

Deforestation and climate change: indigenous perspectives and proposals

A PUBLIC HEARING OF TESTIMONIES FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' COMMUNITIES ON THE FRONT LINE

Organized by

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) and Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESP)

11am – 3pm

Museum of Arts in Lima, (MALI)

December 8, 2014

Indigenous peoples are under siege, and their lands and survival are threatened by the expansion of extractive activities, infrastructure development, top-down conservation schemes and the rapid expansion of industrial agriculture. Deforestation is affecting indigenous peoples' livelihoods, while altering the ecosystem balances upon which their spiritual values depend. As many as 13 million hectares of forests are cleared every year and annual forest loss increases by more than 200,00 hectares.

Caught between deforestation and the damage caused by climate change and remedial actions, indigenous peoples worldwide propose a different model. While tackling the drivers of deforestation and defending their lands, indigenous peoples propose and implement traditional management systems and innovative rights-based approaches to forest conservation and protection. These are now widely acknowledged to be cost-effective and efficient modalities to protect forests while mitigating climate change.

Forests and their role in mitigation have been at the centre of climate change negotiations for many years now, in particular in negotiations on REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). The Cancun agreements finalized in COP 16 in 2010 acknowledged the importance of forests in mitigating climate change and the role of indigenous peoples in conserving and managing forests, and adopted safeguards for REDD+ to ensure respect of indigenous peoples' rights and traditional knowledge. This was a significant step forward in building the foundations of a rights-based approach in a multilateral environmental agreement such as the UNFCCC.

Since then, however, deforestation has increased and with it the ensuing violation of human rights, land grabbing and pressure on indigenous land have intensified driven by the expansion of infrastructure, monoculture plantations for food, fuel and fibre, logging, and support to mitigation actions such as biofuels, natural gas or large scale hydropower development. At the same time the effects of climate change on indigenous peoples have also intensified in terms of restricted access to water, food, drought, alteration of ecosystem balances, loss of knowledge systems and cultures.

In spite of these worrying developments providing additional evidence of the obligation by countries to adopt a rights-based approach to climate change and climate change mitigation programmes and projects, the gains achieved in Cancun risk being lost at COP20 in Lima, unless parties take a bold stance and acknowledge that climate change is a human-rights issue.

COP20 is expected to deliver a footprint for future negotiations that will lead to a global binding agreement on climate to be adopted at COP21 in December 2015 in Paris. Thus far discussions and negotiations on land-based mitigation - including forests - have only paid lip service to the need to ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and forest-dependent peoples and communities. There is an urgent risk that mitigation actions designed in COP20 and beyond may be only centred on the urgency to reduce carbon emissions, and will fail to ensure a holistic approach to forests and the related social and human rights implications.

It is therefore time to urge governments and the UN to fully acknowledge the role of indigenous peoples in mitigating climate change, both by defending their lands, territories and resources, and by managing these sustainably and in accordance to their traditional livelihoods and knowledge.

It is also time for parties and the UN to concretely address the human rights impacts of climate change on indigenous and forest-dependent peoples, as well as the human-rights impacts of climate change policies and actions. Support should be provided to rights-based methodologies, such as participatory mapping and community based monitoring systems, which put indigenous peoples at the forefront of innovative mitigation and adaptation actions.

For all these reasons, Forest Peoples Programme will be in Lima during December 2014 with a delegation of representatives of indigenous peoples, to support the efforts and demands of indigenous peoples' organizations to the COP20. We will all together highlight the urgency to tackle deforestation and climate mitigation by fully ensuring the respect of indigenous peoples' rights in accordance to international human rights standards and instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), involve them in any action on climate, recognize their role in climate adaptation and mitigation.

We will organize a hearing to present the Declaration of Palangka Raya on deforestation and rights of forest peoples, and to share testimonies and experiences of indigenous leaders from Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Paraguay, Democratic Republic of Congo, Panama in the presence of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz.

The Palangka Raya declaration was adopted in March 2014 by the 60 participants to the international workshop on deforestation and the rights of forest peoples, and since then has been signed by hundreds of indigenous peoples' organisations, civil society groups and individuals.

The Declaration urges governments, international agencies and the international community to:

- Halt the production, trade and consumption of commodities derived from deforestation, land grabs, and other violations of human rights of forest peoples;
- Stop the invasion of forest peoples' lands and forests by agribusiness, extractive industries, infrastructure development, and energy and green economy projects that deny the fundamental rights of indigenous and forest peoples;
- Take immediate and concrete actions to uphold indigenous and forest peoples' rights to land, territories, and resources, the right to self-determination and self-determined development and to continue to own, control and manage their lands according to indigenous and forest peoples' knowledge and livelihoods.

As regards Climate Change, it points to the failure of the UNFCCC, the World Bank and the UNREDD Programme to address deforestation through market mechanisms. This failure is not only due to the lack of viable markets, but also because these efforts have failed to take into account the multiple values of forests, and - despite standards to the contrary - in practice are failing to respect internationally recognized indigenous peoples' rights, due to the lack of robust national, legal and governance reforms to ensure respect of the rights of forest peoples.

The Palangka Raya Declaration signatories and supporters call on State Parties to the UNFCCC that will negotiate in Lima and Paris to:

- Address the drivers of deforestation and underline the importance of customary knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities as enshrined in the Cancun safeguards;
- Acknowledge the historical damage done by climate change to forest peoples, the violation of their rights and livelihoods, and their key role in conservation of forests and adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Subject any adaptation and mitigation action proposed on indigenous peoples' lands and forests to the free prior informed consent (FPIC) and full and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

Come and join us at the Public Hearing on “Deforestation and Climate Change: indigenous peoples’ concerns and perspectives” at the Museum of Arts of Lima (MALI) on December 8, 2014!

Come to hear first hand testimonies by indigenous leaders on how deforestation is affecting human rights.

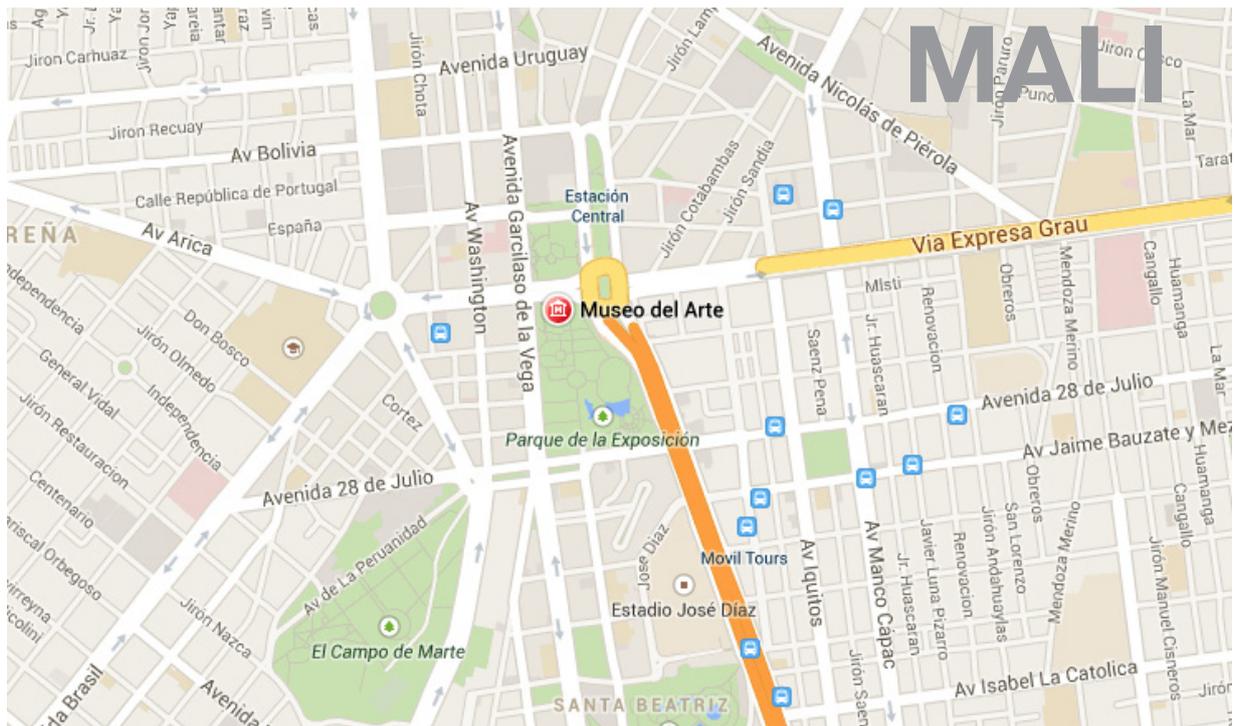
Share your concerns and proposals in the presence of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Listen to leaders talking about rights-based alternative approaches such as participatory mapping and community based monitoring systems.

If you would like to attend, please pre-register by sending an email to the following address:

COP20hearing@forestpeoples.org

The hearing will also include an open space for participants to take the floor and share their concerns and proposals. If you want to be actively engaged in that session, please specify in your email which topic you want to raise. Time will be limited to 5-10 minutes maximum.



#COP20hearing
#factsandrights
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