

Indigenous Caucus
9th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Indigenous Caucus Intervention on CDM
December 4th, 2003

Mr. Chairman, respected delegates, colleagues, my indigenous brothers and sisters,

As a representative of the indigenous peoples' view and position, I would like to draw to the attention of this respected gathering that I speak not only for my own people, but for all indigenous peoples of this world for the concerns we raise as indigenous peoples regarding activities of the clean development mechanism and how this mechanism may affect us.

The proposal for the modalities and procedures of activities of afforestation and reforestation under article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol as they are now under discussion are not acceptable to us. Neither is there the excuse that this proposed definition of forests and the regeneration of forested lands will cure the ills of climate change that are threatening us, nor is it in keeping with the fundamental ethos that informs the indigenous world view.

The definitions of planted forests, in the context of carbon sequestration projects, of afforestation and reforestation also in the same context, suffer from the same deficiencies of neither offering viable options or alternatives in the basic and non negotiable necessity to actually reduce emissions nor are they at all consonant with the reality of forests as understood by our peoples or by forest dwelling or forest dependent peoples anywhere. Forests are not a collection of trees. They are a spiritually and materially essential environment for our survival as human and as peoples.

Given the reality that the major proportion of forests still existing in this world today are in the ancient territories of our peoples, we would here like to make it clear that indigenous peoples consider ourselves rights holders in this process and not merely stakeholders in an economic benefit or risk sharing settlement. As a legitimate and key process within the UN system, we should therefore request that our voices be heard and that we be given space as rights holders. In this regards we would also like to express our concerns that in the on going negotiations on

modalities and procedures of sinks projects, there is a complete absence of involvement of indigenous peoples. We request prior informed consent to be the condition as an established international procedural standard for any sinks projects on indigenous peoples ancestral territories. We furthermore request high environmental and social economic standards as prerequisite for sink projects as enshrined in the spirit of Annex E as far as indigenous peoples' rights are concerned.

We have been relieved to observe that till date only micro hydel projects have been approved under the CDM process. We would however like to have a precautionary and pre-emptive word regarding larger dams which have been planned almost exclusively on indigenous territories. Such projects cannot by any means be permitted to be registered in the CDM. Due attention should also be paid to the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams.

We should also like to draw attention to the manner in which carbon sequestration projects or possible such projects are being presented and peddled around the world to our peoples and other people on the ground. According to these promotions, such projects will resolve the range of social and economic problems facing ordinary and especially poor people, promising achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development and a cornucopia of other benefits. How this can be promised in a process whose very basis and terms as it were have not yet been agreed upon is a mystery to us. It appears quite clear that there is either intentionally or other wise a serious misrepresentation to the general public of the purpose, scope and capacity of the sinks mechanism to achieve social goals.

With those comments, we thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity.