

Chiapas, Mexico, April, 25, 2013.

To:

- The Honorable Mr. Jerry Brown, Governor of California**
- The California REDD Offset Working Group**

Cc: Ms. Mary D. Nichols (Chairman of the California Air Resources Board), Ms. Ashley Conrad-Saydah (Assistant Secretary for Climate Policy at the California Environmental Protection Agency), Mr. Arsenio Mataka (Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs at the California Environmental Protection Agency), Ms. La Ronda Bowen (Ombudsman at California Air Resources Board)

Stop the Agreement between Governments of California,

Acre and Chiapas!

¡BASTA DE REDD+ Y DE ECONOMÍA VERDE!

La Madre Tierra no se vende, se ama y se defiende

The REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation+) program, which allows Northern polluters to purchase forest carbon offset credits from the global South, has been included in transnational negotiations on climate change and lowering greenhouse emissions. For the past three years there have been negotiations between the States of Chiapas (Mexico), Acre (Brazil) and California (USA) for a sub-national REDD+ agreement. The government of the State of California is seeking to link this tri-subnational agreement (955680042) to their Law AB32 (which commits to a 25% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for 2020 compared to 1990, and a 80% reduction for 2050). The Government of California has described this Agreement as “a historical opportunity to strengthen jurisdictional REDD+ programs”.

The REDD+ Offset Working Group is seeking to validate the environmental effectiveness of this Agreement through technical experts. We are concerned that this the technical expert from Chiapas Rosa María Vidal, (Chairman of Pronatura South, Chiapas) was more focused on approving the REDD+ scheme to assure business interests than guaranteeing the protection of biodiversity, forests, and indigenous’ and peasant farmers’ territories and rights.

Under the aforementioned Agreement, California (USA), rather than addressing the root causes of greenhouse gas emissions, will offset their emissions. This Agreement is underpinned by the logic of capitalist accumulation: it enables the purchase of carbon credits that will legally allow the continuation of the predatory and consumerist model.

The agreement claims that it will contribute to protecting forests and jungles in Chiapas and Acre. However, it fails to reveal the business interests in genetic patents behind this supposed altruism. It claims to contribute to the generation of low-carbon energy, without acknowledging the destruction of biodiversity and ecosystems that it brings. It claims to promote sustainable development of local communities, while hiding its true consequences: the fragmentation of their cultures and their organizational disintegration.

Simultaneously, the State of Chiapas in Mexico, with the support and strategic direction of the Federal Government, promotes the devastating local production of biofuels, which are sold as 'clean energy' to guarantee green businesses like biogenetics through the conservation of biodiversity of the most protected ecosystems -in their great majority located in indigenous' territories- to international investors and national carbon brokers (ex-civil servants and conservationist NGOs). On the other hand, the State of Chiapas accompanies this version of "clean energy" by megaprojects such as wind and hydro power plants in Chiapas.

By its option of "climatic" biofuels, the program encourages the destruction of **biological corridors** in the lowlands of the jungle. As well as it endangers the conservation of biodiversity in the protected neighbor areas. Another discrepancy arises between conservation program and the imposition of mining projects in protected areas, so called "Áreas Naturales Protegidas (ANP)". REDD+ is a new version of old colonial practices which pursue the appropriation of earth and territory via expropriation, direct violent evictions or their perpetual rent to the possessing indigenous communities.

In Chiapas the REDD+ mechanism is already in its initial phase, voluntarily if so called and it left behind some big clarifying lectures:

It does not respect the right of Indigenous people, it neither informs nor includes them. This programme does not foresee the cultural pertinence of its purposes and remedies. It includes Pine and African Oil Palm plantations in the term "forest". Even selling it as clean energy by connecting it to big megaprojects of mining, dams and wind parks.

Indigenous people are made responsible for the success of REDD+ while at the same time peasant farmers' production systems are criminalized accusing them to cause climate change.

It promotes urbanization, rejection of cultural support by indigenous people, traditional self-sustaining food production and loss of agricultural biodiversity. With help of this concept communities are divided and social networks are destroyed. Moreover there are numerous cases of eviction of indigenous people and famers away from their land- only to flatten the jungle for new plantations.

There is a clear example of implementation in the region of the "**Montes Azules Biosphere**", a prioritized and preferred area of conservation. When in April 2011 the governor of Chiapas gave the Lacandon Community arms and uniforms to patrol their border against Tzeltal communities who were resisting the demarcation of the so-called 'brecha Lacandona' which would consolidate their This program

clearly fails to represent the word of the majority of indigenous communities of the Lacandon Jungle.

REDD+ is based on speculative and offsets markets where carbon bonds are at the core of the 'air trade' and that translate into a negative material impact on land property and control, creating new privatization regimes, one example being the sale of carbon reserves in lands. REDD+ widens the borders of commercialization and market access to goods like land, water and biodiversity in a totally different direction to their protection and defense, under public policies and/or collective management by indigenous and traditional communities.

About the solutions:

Democratic and technically coherent measures are required to make the transition to a sustainable energy system, and to bring an urgent end to the use and abuse of hydrocarbons. The largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the industrial and consumerist countries of the North, should implement urgent mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without substitutions or offsets, and with a focus on the reduction goals of their own countries.

Resources and measures to conserve forests and jungles should be additional and democratically defined, and not based on impositions or offsets that allow continuing contamination. They should take into account the sustainable alternatives offered by peasant farmers and Indigenous Peoples in harmony with Mother Earth, which support community-based forest management and conservation of forests; they should not be based on markets nor controlled by corporations, financial institutions or 'green brokers'(coyotes), but collectively by the people.

We denounce the shadowy aspect of this program which, beneath the sign of the plus (+), integrates all of the goods and services provided by ecosystems, such as biodiversity and water, which are the focus of profits on new sources of wealth and control. Additionally, REDD+ fosters the dispossession or alienation of indigenous and peasant farmer communities who live in the most biodiverse regions of the planet with the greatest water captation regions on the planet.

We remonstrate the profound incoherence of the proposed "plus" connoting conservation and provision of environmental services, that considers toxic monocultures – specifically those grown for agro fuels – to be viable sinks for greenhouse gases, without taking into account their devastating impacts on immense areas that function as biological corridors, such as the alluvial plains around the "Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas". Conservation does not depend on this new kind of economic incentives, but on democratic and collective forms of forestry management that are respectful of the coexistence of indigenous communities with their environment.

We reject REDD+ in all its versions, REDD++ and all those that derive from it, including Blue REDD because we believe it would irreversibly damage both the mangrove swamp ecosystems and the communities who coexist in them.

**We fully support the communities which are affected by
REDD+ in Acre, Brazil.**

**We demand to the state of California to set up tangible and substantive
measures to counter the effects of climate change on its own territory**

Forests are not for sale

La Madre Tierra no se vende, se ama y se defiende

Signatories

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Otros Mundos Chiapas /Amigos de La tierra México

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