

**United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Session May 18-31, 2013**  
**Joint Collective Statement**  
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**supportive sign-on of the**  
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**Item 5: Indigenous people’s rights and safeguards in projects related to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (E/C.19/2013/7)**

On behalf of our collective joint intervention, we greet the members of the Permanent Forum, and congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson for your nomination.

At this time, we take note of the Permanent Forum’s Report, “Indigenous people’s rights and safeguards in projects related to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation,” under item 5 of the provisional agenda, comprehensive dialogue with UN Agencies and Funds.

This is a brief intervention that deserves more sufficient time to fully respond to what we believe is an overly optimistic Report on the so-called “opportunities” of REDD+ for enhancing our rights and interests. The realities are quite different.

We do note that the Report characterizes two positions by Indigenous Peoples, one of organizations that “radically oppose” REDD+ (these two words are utilized within the Report), primarily over concerns about Indigenous Peoples’ rights and opposition to the carbon market, and the other position, of organizations that see “opportunities” in REDD+ for Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Chair, our opposition to REDD+ is not “radical.” We do not believe it is radical to insist on adherence to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by all REDD+ projects. We believe that the strenuous efforts by Indigenous Peoples with various United Nations programs have not resulted in any legally enforceable rights of Indigenous Peoples within REDD+. As the Report candidly points out, in the World Bank safeguards call only for, “free, prior and informed consultation [that] results in broad community support.” We submit that this is not “substantially equivalent” to FPIC. We believe it is a recipe for division and a total avoidance of Indigenous Peoples’ own decision-making practices and institutions, a violation of the right of self determination, among others.

M. Chairperson, Viet Nam has received 4.38 million US dollars from UN-REDD without even recognizing Indigenous Peoples, much less their land tenure. Another UN-REDD State has attempted to erase Indigenous Peoples from its constitution and laws and allows the violation of the customary land right of the Indigenous Peoples. In States too numerous to mention, even where Indigenous Peoples are recognized and have recognized land rights, there continue to be intentional failures of land demarcations. In some REDD+ States, in the name of conservation of forest, the right of the Indigenous peoples to extract resources from forest, in accordance with their own customary law, is restricted and limited or prohibited altogether.

The Report also admits that REDD+ projects are proliferating outside the UN system with no requirements of safeguards. Within or outside the UN system, multinational, bi-national, as well as national and sub-national REDD+ projects, are being implemented without safeguards, without the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples most concerned. Safeguards

must be implemented before projects are initiated, and only with real consent, not merely the promise of consent. Assured land rights and tenure must also be a pre-condition to REDD+ projects.

We recall that the opposition to market based REDD+ was not radical in 2009, when Indigenous Peoples gathered in Anchorage, Alaska, at the Indigenous Peoples Global Summit on Climate Change, rejected market based mechanisms such as carbon trading the Clean Development Mechanism and forest offsets, as a false solutions to climate change. But now, it appears that REDD+ is and will be market based, and that United Nations and World Bank programs are designed to lead us to that end. And now, in the eyes of some who also attended the Global Summit and joined in the consensus, opposition to carbon markets is now “radical.”

Mr. Chairperson, we do not believe it is radical to oppose a market system that allows multi-nationals to continue to pollute our peoples in the north with the expansion of fossil fuel development in the North with tar sands and its web of pipelines, coal mining, shale gas, hydraulic fracturing, polluting refineries and the like, while threatening the very identities and rights of our brothers and sisters in the South. The implementation of California REDD, a global model for implementing REDD+ at the sub-national level, in Chiapas, Mexico; in Acre, Brazil; and negotiations to implement REDD+ in Cross River, Nigeria and Indonesia does just that.

In the time given us we can only object to a Report that only promises Indigenous Peoples effective respect and observance of their rights, when the truth and all objective reality points to the loss of rights, cultures and lands. And even though a handful, if that many, Indigenous peoples may have real and effective control over their forests and may benefit from REDD+ directly, it is also clear that REDD+ as a market mechanism will consume the forests and customary and traditional land uses of a great many others.

There is an attitude on the part of some proponents of REDD projects, both local and national, that those Indigenous Peoples who reject REDD simply do not understand, and only that more and better communication is needed to convince them of REDD desirability. This attitude reflects an inability to accept Indigenous Peoples’ informed judgment that they do not want their ways of life and identities disrupted or destroyed any longer. It is the same paternalism that accompanies colonialism.

Worse, this attitude reflects the same cultural chauvinism and the attitude that Indigenous Peoples’ cultures and lifeways are poverty and inferior to the West, and that REDD is the only way forward for Indigenous Peoples. Our lifeways, measured by well being, are not poverty. The way forward for Indigenous Peoples is not to displace them and force their assimilation into urban ghettos of the unemployed. Neither is it to pay them for alternative livelihoods or “forest services” or “payments for environmental services” that come between Indigenous Peoples and their spiritual and material relationship to their lands and natural resources. This is what REDD does. The inability of REDD proponents to understand this basic reality reflects a profound lack of understanding of the effects of REDD+ on Indigenous land based cultures and spiritual ways of life. In the end, the so-called “benefits” REDD+ may or may not promise are not safeguards.

According to a preliminary survey by Carbon Trade Watch, of the sixteen UN-REDD countries with UN-REDD National Programs, over ten have violated the right to free, prior and informed consent and the right to participation of civil society and Indigenous peoples. Other countries where these rights have been violated include Indonesia, Ecuador, Paraguay and the Democratic Republic of Congo where civil society groups have suspended engagement with the National REDD Coordination Process.

**We therefore recommend to the Permanent Forum that it conduct a further study of REDD+ in all of its aspects, based not just on no doubt sincere and heartfelt hopes but on the harsh realities of what is really occurring to our**

**forests and our peoples in order that we take effective steps to address them. This further study of REDD+ must include a survey of current voluntary REDD projects and listing of human rights abuses of these projects**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson