



February 2015

Appeal to Support a Civil Society Alternative Programme of Events and Activities during the 14th World Forestry Congress (WFC2015)

Context/Background

The XIV World Forestry Congress (WFC2015) will take place in Durban, South Africa, from 7 to 11 September 2015, hosted by the South African government in association with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The main emphasis of WFC2015 will be on promoting “forestry” in its various forms, including large-scale industrial tree plantations, which convert biodiverse habitat and productive farmland into socially and ecologically harmful tree monocultures. Promoting these plantations also lead to increased logging of natural forests and associated land-grabbing for food and biofuel crop plantations. Timber industry and government delegates at WFC2015 will be looking to increase raw timber supplies, mainly to pulp, paper and wood pellet producers, whilst boosting consumer demand for timber-based commodities through certification schemes that have failed to reduce deforestation.

Industrial pulpwood plantations are just one part of pulp and paper production, and must therefore be contextualised within the complete cradle-to-grave process of ecosystem degradation, soil and water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions that result from planting alien trees, followed by the logging, trucking and processing of timber, as well as the distribution, consumption and end-disposal of wood-based products. Other negative impacts of industrial tree plantations include the poisoning of wildlife, workers and communities with toxic pesticides; destroying biodiversity-rich natural habitats and people's traditional crops and medicinal plants; pollution of air, water, soil and coastlines by energy-intensive pulp and paper mills; and major contributions to global warming and climate change.

A response from civil society

An alliance of local and international civil society organisations led by the Timberwatch Coalition will hold a Civil Society Alternative Programme of Events and Activities in parallel with WFC2015. The Alternative Programme will highlight how the timber industry contributes to global economic inequity, and how it increases the vulnerability of human and natural systems to the impacts of climate change. It will also discuss ways to end the

unemployment caused by mechanisation, and the community marginalisation that results, through radical transformation of policy that supports and subsidises the global timber industry; and by promoting the adoption of agro-ecological farming methods and community driven conservation initiatives.

This programme will also be open to participants at WFC2015 and members of the general public, in order to foster a greater awareness of the ecological, environmental, social and economic harm the activities of the global timber industry often cause.

The Civil Society Alternative Programme of Events and Activities

The Alternative Programme will offer participants opportunities to learn from other like-minded groups and individuals from around the world, share information about their particular challenges, and compare solutions that they are implementing or campaigning for in their own communities and countries.

Within the general theme: 'Making the voices of global civil society heard and heeded', the planned five day programme will offer a range of activities centred on daily themes. These activities will include oral presentations and videos, panel discussions, displays, training workshops and exhibitions.

The themes proposed for the five days are:

- Deforestation - Root causes of forest loss and degradation
- Fake Forests - Impacts of industrial tree plantations on natural systems
- Disrespecting Rights - How industrial logging affects communities
- Land Grabbing - Social and ecological effects of land dispossession
- The Way Forward – To implement realistic solutions that will work

About Timberwatch

The Timberwatch Coalition is an independent not-for-profit organisation (NPO) that works to increase awareness of both the direct and indirect social and ecological impacts of large-scale industrial tree plantations and the processing of wood from both forests and plantations into cheap disposable consumer goods. Its local membership includes individual supporters and 14 South African NGOs who endorse the joint campaign to address the impacts of timber plantations and associated industries in southern Africa.

Through focused research, community workshops, and advocating for policy reforms, Timberwatch works to increase local communities' awareness and capacity to defend their rights and resources. At the same time, the need for a dramatic reduction in global consumption of timber derived paper and cellulose products is emphasised.

Together with its member organisations and international partners, including the World Rainforest Movement (WRM), the Global Forest Coalition (GFC) and the Convention on Biodiversity Alliance (CBDA), Timberwatch has campaigned against false policy solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change, such as CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) carbon sink plantation projects, and related emission offsets and trading. Timberwatch also campaigns against agrofuel (biofuel) crop plantation projects, which displace local peoples and destroy biodiversity, but do not reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

An appeal for assistance

In the context of the programme envisaged above, we are seeking your material and moral support. If your organisation is able to contribute funding towards the general costs of this project, or perhaps to sponsor a particular event or component of the civil society alternative programme, we will be pleased to provide detailed budgets, as well as specific work plans. Any written endorsement of our project would also be appreciated.

By supporting efforts to ensure that the Civil Society Alternative Programme of Events and Activities to take place in parallel with the industry-biased World Forestry Congress, will be successfully implemented, you will help to give a voice to countless communities around the world whose lives, lands and livelihoods have been negatively affected by industrial timber production and processing. But more importantly, it will allow them to share their experiences widely and thus motivate many others to defend their source of sustainable livelihoods - their forests and grasslands – from invasion by land-grabbing timber corporations and mercenary loggers.

Sincerely,



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Also see:

- 1) Letter of commendation from the World Rainforest Movement.
- 2) Background analysis and rationale/motivation for an alternative event.
- 3) List of proposed alternative programme events and activities.



Celebrating 20 Years of Activism

Notes :

Group discussions : Small meeting venues will be available to participant organisations for focus group discussions.

Film Festival : There will be screenings of short videos at a **Forest Justice Film Festival** to be held at a separate venue.

Site Visits : There will be guided field trips to nearby forests, nature reserves, places of cultural and historical interest, as well as to communities that are impacted negatively by industrial tree plantations and timber processing activities.

Media and Public Outreach : A media room will be made available for media briefings and interviews. In addition, interviews, panel discussions and debates for broadcast via public television and radio will be organised in conjunction with local and international media organisations.

Support for participants : General information regarding access to accommodation, places of interest, public transport, medical services, etc. will be provided by a team of volunteers based at the registration and information centre where the programme coordination secretariat will be based. Limited access to wireless Internet facilities will be provided mainly for administrative and support requirements.