

# **Communities Resist Land Grabbing and Tree Plantations 2021 Climate Summit will Cause More of Both!**

## **Our Viewpoint**

### **The latest UN Land-Grabbing Summit**

**The UN Land-Grabbing Summit in Glasgow made it once again clear that these spaces will never advance the already existing solutions to the climate crisis. Its agenda is pre-established by those in power seeking for more profits. In light of this new 'climate package', let's mobilize in solidarity with communities and groups resisting the real drivers of the climate chaos.**

World leaders have spent 26 years discussing and negotiating so-called climate policies that clearly have made the climate instability worst. The reality throughout these years of increasing deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions shows that the common ground of most international climate policies has been to ensure that fossil fuels keep feeding an economic model that benefit the rich and powerful. An economic model that thrives on accumulating land, labour and resources. And year after year it becomes more evident that these Summits have little to do with the climate. They should be called UN Summits for Profiteers or UN Land-Grabbing Summits.

This year has not been any different. The fossil fuel industry, together with its corporate and political allies and financial institutions, mostly from the global North, achieved in having so-called 'nature-based solutions' and 'net-zero' emissions included into drafts of the Summit's final Declaration (1).

Before unpacking some of the threats that these concepts represent for forest-dependant and peasant populations, it is critical to underline that at least 503 fossil fuel lobbyists accessed and influenced the latest UN Land-Grabbing Summit in Glasgow. Analysis from several NGOs found out that if the fossil fuel lobby were a country delegation, it would be the largest one. And their analysis did not look at other polluting industries like agribusiness, finance or transportation. (2) Indeed, a UN Summit of Profiteers.

#### **A Climate Deal for More Offsets, Tree Plantations and Land Grabs**

The inclusion of seductive terms like 'nature-based solutions' (NBS) and 'net-zero' are concealing what in reality are open doors for governments and corporations to keep on polluting, based on the fantasy of balancing out their emissions with offsets and techno-fixes.

These open doors will fuel even further the grabbing of lands and forests as carbon offsets. Territories of Indigenous Peoples', forest-dependent, peasant and traditional communities' will be closed off as carbon stores for corporate 'net-zero' claims and NBS.

The term 'net zero' essentially allows governments and corporations to not reduce emissions and, hence, to move the burden to future generations. [This idea is not new though](#). It has appeared throughout the history of these Summits with different terminology, such as the Clean Development Mechanism or REDD+. Already, oil companies, retailers, giant agribusiness and airline companies offer allegedly 'carbon neutral' products and services that have caused or can cause 'net zero' emissions. Everyone could become 'net zero', while

fossil fuel burning continues. In consequence, the term is completely meaningless as a climate policy. Who benefits from these terminologies are profiteers who want to clean their image and keep their destructive business model alive. The common purpose of these terms and policies is delaying an end to fossil fuel burning and deferring the problem to somebody else to deal with on somebody else's land. 'Net zero' and 'nature-based solutions' are but a continuation of this catastrophic process.

WRM [released a bulletin](#) earlier this year alerting on what we prefer to call 'nature-based solutions dispossessions.' From promoting industrial tree plantations to enclosing more forests as conservation areas without people, these so-called climate policies seriously increase the threat of land grabbing and violence for communities living in and around these areas. Last year, in 2020, during the UN Land-Grabbing Summit, big polluters like Shell, Total and BP, in tandem with big conservationist groups like Conservation International, [launched an initiative to promote these NBS land grabs](#). This year, the term 'nature-based solutions' already made it into drafts of the final UN Summit agreement.

On top of this, these already empty pledges and commitments are only voluntary and there are no legally binding instruments nor legal consequences for not abiding these.

### **More Money Pledged to 'Save the Forests'... or to Privatize Them?**

During the UN Land-Grabbing Summit this November 2021, more than 100 governments signed on to the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use. (3) Although it was announced as a new international commitment to save the forests, these are not new at all. The 2014 New York Declaration already promised to cut deforestation by 50% by 2020 and end it by 2030. Since then, deforestation has just continued to rise. And, of course, there is REDD+. Introduced in 2005 and for which many decisions have been adopted at the UN Land Grabbing Summits, millions of dollars have been spent to get countries 'ready for REDD'. But REDD+ has also completely failed to address deforestation. Even worse, it is largely used as an offset mechanism, meaning that even if emissions from deforestation were reduced, any reduction would be cancelled out by continued emissions from burning fossil fuels. (4)

Furthermore, 12 northern countries have pledged to provide US12 billion dollars of climate finance from 2021 to 2025 to a new Global Forest Finance Pledge. The announcement declares that they will use their public climate finance "to leverage vital funding from private sources to deliver change at scale." (5) Besides, US1.5 million dollars were pledged by 12 northern countries (including the European Union) and the Bezos Earth Fund (from the owner of retail giant Amazon) for protecting Congo Basin forests. This last pledge states that they "intend to build on this in subsequent years, by seeking increased finance and investment from a wide variety of public and private sources while also improving coordination, effectiveness and accessibility." (6)

What are the interests behind these pledges? What are these 'donors' expecting in return? The millions of dollars mobilized largely serve as investments for which donors (or better said, investors) are hoping to not only meet their 'net zero' emissions targets but also to generate high returns. These finance pledges try to make us believe that pushing more money into forests could stop deforestation. Yet, more money means more vested interests and more imposition of governments and corporations' agendas onto forest peoples' territories. This, in turn, means more land grabs and violence. We have seen how more

'climate finance' can easily mean the expansion of monoculture tree plantations (which under UN rules are counted as 'forests'), conservation areas without people, renewable energies including biomass (energy from wood pellets), unproven techno-fixes, and other schemes that only fundamentally harm forest communities and their life spaces.

UN Land-Grabbing Summits will never advance the already existing solutions to address the climate crisis. Its agenda is pre-established by those in power and by those seeking to obtain more profits.

In light of this new 'climate package' full of more land grabbing threats, let's mobilize and organize our energies and activism by actively standing in solidarity with communities and groups resisting the real drivers of the climate chaos.

*The WRM international Secretariat*

**Sign the declaration, [NO to "Nature-Based Solutions"!](#) It remains open for sign-on until the end of 2021**

- (1) UNFCCC, Draft COP decision proposed by the President, November 2021, [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Overarching\\_decision\\_1-CP-26.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Overarching_decision_1-CP-26.pdf)
- (2) Corporate Europe Observatory, Hundreds of fossil fuel lobbyists flooding COP26 climate talks, November 2021, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/11/hundreds-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-flooding-cop26-climate-talks>
- (3) UN Climate Change Conference, Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, November 2021, <https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/>
- (4) REDD-Monitor, The Glasgow Declaration on Forests is far from "unprecedented". It's just another in a long line of meaningless UN declarations, November 2021, <https://redd-monitor.org/2021/11/03/the-glasgow-declaration-on-forests-is-far-from-unprecedented-its-just-another-in-a-long-line-of-meaningless-un-declarations/>
- (5) UN Climate Change Conference, The Global Forest Finance Pledge, November 2021, <https://ukcop26.org/the-global-forest-finance-pledge/>
- (6) UN Climate Change Conference, COP26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement, November 2021, <https://ukcop26.org/cop26-congo-basin-joint-donor-statement/>

## **Learnings of Tupinikim Indigenous Leaders from Brazil about the Recovery of their Territories: A Struggle Lasting More than 40 Years**

**Tupinikim indigenous leaders from Brazil share the experience of their people in the struggle against one of the largest eucalyptus plantation and pulp production companies in the world, Aracruz Celulose – currently named Suzano Papel e Celulose. They share the lessons of a struggle during which these Indigenous People recovered 18,070 hectares of land.**

This is the first article in a series about the experience of communities that have taken back territories that had been invaded by monoculture tree plantations. In this article, two Tupinikim indigenous leaders from Brazil report on the experience of their people in the struggle against one of the largest eucalyptus plantation and pulp production companies in the world, Aracruz Celulose – currently named Suzano Papel e Celulose. They talk about the main learnings, challenges and difficulties.

In 1500 when the invasion of Brazil by the Portuguese colonizers began, the Tupinikim inhabited a stretch of thousands of kilometers along the Brazilian coast, from the Northeast to the South of the country. After centuries of confrontations, genocide and massacres, in the 1960s there remained only a small territory in the municipality now called Aracruz in the north of Espírito Santo state. They lived in 40 villages in an area of Atlantic forest. It was at that time that a group of indigenous Guarani, migrating in search of the Land Without Ills, joined them.

In 1967, in the middle of the military dictatorship, Aracruz Celulose invaded this territory and destroyed almost all the indigenous villages, including the Macacos village, where later the complex of three Aracruz pulp mills would be built. The Tupinikim and the Guarani were confined to just three villages. As well as seizing the territory, Aracruz knocked down most of the forest in order to establish eucalyptus monoculture plantations.

What seemed like a fatal blow turned out to be the start of a struggle lasting more than 40 years, during which the Indigenous Peoples in question recovered 18,070 hectares of land in three stages. The federal government recognized and demarcated 4,492 hectares in 1981, 2,568 hectares in 1998 and, lastly, another 11,000 hectares in 2007 as the Tupinikim-Guarani Indigenous land.

For this to happen, the Indigenous Peoples had to put pressure on the government to ensure the right of the Tupinikim-Guarani to the lands traditionally occupied, as provided for in the Brazilian Constitution. To this end, in 1980, 1998 and 2005, the Tupinikim and the Guarani used the tactic they call “self-demarcation”. On the basis of lands previously identified by a technical group appointed by the federal government in conjunction with the communities, Indigenous People chopped down Aracruz’s eucalyptus trees to delimit their territory on their own account.

Despite violent actions by the police and Aracruz, which destroyed villages that had been rebuilt in the indigenous areas retaken, and despite a racist campaign promoted by Aracruz alleging that the Tupinikim were not indigenous, the Tupinikim and the Guarani stood firm and continued to fight until the minister of justice signed the demarcation order officially recognizing their lands, in 2007.



But the struggle is not over yet. The anti-indigenous government of Jair Bolsonaro, in conjunction with other anti-indigenous forces, is now seeking to adopt the so-called “temporal framework” that suggests that indigenous lands can only be demarcated where Indigenous Peoples were present in 1988. This could result in the annulment of the demarcation of most of the Tupinikim and Guarani lands in Espírito Santo.

WRM talked to Deusdeia Tupinikim, a female leader of the Pau Brasil village, and Paulo Henrique, Tupinikim leader of the Caieiras Velhas village and coordinator of the Indigenous People’s organizations APOINME – which fights for the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Northeast Brazil plus the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo –, about the 40 years of struggle for the Tupinikim-Guarani land.

**WRM: In this 40-year struggle you had three moments of self-demarcation of the territory. How did this struggle begin and what is self-demarcation?**

**Paulo:** First I’d like to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you and pass on a little of what we did to other communities that are facing this challenge of taking back their territory. Here in Brazil, the struggle for land is still a bottleneck and a challenge for many peoples, communities and social movements. We managed, though we know that these 18,070 hectares are not the full territory, but rather what was demanded at the time by the leadership from FUNAI [government agency for indigenous affairs] and was considered the minimum sufficient for the physical and cultural reproduction of the Indigenous Peoples here in the region. At the time of the first struggle, I was still a child. I took part a little in the second one, and in the third I participated more intensely.

In order to start a fight for land, the main thing is knowing what you want and having concrete proof, so that you can enter the struggle with some grounding. We had historical documents proving our traditional occupation of the territory, including a document of 1610 that shows that the Portuguese Crown had donated a *sesmaria* to the Tupinikim, in the lands later invaded by Aracruz Florestal.

We self-demarcated three times, in 1980, 1998 and 2005. This means demarcating our territory ourselves. At each moment that we did that, we knew that we had to do something, to head into the struggle, because the government had paralyzed, had filed away our suit. We had to force the government for them to take up again the suit and recognize and demarcate our territory. We did the self-demarcation with all the communities participating.

**Deusdeia:** We went into the fight for land because for us the question of water was very important: the shoals, the water sources, the springs. We also started to identify and set aside some lands for nature to have the freedom to come back. We also needed more space because today, just here in the Pau Brasil village, we have more than 200 families. So our biggest dream was to have this space for our children and grandchildren to be able to build their homes, have the freedom to go out, have the freedom to go fishing, the freedom to farm and to look after the environment, because up until then, Aracruz used to plant eucalyptus even in valleys, on the banks of rivers and streams, and even in them. Owing to our fight, several streams in places where there is no longer any eucalyptus have started to come back.

**WRM: What were the main lessons you drew from such a long struggle?**

**Paulo:** The first lesson I draw is that nothing is impossible. We fought against a multinational corporation. We were heavily criticized, we suffered retaliations on the part of the government, we suffered persecutions, prejudice and discriminations, but we didn't lower our heads.

The second lesson is the unity of the peoples, leaving aside the differences that exist between some, coming together to fight against a bigger enemy, which at that occasion was Aracruz Celulose. And nobody was bigger or smaller, we were all on the same boat. If you took a bullet, everyone would take a bullet, if one could eat, everyone would eat. This equality was very important.

The third lesson is the importance of having a single objective. Our objective was the conquest of the territory and at no time did we deviate from this objective. We could draw up different plans to reach our objective, but the objective was clear and only one.

**Deusdeia:** This struggle was a major learning process and over the years we grew, we saw how we could improve the fight. Each fight we had, the chiefs together with the communities had more knowledge of the laws, of how we could come together and strategize. The struggles of 1998 and 2005 left their mark on me because it was when we, women, got involved as well.

**WRM: What were the challenges for indigenous women entering this fight? How did you find the courage to be there at the occupation, with the men?**

**Deusdeia:** I remember when we gathered [on the first day of the self-demarcation in 2005, when the police was coming], when the chiefs and leaders, for whom I have much respect, said that whoever wanted to go home should go home, and that they were going to stay until the end. There were many of us. What made us take the attitude of not leaving the chiefs alone, I don't know. I think our god Tupã, he encouraged us very much, to be courageous together with our leaders. And when you're sure that that thing [the land] is mine, you go ahead unafraid of making a mistake. So, that was when we women said we've come here and that we were only going to leave with everyone else when we conquered the land.

I remember when we occupied Aracruz's factory, we the women and children stayed more toward the front. They said that the men were not harmed because of the presence of the women and children, and that strengthened us as women. In all the actions, we were there, with our bows and arrows, with our headdresses, and when we'd put ourselves in front we could see that they [the police] would not fight us. When they got to Olho d'Água with that tractor to destroy the village, the prayer house, we weren't there at the time.

Even to this day, in the meetings in the communities, we have a voice, and we speak. And this strengthened women. What used to happen in times gone by, of women staying in the background, today doesn't happen any more. Today we are side by side, here in the struggle. And if we have to fight again, I'm sure to be there if I can. Those youngsters that traveled to Brasília now to fight against the "temporal framework", they sent me messages: "look, woman, you're a warrior, we are here because we were inspired by you". This to me is an honor, to know that from our struggle – not just mine, but the struggle of many women, some of whom have already left us, while others remain in struggle – the youth of today take inspiration.

**WRM: What were the main challenges and difficulties you faced in this struggle?**

**Paulo:** The main challenge to start the last fight in 2005 was getting it into our heads that the territory was more important than an agreement that had been reached in 1998 with Aracruz Celulose. The leaders, the communities, they were attached to this agreement that demarcated a piece of our territory and gave money and some other benefits to the communities, and in return left much of our lands in the hands of Aracruz. It was a huge challenge and I felt it directly because I was one of the few to question the agreement. But we did the work of talking to people in the communities until we got leaders in all the communities that understood that our fight was for the territory.

Another challenge, related to this agreement, was to detach ourselves from the things we'd achieved in 1998. They were places in university, agriculture projects, money sent to families from the sale of eucalyptus planted on indigenous lands for Aracruz Celulose – to let go of all that and go forth to the struggle for the territory. We were very much criticized, people said we were destroying everything, that there would be nothing else, but we remained firm and managed to show that the territory was extremely important.

This led to an even bigger challenge, which was to bring together all the communities to be able to start the fight. We held a general meeting and, above all else, the speeches made by the elders were extremely important because they managed to show people the importance of the struggle for land, and then we managed to bring everyone together and convince all the communities to join in this fight.

Of course we had many other challenges. I remember right in the middle of the struggle people saying: “Why are we here, fighting for this land? Let's leave them with Aracruz and live off the money made with eucalyptus” and trying to influence people's minds to give up. So we had to work constantly to raise the community's awareness about being together with the leadership in the struggle.

Another challenge was in January 2006, when the police invaded our territory (retaken) and took down our Olho d'Água village that we had rebuilt. I remember being the first to get there, trying to talk to the police commander who was heading the group, for him not to do that and trying to mediate. In the end there was all that violence that happened there. But we are indians, we are stubborn and we went there and rebuilt Olho d'Água once again and there it is nowadays, thank god.

**WRM: It was in this last demarcation that you not only demarcated the territory, but decided to occupy it, rebuilding some of the old, defunct villages like Olho d'Água. Why did you think it was important to occupy the territory?**

**Deusdeia:** According to our elders, there were about 40 indigenous villages before the company got here. When we started the struggle, we went round with the elders, like Mr. Antonino from my village. He took us to where he lived before, Cantagalo village. Back when he lived there, there was a big river, and for this reason we found an immense amount of oyster shells. Those shells were like our identity that was there, showing the place had been home to Indigenous People. Nowadays there is no more eucalyptus there, fortunately.



When we decided to take possession of this territory, it was for the world to see these defunct villages, to see this big territory that belongs to Indigenous Peoples, and when these villages were rescued, such as the case of Olho d'Água, there is a history. I talk about Olho d'Água like a child asking for help. Because when eucalyptus was planted there, that little spring [olho d'água in Portuguese] never dried up, it continued alive, but crying out for help. Even with the eucalyptus plantation, it did not fall silent. The rescue of that village was like a dream.

**Paulo:** Even though unrecognizable in the eyes of some, those old villages in the eyes of the indigenous elders were not unrecognizable. They had an intimate relation with that space. So it was important to rebuild them in order to be able to restart the occupation of the territory. In other words, demarcating is not the only important thing. We decided to occupy to be able to show that we weren't only fighting for land, but fighting for our sacred spaces, where our ancestors lived. A third point is that the three villages we rebuilt, Areal, Olho d'Água and Córrego d'Ouro, were strategic points within the retaken territory for us to maintain surveillance, the monitoring of our space, for us to know who was entering and leaving our territory.

**WRM: Was there a learning process over the course of this 40-year struggle?**

**Paulo:** Yes, and I'd like to stress that between one demarcation and the next, there were processes of co-option of leaders who were at the forefront of the struggle, especially in the period of 1998 to 2005 that I followed more closely. Because I think that we had the conditions at that moment, in 1998, to have concluded the demarcation of the territory. But unfortunately, during the self-demarcation, the leaders were pressured and taken to Brasília, they were co-opted and decided to accept an agreement exchanging land for money and stopping the fight. But in 2005, we decided to take the struggle up again because we felt that the land was more important than money. This is why I talk about the importance of the objective and that it has to be common to all. We learned a lot from that, the struggle for land was like a school that equipped us for other fights. And our struggle is not over yet. It will continue because there are new threats to our territory.

**WRM: In what way does the struggle for land have to do with the fight to rescue and strengthen the Tupinikim cultural identity?**

**Paulo:** The struggle for land is part of this struggle to rescue our culture. Firstly because it is traditional Tupinikim land, but above all, I wanted to say that the demarcation of indigenous territory should be seen by our peoples as their main fight and by our rulers as the main public policy for the Indigenous Peoples. This is because the territory is the beginning of everything. If I don't have the territory guaranteed, I don't have education, quality health care, I don't have an environment that ensures my survival, my subsistence, I won't have space for my traditional practices. So when we demarcated, occupied and rebuilt the villages for us to be able to have our practices, our rituals and ceremonies, it is because our indigenous territory provides this possibility. We need to have this relation with the land, with the elements of nature.

**Deusdeia:** When we started this fight to re-conquer the territory, there also started growing a wish to have our own indigenous education, with our educators, and to recover our language. We met a professor from São Paulo called Navarro, who does this work, with different peoples, of language rescue, and we managed to meet an indian of the Potiguara people,

who rescued the language, similar to ours, and today it already is the mother tongue of this people. We managed to bring these people here and have classes with them. Our older folk also helped because they knew words here and there. We started doing research about the language and my grandmother at the time first said that she wasn't going to tell us what the language was like in the past because she didn't want to happen to us what had happened to her. She married a non-indigenous person who used to hit her to make her speak 'properly'. That was sexism trying to shut women up for them not to speak their language. But we managed to write down these loose words of hers. Then there arose the need to take this rescue to our classrooms, with indigenous students and teachers. All of this was a major advance and it took place at the same time as the struggle for land.

**WRM: During the last struggle, from 2005 to 2007, Aracruz launched a racist campaign saying that you weren't Tupinikim, suggesting that you were not indigenous. What was the impact of this for you and for the struggle?**

**Deusdeia:** Aracruz tried everything to show the government, the world, that we weren't from here, and also that we weren't indigenous. But this didn't intimidate us because we were sure we are from this territory. Our certainty comes from the stories of the elders. We were very firm in our stories. We really questioned the company and continued to fight. For example, in 2006 we occupied the company's factories. Nothing could harm us in there, on the contrary. We sat down there with children, with women, even the elderly were there. And when we'd leave and go to a confrontation, we were sure we wouldn't die, but that we were going to a conquest. And Aracruz kept bringing its reports, and we were always sure, with our feet on the ground, that this mother earth, it was there sustaining us and that our children's children would be buried in the ground here.

**Paulo:** I remember once going into Aracruz, the town, to do some shopping at the supermarket, I had my body painted and my daughter too – this in fact was some time after the struggle, but just for you to see how this still reverberated in people's minds here in the municipality. I was in line to buy meat among other people, but nobody wanted to take my order. I said: "just because I'm an indian, just because I'm painted, nobody wants to serve me?" I gathered my things and left. Many things like that happened. There were kids going to school outside of the village, and if they were painted they weren't allowed in, they'd send the kids home because they were indians. We also suffered persecution and criminalization for fighting in defense of our territory. One time, a leader was followed by an armed security guard at the service of Aracruz. Me and another leader confronted and disarmed him, then handed the gun over to FUNAI. Also, we had to go to court, we were sued for theft of a vehicle, conspiracy, kidnapping etc, as if we were the criminals, while this security guard could have killed our leader in the middle of the highway.

All of this discrimination and persecution lasted for a long time after the fight was over because Aracruz had fomented it, that we were here to invade land, to take over the whole municipality, that we were even going to invade people's homes, that was how people used to talk about us and started to feel revulsion against us. This generated a very bad, embarrassing situation. Our children went as far as saying that they didn't want to be indians. But we were able to overcome it, to work things through among ourselves and here we are, to be able to show that we are a resistant people, that we don't run away from a fight. They didn't manage to break our resistance, because we were determined in our objective and this objective we kept until the end.

**WRM: What were relations like with supporters of the struggle, and why were these supporters important?**

**Deusdeia:** The importance of supporters was great, because they believed, because they were committed to us. They were organizations, movements, other communities, professors, students and also some politicians. They helped a lot in revealing to the world that the indians aren't lying, that they originate here. Together we produced brochures about us and our struggle that were sent across the country and abroad, and this made the support grow. Our conquest came about also because of the support from outside Brazil that reinforced the repudiation of Aracruz. Even though Aracruz had a lot of money, much power, its money did not silence us, it didn't manage to buy off people and organizations in the countries that bought their product, and they joined us. This was a major victory for us. We confronted the company from the edges and when it noticed, it was already being surrounded by our supporters from the outside and by us with the mobilization inside the communities. If it hadn't been for these supporters I believe we still would have conquered the land, but it would have taken longer.

**Paulo:** People were touched by our fight, by the fight of Indigenous People, they were crucial, those who decided to join the fight with us and at no time to give up. And this goes to show the importance of networking, that a big fight like this one we had here we can't win alone, but requires people and organizations in Brazil and outside Brazil that are on our side to be able to achieve what we wanted.

**WRM: What would you say to other communities that want to start fighting to take back their territory? What is important to take care of and what is best avoided?**

**Paulo:** Beyond the importance going into the struggle with some grounding, of putting pressure as we did by doing our self-demarcation, it is extremely important also to be organized. It is no use wanting to go into a struggle when you're disorganized. You need to be organized. If you go in disorganized, your struggle will not be successful.

Another thing is that if it's more than one group, community or people, is to have a common objective. It is no use me wanting to go in with an objective of conquering a territory with the understanding that it is important for my survival, subsistence and existence, while others are wanting to go in with individual interests, of wanting to get rich, not interests that contribute to the future, the collective interests of communities. Because we know that there's a lot of that in our midst.

Last but not least, it is important to think about strategy. You need to have a strategy of struggle. How can you go into a fight without a strategy? When we started the self-demarcation we already had everything planned, agreed, we had a strategy.

**Deusdeia:** I think one of the first attitudes is unity. A union for me is one thing. Unity is another, it is something that mixes people and there's no way of separating them. It means everybody thinking the same, having a strategy, seeking support that truly helps in this organization of the community itself to demand its territory. It was through unity that we were able to organize ourselves and also rescue and strengthen our culture. We rescued much of our culture that had been lost, like our crafts and dances and the language, that I've already talked about.

We also need to unite with other communities. Today, all over Brazil, we are uniting to defend our territory, Indigenous Peoples, *quilombola* communities, riverine populations, the MST, against the discrimination and persecution of our communities. We must strengthen our identity like the MST does in its settlements. They prove their identity by planting the crops that go from their fields to people's tables, even to the tables of the rulers who want to take away their right to survive.

So you have to get organized, sit down with everyone and have a strategy, take care. For example, not letting outsiders go into the community and grab someone, no. You have to say who you're going to talk to, that was how we organized ourselves as well. Even in this regard we have to have strategy, we have to be careful. But with wisdom, and with the traditional knowledge of each people, we can make the struggle grow even more.

**WRM: If the Bolsonaro government manages to impose the “temporal framework”, and this might imply losing part of your territory, are the Tupinikim and the Guarani going to surrender their lands?**

**Paulo:** We are not going to surrender our lands, we're going to fight, we're going to die until the last indigenous person, because it's our land, our territory, and we're going to defend it at any cost, nobody can take it away from us.

## Local Communities in Tanzania Continue to Face Problems Brought by Green Resources' Tree Plantations

**Green Resources Tanzania Limited (GRL) is branding itself as a leading company in East Africa. It claims to offer solutions to climate change through planting monoculture trees. This wrong and misleading claim hides the reality on the ground. GRL is causing land grabbing, deforestation, destruction of grasslands and much social harm.**

My name is Frank Luvanda, born, raised and living in Tanzania. I work at SUHODE Foundation, a small but active NGO working in addressing various environmental and social challenges that local communities face in this country. This article is an opportunity to expose to the rest of the world the dangers and evils that monoculture tree plantation companies in Tanzania inflict, in particular, the company Green Resources Tanzania Limited.

Green Resources is the biggest tree plantations company in the country, and also in the East Africa region, where the company controls an area of about 38,000 hectares of land. It is a Norwegian company, controlled by Norfund, the Norwegian governmental development institution, and Finnfund, the Finish governmental investment arm. Besides Tanzania, the company also has tree plantations in Mozambique and Uganda.

### Discourses and lies

In recent years, many communities in Tanzania have been experiencing challenges brought by climate change, such as increased temperatures, emergence of new crops and human diseases, excessive flooding, long drought seasons, unpredictable rain patterns, increased hostile weather events, sea level rise, inundation of smaller islands, among others. These climate change impacts bring other challenges, such as food insecurity, expansion of deserts, loss of water quantity and quality, loss of biodiversity in various ecosystems, among others. And all of these challenges heavily affect local communities, especially those depending on their lands for food and production of business crops in their respective localities.

On top of this challenging context, some multinational companies and funders have come up with so-called solutions to mitigate climate change by insisting on expanding monoculture tree plantations, especially in countries in the global South. After many years of testifying what these plantations look like on the territories and for communities living in and around these monocultures, I can firmly say that industrial monoculture plantations are NOT a solution to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. The solution can only be in leaving fossil fuels underground.

Green Resources Tanzania Limited (GRL) is branding itself in Tanzania as a leading company among other monoculture tree plantation companies in East Africa. It claims to offer solutions to the negative impacts of climate change through carbon sequestration by planting many hectares of monoculture trees!

This wrong and misleading claim hides the reality on the ground. By planting thousands of hectares of plantations with eucalyptus and pine trees, GRL is in fact causing many challenges to local communities and affecting the environment in general through land



grabbing, deforestation, destruction of grassland ecosystems and contribution to the loss of biodiversity.

### **Green Resources on the ground in Tanzania**

I recently visited twelve villages affected by the GRL's plantations, namely Mapanda, Kihanga, Nzivi, Idete, Mninga, Taweta, Uchindile, Ukami, Mgugwe, Mnyela, Chogo, and Igowole. It became evident to me that many communities in these villages experience serious problems, most of which have been caused GRL's grabbing their lands and resources.

Communities in the village of Idete are now experiencing land shortage due to GRL grabbing much of their land for its plantations.

GRL arrived at Idete in 1996 and acquired 14,000 acres (5,665 hectares), a land area known by communities as Farm 900, with full consent of the Idete communities. Few years later, GRL acquired other 12,000 acres (4,856 hectares), an area locally known as Farm 901. Local communities and the current Idete local government affirm that they don't understand how this was given to the company as there was no consultation made, and thus the acquisition must have been made illegally. Based on the communities' perspectives, GRL possession of Farm 901 is a dishonest grabbing of their fertile land, which has provoked much suffering due to the insufficient land that was left for them. According to many community voices, *"The land on Farm 901 was the fertile local community village land for their current and future uses but it is now under GRL illegally!"*

As a result, people are starving due to insufficient land for producing their crops, grazing their livestock, and other social and economic activities. Land related conflicts among local communities at Idete are increasing as people compete and fight for smaller pieces of lands. In order to escape from this, some communities have opted to move away and start a new life inside forests along the way to Makambako. Hence, for their survival, they have had to deforest these areas, which are well known as Miombo woodlands. Other community members from Idete have decided to return to Farm 901 to continue farming, claiming that GRL did not consulted nor compensated them and that they are ready to fight for their land! Many others are starting to feel encouraged to enter Farm 901, so that their voices and demands for that particular land that was grabbed from them could be heard.

Another vivid danger of the GRL operations in Tanzania is clearly visible at Ukami village. There GRL acquired 3,400 hectares of land offering, as usual, lots of promises, such as building a village government office, classrooms, health facilities, and creating employment to communities. Most of these promises have not been fully fulfilled. The current village government still cannot understand what was the basis for the former village government to offer such a huge area of land without reserving some land for communities to carry out their social-economic activities in their area. They suspect that corruption might have helped GRL to be able to acquire almost all the land of the Ukami village.

Local communities have started a campaign to demand back their land, which requires legal support from organizations supporting communities in their struggles against monoculture plantation companies. As of now, Ukami village experiences lots of serious challenges to survive. There is extremely insufficient land for agricultural activities and even for social needs such as burial sites, human settlements, among others. There are many land conflicts,

as well as food insecurity and children malnutrition. The SUHODE team asked them what they think would be the solution to their situation, and their response was *“to reclaim part of the land or the whole land”*.

In summary, out of 12 villages that we visited, only the villages of Chogo, Igowole, and Nzivi are somehow secure from the most serious challenges brought by GRL. The reason for this is that on these 3 villages, land is still available and sufficient. The Chogo village has still plenty of land which they said they will not dare to give it to GRL. This stand is the same for the the Nzivi and the Igowole villages. (1) Unfortunately, the rest of the villages are suffering a lot, they experience land shortages, increasing land conflicts between their local community members as they compete and fight over land, unfulfilled promises by GRL, increasing levels of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity, increased levels of poverty as most of their economic activities depend on the availability of land.

I take this opportunity to request and call upon people and organizations that share our vision and thinking on the destructive impacts of industrial monoculture tree plantations, to work together towards supporting community struggles and movements against the expansion of these plantations in Tanzania and other parts of the world!

In particular, we call upon the Norwegian and Finnish citizens and organizations to help us stop the destructive investment their governments are promoting in our countries!

(1) <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/tanzania-community-resistance-against-monoculture-tree-plantations/>

## **Agribusiness Means Fire: Land Grabs, Deforestation and Fires in the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal biomes**

**Forest fires and deforestation are tools to consolidate the land grabbing that goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of the capitalist agricultural frontier into the territories of indigenous peoples and traditional communities.**

*Five perspectives to understand the forest fires that have afflicted Brazil in recent years.*

In August 2019, landowners agreed among themselves to set fire to the Brazilian Amazon forest, specifically in the southwest of the state of Pará, in what became known as Fire Day. On the following year, more to the south, fires were started in cattle ranches that supply beef to major meat packing operations. (1) These spread quickly and burned 4.1 million hectares of the Pantanal, (2) an area of wetlands that crosses the border into Paraguay and Bolivia.

Over the last three years, socio-environmental devastation has been at the heart of the Brazilian public agenda, while we watch, astounded, as the government lies about the causes and about its own responsibility on the matter.

Data monitored by the National Institute of Space Research (INPE) indicate that in March 2019, Brazil had the largest number of fires in the historical series, started in 1998, totaling 5213 fires. April 2020 also beat the record for that month, with 4117 fires.

And this setting is not just a Brazilian reality. In 2020, the dynamic of fires across South America worsened, with the largest numbers since 1998 for the months of March (31,529), April (23,139) and May (15,070).

Beyond the satellite images and numbers about fires and deforestation, it is important to refine the debate: on the one hand, by raising the dimension of lived experience on the ground, in forest areas and other hinterlands; on the other, by pointing out what is behind the fire and the chainsaw, and its relation with agribusiness.

In this text, we present five perspectives considered fundamental in the articulation *Agro é Fogo* (Agribusiness means Fire), (3) a coalition of movements, organizations and social pastoral bodies that have worked for decades in defense of the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal biomes and their peoples and communities.

**1) Forest fires and deforestation are tools to consolidate the land grabbing that goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of the capitalist agricultural frontier into the territories of indigenous peoples and traditional communities.**

Deforestation and fires are usually addressed as problems merely of an environmental nature. However, deforestation operates as a tool of the private appropriation of land and, therefore, is concentrated in undesignated public lands, precisely the areas prone to land grabs. (4) It is the potential regularization of the area appropriated – through amnesties historically granted in Brazil to land grabbers and deforesters via various normative changes – that makes this process viable. Such changes were speeded up after the 2016 coup, and have become even more intense during the government of Jair Bolsonaro. (5)

All these areas of forest and other wilderness into which capital is trying to advance are territories belonging to countless indigenous peoples and traditional communities that inhabit and protect them. In many cases, they have not had their territorial rights recognized. Therefore, it is impossible to address the environmental question in Brazil decoupled from the agrarian and the land questions. On the contrary: in the light of this understanding, agrarian reform – including officializing traditional territories with deeds – becomes not just a question of ethics and rights, but also an ecological imperative.

**2) Agribusiness's chain of relations is global and there are shared responsibilities with regard to the devastation in the territories. However much market environmentalism tries to promote the greenwashing of the commodities that Brazil exports, the globalized agro-food system controlled by a few highly financialized transnational corporations is intrinsically unsustainable.**

Brazil's export economy is extremely dependent on agribusiness, which occupies spaces of power and controls a narrative of vigor. Every day on the country's largest television network, we watch ads saying "Agro is pop, agro is tech, agro is great!". For all the talk of technology, over the last few decades, agribusiness has expanded in production volume much more owing to the expansion of the agricultural frontier than to increased productivity. In this sense, modern agribusiness depends, as it always has done, on the invasion of public lands in order to establish its territory. It does so by means of the organized crime of land grabbing and the plunder of timber, with intense use of slave labor and grotesque fraud. (6) At the same time, in a vicious cycle, it maintains a relation of extreme dependence on the State, which, within this logic, always has to be at its service.

This chain of relations is global and connected to agro-industrial giants – from meat packers and grain processors to major laboratories, fertilizer and agro-chemical manufacturers, all the way to the exporters –, and leaves a large share of Brazilians in a situation of food insecurity, even though the country is one of the world's top agricultural producers. It is more and more diffuse and financialized, as in the case of the international pension funds (7) that invest in grabbed lands in the Brazilian Cerrado biome, obscuring their shared responsibilities. The trail of fire left behind by Brazilian agribusiness is global, and a critique of the unsustainability of the commodities that dominate the globalized agro-food system should also come from other parts of the world.

**3) The agribusiness chain has always used fire to conduct deforestation, land grabbing and territorial control, but with the *bolsonarista* additive there has been a greatly enhanced use of fire as a weapon to threaten and drive out peoples and communities from their living territories.**

Historically, fire has been used in these processes as a veritable weapon of territorial control against peoples and communities, seeking to expel them from their traditionally occupied lands. (8) However, there has been a clear intensification of attacks using fire along the frontlines of the *bolsonarista* project of destruction: president Bolsonaro encourages the illegalities perpetrated by his followers. The so-called Fire Day along the axis of highway BR-163 in August 2019 probably is the most flagrant expression of this, but not an isolated incident. In order to exemplify this, let us point out some cases in different regions of the country.

In the state of Piauí, in an area of Cerrado, (9) the Gamela Indigenous Land sits along the expanding agricultural frontier. The community has been suffering from the effects of several criminal fires set by land grabbing soya producers: in 2017 and 2020, houses were burned down, and in 2021, fences were destroyed, property removed, a warehouse belonging to a local family was set on fire and death threats were made.

In the center-west region of Brazil, along the old agricultural frontier between the Cerrado and the Pantanal, the overwhelming fires of 2020 burned more than 211,000 hectares of the Kadiwéu Indigenous Land, 39.15% of their territory. In the riverine community of Barra de São Lourenço, three families had to be rescued by the fire brigade and some 25 families spent days having to cope with muddy waters, full of ash.

In the so-called “Deforestation Arc”, an area of transition between the Cerrado and Amazon biomes, sits the Parque Indígena do Araguaia Indigenous Land in the state of Tocantins, where there reside 3500 members of the Avá-Canoeiro, Iny Karajá, Javaé and Tapirapé indigenous peoples, as well as isolated groups. This area was among the ten worst affected indigenous territories in the *Amazônia Legal* region by the fires of 2019. In 2020, this indigenous land had 8792 hotspots, and again in 2021, fires have destroyed what was left of the vegetation.

The forest fires are expressions of territorial conflicts. The reason we have some of the Pantanal, the Cerrado and the Amazon still standing is because indigenous peoples and traditional communities have fought tirelessly to hold on to their territories. And it is the management done by these peoples and communities that preserves the forests and multiplies their socio-biodiversity.

#### **4) Fire is an element of nature managed with wisdom and care by indigenous peoples and *quilombola*, traditional and peasant communities in the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal for millennia, an increasingly criminalized practice.**

Bolsonaro’s speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2020, during which he said that it is “the *caboclo* and the indian” that set fire to the forest, is obviously a cynical smokescreen to deflect attention from the origin of the criminal forest fires. The word *caboclo* was used by the president to refer to descendants of indigenous people. Even among those who stand in solidarity with the struggles of indigenous peoples and traditional communities, there is a lack of knowledge and some prejudice about *coivara* agriculture (or *roça de toco*) and other uses of fire in traditional systems. (10)

These systems are keepers of a sophisticated connection with millennia-old knowledge, developed and adapted by the ancestors of these peoples and communities. In this sense, they are part of the long-term management of agro-forest landscapes characterized precisely by high levels of biodiversity, as well as feeding and providing an income for thousands of families. Especially in the Cerrado, the management of biomass allows fires to be prevented. Such knowledge has been brought by indigenous members to forest fire brigades as part of programs from environmental agencies. (11) This whole wealth of knowledge must be valued and respected, rather than stigmatized and criminalized, as has been happening. They are uses of fire implemented with care and reverence for this element of nature, as opposed to the capitalist fire – directly or indirectly associated with the cycle of deforestation and land grabbing.



**5) The intensification of deforestation and forest fires in the last two years has to be understood as a common challenge in the defense of the Amazon, the Cerrado and the Pantanal biomes.**

Lastly, there is a socio-metabolic relation between the Amazon, the Cerrado and the Pantanal. The history of devastation of the Cerrado puts pressure on the expansion of the agricultural frontier toward the Pantanal and the Amazon. And the devastation of more than half of the Cerrado, especially on the plateaus where rivers have their sources – rivers that flow toward various hydrographic basins –, has everything to do with the water shortage in several regions of the country and with the low water level in the Pantanal flood plain. Let us not forget that the Paraguay River has its source in the Cerrado, floods the Pantanal and flows through other countries in the region.

In other words, the defense of the Amazon, the Cerrado and the Pantanal are connected. The *Agro é Fogo* coalition understands this and, therefore, is building a common fight. Now we are trying to enhance this dialogue with South American allies, since this socio-metabolic web obviously extends beyond Brazil's borders to other Amazonian countries, to the Chaco and to the Bosque Seco Chiquitano, where intense fires have also taken place in the wake of the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

*Diana Aguiar*, Social Sciences post-doctoral researcher in Development, Agriculture and Society (CPDA) of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), and advisor to the National Campaign in Defense of the Cerrado.

*Bárbara Dias*, executive secretary of the *Agro é Fogo* coalition and PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (MN/UFRJ).

*Carolina Motoki*, research coordinator of the *Agro é Fogo* coalition and advisor to the National Campaign to Prevent and Combat Slave Labor of the Pastoral Land Commission.

*Valéria Pereira Santos*, Pastoral Land Commission organizer for the Cerrado; holds a master's degree in People's Demands and Regional Dynamics from the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT).

(1) <https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2020/09/fogo-no-pantanal-mato-grossense-comecou-em-fazendas-de-pecuaristas-que-fornecem-para-gigantes-do-agronegocio/>

(2) <https://lisa.ufrj.br/noticias/area-queimada-pantanal-2020/>

(3) <http://www.agroefogo.org.br>

(4) For more on the relation between deforestation and land grabbing: <https://agroefogo.org.br/a-boiada-esta-passando-desmatar-para-grilar/>

(5) In this article there is a timeline showing how legislation has facilitated the actualization of land grabs: <https://agroefogo.org.br/presidencia-e-parlamento-a-servico-dos-grileiros-legislar-para-grilar/>

(6) About the relation between deforestation, land grabbing and slave labor, check the following articles: <https://agroefogo.org.br/trabalho-escravo-expropriacao-e-degradacao-ambiental-uma-conexao-visceral/> and <https://agroefogo.org.br/a-boiada-esta-passando-desmatar-para-grilar/>

(7) In these articles you can read about the relation between the State and agribusiness, and what this implies: <https://agroefogo.org.br/o-agronegocio-e-o-estado-brasileiro-quem-lucra-quando-a-boiada-passa/> and <https://agroefogo.org.br/ligacoes-perigosas-fundos-de-pensao-internacionais-queimadas-e-grilagens-no-matopiba/>

(8) In the *No Rastro do Fogo* section, you can follow the various conflicts systematized by the platform, where fire is used as a weapon to grab public lands, intimidate and expel traditional communities and peoples: <https://agroefogo.org.br/no-rastro-do-fogo-conflitos-territoriais/>

(9) In order to demonstrate more concretely the intensification of the use of fire as a weapon against the peoples and traditional communities of the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal in recent years, we resorted to the database on conflicts in the countryside of the Pastoral Land Commission and the territorial conflicts contained in the *Agro é Fogo* dossier.

(10) About fire management among traditional communities, see: <https://agroefogo.org.br/saberes-que-vem-de-longo-usos-tradicionais-do-fogo-no-cerrado-e-amazonia/>

(11) See: <https://apublica.org/2021/09/conhecimento-indigena-inova-estrategia-de-combate-a-incendios/>

## Mesoamerican Meeting of Communities Against Oil Palm

**One of the main causes of deforestation in Mesoamerica is the expansion of oil palm monoculture. An exchange of experiences brought together representatives from indigenous and peasant communities to analyze and discuss the consequences of this monoculture in communities and territories, as well as to coordinate their resistance.**

Oil palm is advancing upon Mesoamerica, the territory spanning Southern Mexico to Panama. This agribusiness industry is placing indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendent territories in dispute, leaving a toll of dispossession, violence, contamination, poverty and loss of food sovereignty in communities. Even though community resistance has managed to halt the advance of oil palm in some regions, its expansion continues to threaten the lives of peoples and communities.

In the process of oil palm expansion, which is backed by local and national governments, companies have made a number of promises (1) that never materialize, and which organized communities have loudly denounced (2). In response, companies create marketing strategies to hide their impacts in the territories and to present a green image to consumers of palm oil.

This is how “contracts,” or agreements with small producers, “corporate social responsibility” policies, and the promotion of “green seals” and “certificates”—such as those endorsed by the RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil)—came into being. They are new strategies to cover up the usual impacts.

Meanwhile, climate change is seen as a new opportunity for expansion. The use of industrial palm oil, originally intended for the cosmetics industry and for the production of ultra-processed foods, has also come to be promoted as an agrofuel and as a raw material in energy production; and plantations have come to be promoted as carbon sinks and reforestation projects. All of this is reflected in the increase in the area of territories under palm monoculture; meanwhile the true causes of climate change—such as the use of fossil fuels—are not addressed.

This is the reality for many peoples and communities in Mesoamerica. There are more than 190,000 hectares of oil palm planted in Honduras, distributed throughout the departments of Cortés, Yoro, Atlántida and Colón. In Guatemala, the 171,000 hectares of oil palm are found mostly in the areas of Petén, Ixcán, Escuintla and Huehuetenango. And in Mexico there are more than 90,000 hectares, located mainly in the states of Chiapas, Tabasco and Campeche.

The diversion, contamination and reduction of water sources; the reproduction of animals that put people’s health at risk (such as poisonous snakes); deforestation and the destruction of living spaces; and the militarization of territories with a strong presence of paramilitary groups under the cloak of private security or the presence of drug traffickers—are part of the constant violence and imposition that communities suffer when oil palm is installed in their territories. All of this—particularly in places where organized communities are resisting this invasion—has led to violence and systematic intimidation of people who are defending life, who face everything from criminalization to disappearance to murder.

For this reason, communities and organizations from Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico came together in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico in early October 2021, to share their experiences with the advance of industrial oil palm monoculture and its impacts. The goal

was also to develop a diagnostic of the region and outline common strategies to help them combat these monocultures.

From this meeting, the Mesoamerican Network Against Oil Palm was created. In the following Declaration they summarize part of the complaints and reflections that were shared during the gathering:

### **Declaration of the Mesoamerican Network Against Oil Palm**

“From October 4-7, 2021, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, various organizations, networks, members and representatives of groups from Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Uruguay and Ecuador came together, in order share experiences around oil palm plantations, and to analyze, study and discuss the consequences of this monoculture in our territories.

Oil palm has arrived in our territories under an accelerated, aggressive and predatory extractive model. Palm monoculture causes the disappearance of water sources, diverts rivers, and causes the disappearance of native peoples’ sacred places linked to water. It impacts the worldviews of native peoples. Palm monoculture violates labor rights and leads to slave labor. It destroys the social fabric. It is based on companies’ appropriation of territories through violence, deception, lies, false promises, and the criminalization of social protest, all in complicity with political power.

Palm plantations cause a breakdown in communities’ food sovereignty; they destroy soils and accelerate deforestation; they cause poverty, dependence, droughts, fires, dispossession, displacement and serious health problems among populations; they destroy the landscape and accelerate climate change. Palm plantations are accompanied by violence, militarization and the criminalization of communities who are demanding basic rights. The effects of this model have a direct impact on women, who additionally face physical and sexual violence.

For all of these reasons, the movements and organizations present resolve to halt this Extractive Model, generate local alternatives, and unveil the false discourse that oil palm plantations are sustainable, that they bring development, that they reforest and combat climate change; instead, we raise awareness that palm monocultures are not forests, but rather megaprojects of death that are destroying the planet.

- We denounce the contamination and loss of water sources, in particular the effects on the Tulijá River in Mexico.
- We demand justice for the communities of the Guapinol River, and for the murders perpetrated in the Bajo Aguán in Honduras.
- We denounce the contamination of the La Pasión River by the REPSA [palm] company in Guatemala.
- We reject the persecution of social protest and of communities defending their rights—communities in which people have been murdered, persecuted, criminalized and taken to court by the palm agribusiness model; and we stand in solidarity with defenders of the Barranquilla de San Javier Commune, who have been taken to court by the Energy & Palma/ La Fabril company in Ecuador.

Plantations are not forests! For territories free of oil palm monocultures.”

## A cry for life

We cannot fail to highlight that, where industrial oil palm monocultures are installed, women are affected—either as plantation workers or as inhabitants of surrounding communities. One of the Honduran participants at the recent meeting in Chiapas wrote a poem in which she reflects feelings and experiences shared by the women present at the gathering.

*“They offered you a false future, an economy that doesn’t exist, they got you excited for a better life, they made you believe that a forest full of life and oxygen was bad, they sold you a tale that only exists in their evil mind. You did not realize this and you gave everything away in exchange for a future that does not exist. They lied to you, they destroyed you little by little.*

*Time has passed, and today, those of us who grew up in your mistake are aware of what you did, of that future that they sold you, that I didn’t see and which doesn’t exist. I reproach you but do not blame you, that is why I tell you that I, us women, all of us going to fight to destroy this system, just as they did to you. We are going to get back what belongs to us.*

*The forests that they took away from us will be ours again, we will once again see those crops that fill us with life, we will once again see those women strong and full of courage, giving life to our communities; we will see the beautiful smile of the girls and boys who are slaves to no one, who are free.*

*Saying NO to oil palm, NO to violence, NO to taking our lives—and they kill us not just with bullets, but also by taking away our lands and territories.*

*Because this is not afforestation, it is deforestation.  
Because this is not work, it is slavery.  
This is not life, it is death.*

*Today we raise our voices, united and empowered, and we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!”*

(By Flor Contreras Ulloa – [see the video here](#)) (3)

From different parts of Mesoamerica and Latin America in general, the resistance is growing, organized communities are connecting, so that their “ENOUGH!” is heard throughout the world, so that it reaches communities in Africa and Asia that are also affected by this monoculture. And also, so that it is heard by those who consume industrial palm oil, so that people understand that this destructive model of industrial plantations will never be sustainable or green.

(1) 12 Replies to 12 Lies about Oil Palm monocultures plantations

<https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section2/oil-palm-12-replies-to-12-lies/>

(2) Oil Palm Plantations (information and accounts on impacts and resistance)

<https://wrm.org.uy/browse-by-subject/tree-plantations/oil-palm-plantations/>

(3) Un grito por la vida (“A cry for life”)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5818UIPASfM&t=1s>

## Eucalyptus and Rubber Tree Monoculture Plantations Cause Hunger among Rural Communities

**On the frontlines of the promotion of monoculture tree plantations as a solution to the climate crisis, under the false pretext of 're-forestation', families affected by tree plantations in Mozambique, Tanzania and Brazil, have once again denounced the serious impacts of tree monoculture on their lives and the environment.**

Resorting to promises of permanent jobs, development and the building of schools, roads and wells, eucalyptus and rubber tree plantations have taken over large tracts of rural families' fertile lands, thus contributing to a scarcity of land for food production and an increase in hunger among communities.

At a moment when the Government of Mozambique strongly advocates and promotes the establishment of monoculture tree plantations as one of the solutions to the climate crisis under the false pretext of "re-forestation", representatives of families affected by tree plantations in Mozambique (from Sofala, Manica, Zambézia and Nampula provinces), Tanzania and Brazil, gathered together on September 21, the International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, have once again denounced the serious impacts of tree monoculture plantations on their lives and the environment.

Representatives from these communities also denounced the destruction of ecosystems, farms, water sources and native production systems, leading to a worsening and deepening of poverty among rural families, and the contamination of ecosystems, soils and waters as a result of the excessive and uncontrolled use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and agro-chemicals.

*"...the eucalyptus and rubber trees have taken over and destroyed the fertile farm lands, and families today no longer have any means to feed themselves, and some no longer have anywhere to live. If eucalyptus were food, it would be much better, but it isn't. Furthermore, the companies destroy the native trees and use chemical products that contaminate the soil and water. Wells and rivers have dried up and drinking water has become scarce."*

*"When someone decides to farm lands that the company claims to be theirs, the person is intimidated and threatened. This also happens when someone makes a complaint to their local leaders or government officials."*

Moved by feelings of anguish and revulsion, the participants of the meeting of September 21 revealed that the land where they produce corn, manioc and beans constitutes their only means of survival. For this reason these communities have resisted for many years the eucalyptus monoculture plantations of the Green Resources company in Mozambique and Tanzania, of the Portucel company in Mozambique, of Investimentos Florestais de Moçambique (IFM) and the rubber monoculture plantations of the Mozambique Holdings company in Mozambique.

The appeals of the affected communities have been to a large extent ignored by the Government. Denouncements and complaints that have been presented, when answered, are dealt with lightly, minimizing at any cost the allegations and sentiment of people who face on a daily basis the harsh reality of tree monoculture within their living spaces. Despite ample evidence that none of the investments in plantations actually generated better living conditions for communities, the Government insists in promoting monoculture plantations, while refusing to recognize the numerous and already evident problems with this patently failed extractivist model.



An open letter resulted from the meeting. It can be accessed here: <https://wrm.org.uy/pt/acoes-e-campanhas/carta-publica-do-encontro-internacional-como-resistir-as-plantacoes-de-monocultura/>. We ask you all to disseminate it widely.

*Academic Action for the Development of Rural Communities (ADECRU - Acção Académica Para O Desenvolvimento Das Comunidades Rurais),  
Environmental Justice Mozambique (JA! - Justiça Ambiental) / Friends of the Earth – Mozambique,  
Montes Errego Young Combatants' Association (AJOCME - Associação de Jovens Combatentes  
Montes Errego),  
Tabita Mission (Missão Tabita), and  
World Rainforest Movement*

## RECOMMENDED

### **In the midst of the pandemic, land invasions and killings of indigenous people increased in 2020**

The report, “Violence against the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil—2020,” published annually by the Indigenous Missionary Council of Brazil (CIMI, by its Portuguese acronym), reflects the image of tragic year for the country’s native peoples. Contrary to what might be expected, the serious health crisis caused by the pandemic did not prevent *grileiros* [person or group of people who illegally appropriate public lands or others’ property, later claiming ownership through fraudulent documents], miners, loggers and other invaders from further increasing their offensives against indigenous lands. The violence perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples and their territories goes hand in hand with the discourse and practices of a government intent on opening indigenous lands to exploitation and depredation—a government that is working to place those areas at the disposal of private interests, favoring the objectives of large agribusiness and mining companies and other large economic groups. See report in Portuguese [here](#). And the executive summary in [Spanish](#), [French](#), and [English](#)

### **“The Climate Debate is Not about CO2 Molecules”**

The Oilwatch Latin America network released this statement in October 2021 to stress the urgency of ensuring that fossil fuel energies remain underground. The statement underlines the delusion behind terms such as ‘net zero emissions,’ ‘carbon neutrality,’ ‘nature-based solutions’ or REDD and affirms that “Pretending that addressing climate change is a matter of measuring and managing CO2 molecules is a way of privileging the market and subjecting traditional communities to violations of the rights of humans and nature, while at the same time making global warming worse.” Read the statement in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

### **Voices from a South East Asia Regional Platform**

The Mekong/ASEAN Environmental Week (MAEW) is an annual regional platform and process for deeper sharing among people in the region of Southeast Asia, where key actors can exchange, analyze and debate on emerging issues that significantly affect them. This year the focus was on “Redesign ASEAN: Peoples' Voices in World Crises.” Discussions covered the environmental situation as well as the economic, political, and other aspects that impact the region and its people. Presentations include energy in the region; Mekong ecology; climate crisis; cross border haze; plastic waste and ocean pollution; restriction of youth power; digital disruption; digital currency; green economy; blue economy; the role of ASEAN; and the geopolitics of global and regional powers. Read further and see the presentations in English and Thai here: <https://maew2021.simdif.com/>

### **Expansion of wind energy in China and balsa wood logging in Ecuador**

In a recent publication, the Ecuadorian organization, Acción Ecológica, reveals how the extraction of balsa wood has affected Amazonian indigenous territories—impacting both the social fabric and the forests in the foothills of the Andes Mountains (including the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve). The balsa wood “boom” is a result of the Chinese wind industry, since China is the country that has built the most wind farms in recent years. The publication also addresses how the balsa wood business is structured in Ecuador, as well as its main producers and exporters. Read it in Spanish [here](#).

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## **“Climate Opium”: Putting Whales into the Carbon Markets**

An excerpt from a forthcoming book entitled “Climate Opium” explores how we are overdosing on false solutions to climate change, so much that the biggest mammals on earth are being forced into carbon pricing schemes. The excerpt focuses on how whales are being reduced to a giant carbon offset business opportunity based on how much carbon dioxide whales absorb and how their iron-rich excrement serves as food for tiny marine algae called phytoplankton, who also absorb carbon dioxide:

<https://globaljusticeecology.org/wp-content/uploads/CLIMATE-OPIUM-SAVE-THE-WHALES-from-the-Carbon-Market-long-version-POST-1.pdf>

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Editor: Joanna Cabello

Editorial Assistants: Elizabeth Díaz, Lucía Guadagno, Jutta Kill, Winfridus Overbeek and Teresa Pérez

### **WRM International Secretariat**

Av. Bolivia 1962 Bis, CP 11500 Montevideo, Uruguay

Phone/Fax: +598 26056943

[wrm@wrm.org.uy](mailto:wrm@wrm.org.uy) - <http://www.wrm.org.uy>