

Forest Cover

A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy

Issue no. 14: December 2004

About Forest Cover

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of *Forest Cover*, the newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC). The GFC was established by a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) to facilitate the informed participation of NGOs and IPOs in intergovernmental meetings related to forests. *Forest Cover* is published four times a year. It features reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its founding members or the editors. *For free subscriptions, please contact Simone Lovera at: lovera@foei.org.*

Contents of this Issue:

- **About Forest Cover**
- **Ex Silvis: Naïve Optimism**, by Miguel Lovera, coordinator, Global Forest Coalition
- **Genetically Modified Trees: A Step Forward ... in the Wrong Direction**, by Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement and Simone Lovera, Friends of the Earth International
- **Biotrade and the Privatization of the Climate System**, by Roque Pedace, Friends of the Earth-Argentina
- **ITTO: The New Carnival of Souls**, by Sandy Gauntlett, Pacific Indigenous Peoples' Environment Coalition, Aotearoa/New Zealand
- **Yet Another Expert Panel**, by Miguel Lovera, coordinator, Global Forest Coalition
- **Branching Out: How Privatizing Parks Tramples Community Rights**, by Thomas Jalong, Sahabat Alam Malaysia

- **Reports on Other Forest-Related Meetings: Cites Regulates Ramin Trade**
- **Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings**

Ex Silvis: Naïve Optimism

By Miguel Lovera, coordinator, Global Forest Coalition

Last October we all heard the good news. Russia was going to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. And indeed it was good news – or at least not completely bad.

But there are a few problems. One is that Russia's entry into the agreement will allow other industrial countries to pollute more and slow down their transition to sustainable energy systems. Why? Because Russia has been credited with a lot of pollution rights just before having suffered an economic collapse around 1990. Under Kyoto, it will be able to sell them around the world. This is only one of the factors that make the Protocol a perilous gamble: too much flexibility for a game with fixed results.

Commercial interests have shaped the Protocol and its implementation. Negotiators have made sure that nothing will be done unless certain types of corporations profit, never mind any looming climate catastrophe. No wonder so many people doubt the Protocol's viability. After all, the private sector's record in benefiting humanity's environment is poor in virtually all respects. Vested interests and the "call of the cash" rule when corporations chop down forests for timber, plant monocultures in the least appropriate areas, or engineer transgenic food crops and trees, regardless of the consequences.

And governments? Are they doing enough? Will the Kyoto Protocol ensure that politicians

adjust their economies even a few inches to take account of climate change demands? The messages we are getting so far are dismal. Instead of resolving to combat wasteful consumption, for instance, governments are proposing to produce endless amounts of “bio-energy”. This new fuel is not, as they claim, innocent or benign. The substrate for the production of biomass, after all, will often be the space used by people to grow food.

Of course, many of these people will be far away. Industrialized governments seem to imagine that “space” is always there in other countries – Dutch energy companies, for example, are developing plans that would require planting additional millions of hectares of Brazilian land with tree monocultures. Remember the Plantar scandal (see Forest Cover 13)? Multiply that 20 times.

In sum, many governments dream of supplementing oil with other cheap fuels created on other people’s lands. Such dreams do not respond to a common interest in combating climate change, but to commercial interest in adapting to a new business climate – which isn’t the same thing.

In a perfect world, implementation of the Kyoto Protocol would deliver around five per cent emissions cuts in industrialized countries. This is not enough. According to conservative scientific estimates, 60-80 per cent is more like it. Not that the Protocol is in fact likely to be implemented as planned. Instead of dropping, emissions have risen at least 10 per cent since 1990, due to reckless government, lack of economic reform, and irresponsible life styles.

Still, there is reason to be optimistic. Between now and 2012, after all, enough disasters may happen to convince the powerful and their governments that the Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed in 1992 actually needs to be implemented, with no free rides for anyone, not even the rich. It’s hard to resist the feeling that “in the end everything will be all right, and if it isn’t, it is not the end.”

On consideration, though, this might be a bit lax. Nothing will replace the need to replace the deleterious development model that created the muddle in the first place. Adaptation to new conditions will not be feasible in many

cases since the pace of change will be too rampant. It is time to face reality and start implementing the sensible recommendations and commitments that made us feel optimistic in the first place. If some countries could devote the cash to tackling climate change that they pour into waging war, then, and only then, could we call ourselves truly optimistic, and not just naïve.

Genetically modified trees: a step forward ... in the wrong direction

By Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement and Simone Lovera, Friends of the Earth International

The intergovernmental debate on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has until now focused more on agricultural crops than on genetically modified trees. This is understandable, given the fact that GM crops are already being commercially grown in many places around the world for either human or animal consumption, with potential threats to human health.

However, that does not mean that GM trees are less dangerous than GM crops. According to a brand-new report of the World Rainforest Movement and Friends of the Earth International, “Genetically Modified Trees, the Ultimate Threat to Forests”, which will be released at the tenth Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2004, the dangers posed by GM trees are in some ways even more serious than those posed by GM crops.

For one thing, trees live longer than agricultural crops and often undergo metabolic changes many years after they are planted. That means that they are more likely than crops to suffer unforeseen effects of genetic manipulation during their lifetimes. In addition, the plantation trees most targeted for genetic modification are much less domesticated than crops – meaning that they are more likely to “contaminate” their relatively wild cousins than are agricultural crops. Adding to the likelihood of disaster is the fact that scientists’ knowledge of forest ecosystems is poor, making it difficult for them even to make a wild guess about all the things that might go wrong in a GM-affected landscape. Yet in spite of these risks and

uncertainties, forestry scientists continue busily playing with genes in order to "improve" trees.

In practice, of course, the word "improving" here means changing tree characteristics to better serve the interests of funders or the profitability of business. But from a biological or more broadly social perspective, this may not be an improvement at all. For example, is a tree genetically engineered to contain less lignin better than a normal one? From one perspective, it is clearly worse, since it is weaker and more susceptible to extensive damage during windstorms. Might, then, a herbicide-resistant tree genetically engineered to be herbicide-resistant be an "improvement"? Again, it is not, insofar as it is designed to allow extensive herbicide spraying that adversely affects a whole range of local flora and wildlife.

Similarly, how much use to human beings is a tree genetically engineered to be flowerless, fruitless and seedless if it cannot provide food to myriad species of insects, birds and other wildlife? Or a tree with insecticide properties that undermine entire food chains? The fact is that genetically-engineered trees constitute a further step forward ... in the wrong direction.

From an industrial, profit-making perspective, forests have consistently been perceived as "untidy" and of "low productivity". Forestry scientists and foresters have thus been assigned the task of "improving" them by establishing single-species plantations in straight, equally-spaced rows to obtain the largest, most easily-harvested quantity of wood per hectare. Playing a central role here, particularly in establishing eucalyptus plantations, has been the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which has championed trees that grow fast, have straight trunks and few branches and yield uniform, industry-friendly wood. This formula naturally has favoured the entire Green Revolution package: mechanization, herbicides, and chemical fertilisers and pesticides. From there the next logical step has been to clone the "best" trees – and then to modify them genetically.

This industry-biased, large-scale tree monoculture model is being increasingly challenged by local communities and

organizations throughout the world because of its negative social and environmental impacts. These impacts – and this resistance – can only be expanded by GM tree plantations, which will deplete water even more quickly; degrade soils even more swiftly through biomass extraction, intensive mechanization and increased agrochemical use; devastate biodiversity even more comprehensively through built-in herbicides and insecticides and engineered sterility; and deprive even more communities of their livelihood, replacing them with a "green desert".

Oblivious, many forestry scientists are pushing forward, not only at the laboratory and controlled-trial level but also in the field – as in China, where well over one million insect resistant GM poplars have already been planted. No one knows the exact area planted with GM trees in China or even exactly where they are, since a GM poplar looks much the same as any other poplar. And with the ease with which they can be propagated and moved from one nursery to another, the GM poplars continue spreading out of control.

Instead of stopping such dangerous experiments, GM tree proponents typically adapt the argument of traditional plantation promoters that "plantations are here to stay, whether we like it or not", merely replacing the word "plantations" with "GM trees". Using this same reasoning, it would be easy to argue that virtually any moderately-entrenched wrong is "here to stay". Biodiversity loss would be "here to stay". Water scarcity would be "here to stay", climate change would be "here to stay", and poverty and gender inequity would be "here to stay", whether we like it or not.

Like most people, however, we at GFC believe that when people don't like how things are, they can change. That is why governments agree on environmental conventions, human rights agreements, and covenants on Indigenous Peoples', worker's, women's and children's rights, to mention but a few.

GMOs in general and GM trees in particular constitute a violation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which obliges governments to take a precautionary approach towards genetically-modified organisms that may cause serious damage to biodiversity. GM

trees are also in violation of the spirit of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) set up to protect the world's forests. These facts alone should have prevented the Parties to the Climate Change Convention from deciding, last December, to allow GM trees to be used in the monocultures that the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism claims will be able to absorb industrial carbon dioxide emissions. And these facts alone should persuade the Parties to correct that mistake and, acting in their capacity as governments, simply ban the release of GM trees.

The future is something we build today. The world can go in one direction or another. It is up to us – not "fate", or biotechnologists – to decide. If we don't like what is happening, we can and must do something about it.

Another world is possible ... whether the GM tree industry likes it or not.

For copies of the WRM-FoEI report, or additional information on the impacts of monoculture tree plantations and genetically modified organisms, please visit: <http://www.wrm.org.uy> or <http://www.foei.org>.

Biotrade and the Privatization of the Climate System

Summary of the presentation by Roque Pedace, FoE-Argentina, to the Nature for Sale conference, September 2004. The report of the conference can be downloaded in English, French and Spanish from <http://www.foei.org/publications> starting January 2005.

People who use more than their fair share of the natural world have sometimes proposed paying compensation to others who protect vital aspects of it.

When it came to Climate Change the Kyoto Protocol framed the problem differently. Who is entitled to the use of the relevant common goods and services, sinks (oceans, soils, new vegetation), and reservoirs (atmosphere) of carbon dioxide? The answer was to give extremely generous emissions rights to the rich countries. Moreover, the Kyoto Protocol introduced the possibility to apply the Clean Development Mechanism which allows industrialized countries with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to count reductions

they fund through third parties towards their own targets

Unfair trade was the inevitable consequence. This indirect way of establishing property rights on common goods elicited another perverse effect: given the economic difficulties faced by communities in developing countries, it would be easy to find sellers of carbon credits at unreasonably low prices.

If this market was established, then conditions under which society allowed the generation of private benefits from a public good should be regulated in order to avoid unreasonably high environmental and social costs. This was precisely the danger with biological CO2 absorption, which is, using trees and other plants as sinks. Much touted as the cheap solution at hand, it took very little time to see it was too cheap to be true.

First of all, it is hard to monitor and verify how much carbon plantations are really "taking care of", particularly when plantations can induce deforestation in distant places. Second, plantations are often incompatible with local needs for land or biodiversity conservation. Third, they do nothing to wean industrial societies off fossil fuels - the key step that needs to be taken to tackle climate change. Fourth, from a carbon-conserving point of view, plantations are inferior to simply leaving old-growth forests alone - yet giving emission rights for "avoided deforestation" had to be excluded from the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period because of fears of gaming and fraud.

From a climate perspective, the best plantations would be those established on sparsely-vegetated land - degraded land or good-quality cropland. Such land would often require a lot of fertilizers, pesticides, labour and intensive management to raise productivity significantly. Establishing carbon plantations on the scale required (400-1000 million hectares) would face severe social, political and practical limitations.

Locally-Produced Biomass versus the Reality of Biotrade

But could concrete local social and economic benefits be found for such carbon projects?

One possibility would be to try to set up a biomass energy market that benefited local communities, through an indigenous biomass energy infrastructure and the removal of subsidies for competing fossil fuels. In the words of one high-ranking Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) official, "There are indications of a growing and potentially very large carbon market converting agriculture into a major player in this field. International bioenergy trading is becoming a reality; wood, wood chips, ethanol, biodiesel and bioelectricity are being transported across borders. It needs to be ensured that the farmers do not miss the benefits of this trade." But this trade takes place under rules which are far from promoting ecological leapfrogging in the south but rather threatening food sovereignty and the chances for sustainable forestry and agriculture.

The Carbon Finance Business

Meanwhile, the Carbon Finance Business of the World Bank has developed a portfolio for biomass projects which is significantly higher than the one for sink projects. These biomass projects have proven that focusing only on the climate impact of a project without a broader analysis of its social and environmental context means that even without using sinks credits the CDM can become a new subsidy for industrial plantations.

The most significant example is the Plantar project, under which 23,100 hectares of monoculture eucalyptus is to be used for the production of charcoal for pig iron production. The plantation is to be partly financed with climate money on the ground that without it, the fuel for the iron production would have to be switched to coal. As reported previously in Forest Cover, the Plantar project is responsible for many serious social and environmental problems, including displacement of local communities, horrifying labor conditions and intimidation of trade unions, biodiversity destruction in the surrounding cerrado scrublands, and increased pressure on native forests. It is creating few permanent jobs and is monopolizing land needed by thousands of landless people.

What's more, the Methodologies Panel of the Executive Board of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean

Development Mechanism has warned that approval of 'avoided fuel switch' projects such as Plantar represents a "moral hazard", a continuation of standard practice (non additional) that should not deserve any credit.

Property and Access

Equity in access to forests is important, particularly for poor people in Southern countries who depend on them for basic subsistence. Typically, complex property rights and access rules govern different forest goods, enabling many different actors to use and benefit from them. These systems of governance have often evolved over long periods and may be customary rather than recognized by state law. Rights of access to forests are often contested among stakeholders across different scales.

Forestry carbon projects change these property rights and access rules. As demonstrated by Plantar, a global carbon trade will provide a major incentive for large industries to establish large-scale projects that pursue carbon efficiency over local sustainability. If the carbon trade market takes off as predicted by FAO and as promoted by the World Bank, local communities and their rights and needs will be pushed aside by thousands of hectares of additional monoculture tree plantations. The recent inclusion of genetically modified trees as potential carbon sinks fundable through Kyoto's Clean Development Mechanism only adds to the dangers to local communities.

In many areas of the South, rights in forests and land are so complex that only a few of them are legible by, or fit into, formal frameworks imposed by international regimes and governments. Informal rights - the ones poor and women-headed households depend on the most - are most likely to be violated under official regimes such as those that global carbon markets require. Poor and women-headed households are also likely to be disadvantaged in negotiations over carbon projects, which tend to take place at a high level at which international investors have more bargaining power. In sum, the development benefits of forest carbon projects are poorly defined, while they are prone to exacerbate existing societal inequalities.

ITTO: The New Carnival of Souls

By Sandy Gauntlett, Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, Aotearoa/New Zealand

On first impression, the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) seems reasonably accessible. Recognised organizations that register with it are granted permission to attend its Council and sit among the delegations, making lobbying easy.

But look deeper and you discover the fault lines in the new carnival of souls. Speaking rights are restricted to delegations and NGOs do not have the right to address the plenary or air their concerns. NGO access to the Council appears to be possible only through the new CSAG (Civil Society Advisory Group), which seems a long way from being fully representative of civil society or civil society concerns. In fact, many major environmental NGOs have decided against formally joining the CSAG, and have reservations about the make-up and mandate of the group as a whole.

One major concern is the lack of representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Council. It is a long-established truth that NGOs cannot and do not represent the needs, wishes and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples. Yet that has not stopped the CSAG grouping from putting forward wording on Indigenous issues to the ITTO Council. This is a major breach of protocol and needs to be addressed. The Council should institute an Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group immediately and address the issues Indigenous Peoples have with the timber trade. It is after all, a trade agreement that has seen continuing human rights abuses against Indigenous Peoples. To attempt to address past injustices by setting up an advisory body of trade-supportive NGOs is little more than farcical.

On another note, it was interesting to see the large number of nations represented at the latest ITTO meeting that took place in July in Interlaken. Ghana, which rarely sends more than one representative to policy-making bodies for like the UN Forum on Forests and the Convention on Biodiversity had a delegation of 6 representatives and Indonesia sent no less than 20 representatives. Why the

great interest in ITTO? What happens here that is not being addressed at policy fora?

The answer is simple: money. The ITTO disburses millions of dollars in project funding and the lineup of people with their hands out is incredible. The carnival of souls that was the Council meeting in Interlaken was at times laughable and at times depressing, but constantly reminded observers of the power of the dollar as nation after nation lined up for their share of blood money.

Does that mean that nothing good came out of Interlaken? No, of course not. For one thing, the combined panel of CSAG and the Trade Advisory Group (TAG) produced a strong statement that finally attempted to deal with the major issues of illegal logging and corruption. Among other things, this statement suggested capacity-building measures at a national level to help address the problem of chain of custody (where legitimate ownership and legality of cutting rights are traced from landowner to export thereby establishing the legitimacy of the export), whether national conferences or programs to develop tracing methodologies. The latter especially deserves support as a way of tackling the corruption that has been so rife in the international timber trade.

It is therefore disappointing that the ITTO website talks less about tracing methods than about national conferences. Of course, conferences could help raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem, but they might also merely lead to mere money-spinning ITTO projects for those nations where corruption has proved a major barrier in terms of legal sourcing of timber. We must prevent this happening. At Interlaken, both Switzerland and the United States offered to fund national efforts in the South to deal with illegal logging. We must make sure that this money goes where it belongs and is not seen as part of the GDP of offending nations. There is a good chance that the carnival of souls that is the ITTO may develop into nothing more than another version of the “best little whorehouse in the South”. We need to remember that the currency of trade in this whorehouse is the world’s forest resources. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>.*

Yet Another Ad Hoc Expert Panel

By Miguel Lovera, coordinator, Global Forest Coalition

It was one of those meetings from which no one should expect any sensational breakthroughs. When the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on all Types of Forests (what a mouthful!) met in New York from September 7 to 10, the result was . . . very little.

The Group, which was meeting under the auspices of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), was supposed to explore what the international community ought to do to halt deforestation, and how. Instead, various experts indulged themselves in unbearable digressions exalting the virtues of an ideal “forest convention” – the kind of talk that has delayed badly-needed action at least for the last decade. And the co-chairs squandered the meeting’s clear momentum toward endorsing a free-standing forest convention or a framework convention on forests by trying to reflect all the diversity of the views present, including those of NGOs and IPOs.

At least the meeting was much less politically charged than normal UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) sessions, where governmental horse-trading often determines the positions taken. While traces of diplomatic language are unavoidable at all UN events, here the experts were able to express themselves with unusual freedom, as no real negotiations were at stake.

One thing the meeting showed is that the current UNFF, or anything like it, is unsustainable. If the international community is to curb deforestation and forest degradation and to achieve sustainable forest management, future forums will need clearer targets, monitoring, reporting, participation and funding. It is disappointing that the report of the meeting does not acknowledge this. *For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>*

Branching Out: How Privatizing Parks Tramples Community Rights

On 24 - 25 September, Friends of the Earth International, in cooperation with the Global

Forest Coalition, organized the "Nature for Sale" conference, which aimed at documenting the experiences of communities affected by the privatization and commodification of water, biodiversity and the earth's carbon-cycling capacity. These schemes are being heavily promoted by international institutions like the World Bank, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Biodiversity Convention. Thomas Jalong, a Penan from Sarawak, Malaysia, describes how the privatization of the Gunung Mulu national park is leading to the marginalization of the Indigenous Peoples in the area. His story will be published in the "Nature for Sale" report, which will be launched at the World Social Forum, January 2005.

Privatization of the Gunung Mulu National Park

By Thomas Jalong, Marudi Office, Sahabat Alam Malaysia/Friends of the Earth-Malaysia

Since the Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak opened to the public in 1985, it has drawn visitors from all around the world. The park has the world’s largest cave passage and natural chamber, and the longest cave in Southeast Asia. Tourists also come to see its almost immeasurable richness of plants and animals. A single hectare of the park can contain more tree species than all of North America, according to park statements.

But while tourism has brought much-appreciated economic benefits to the area, recent efforts to privatize management have trampled on what few rights the government had devolved to the original owners of the area. Long before the tourists came, the Mulu area was inhabited by the Berawans of Long Terawan and some nomadic Penans, who now live at Batu Bungan, a settlement at the fringe of the park. After the park was established, the Wildlife and National Parks Department of Sarawak managed the area. It allowed the indigenous peoples certain traditional “privileges”, such as the right to hunt for deer and wild boar, fish, and remove certain plant species such as rattan within certain areas.

After the park was listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000, however, the park’s management was handed over to private hands, Borsarmulu Park Management, a subsidiary of Borsarmulu Resorts (BRSB), which also owns

the Royal Mulu Hotel and Resort. The link between the government and the company is obvious, as the shareholders of BRSB are the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and Kenyalang Cergas, a private company run by the brother and sister of Sarawak's Chief Minister. The siblings also sit on BSRB's board of directors.

Although many native Berawans appreciate the economic benefits trickled down from the park's exploitation, their rights and participation have often been completely disregarded, especially when government and private interests have colluded for profit.

For example, in 1975, the state government acquired a 20-acre piece of land from a native landowner. The government said it would build the park's headquarters there, but the building never materialized. Instead, the authority conceded this land to BRSB to build the Royal Mulu Hotel & Resort.

In 1993, the company was granted another 243 acres of provisional lease for the second phase of the resort and other developments. By that time, a number of indigenous families had already claimed that land and some of them had already built small lodgings there for tourists.

The result has been a bitter dispute between the Berawans and the authorities, with the state refusing to negotiate. The government instead has openly criticized the Berawans, characterizing them as greedy and alleging they cannot prove their claims. During the 1990s, the Berawans staged peaceful protests, which the authorities quelled with police force and threats.

Today, the government is planning a number of projects to fulfill its goal of making Mulu National Park a major tourist destination. Many of these projects promise to infringe on the rights and lands of Indigenous Peoples, who have persistently asked the government for the land to be properly surveyed and deeded, to no avail. Most recently, the Berawans are claiming land that the government has allotted for an extension of the Mulu airport. Because the government has refused to entertain the claims, the native landowners have hired a lawyer and called for

arbitration. The case is still pending. The government has also failed to allow the Berawans to participate adequately in decision-making regarding the control, regulation, management and implementation of development activities near the park, even when such activities directly affect them. The Berawans have also been shut out of many economic and business opportunities arising from tourism development in the area, in which they participate mainly as mere workers.

For more than a decade, the Berawans have demanded that the government

- recognize their land rights;
- demarcate their lands and issue titles to all landowners in the Melinau area;
- ensure the participation of the Berawan people in decision making to control and manage the development near the Mulu National Park; and
- ensure a fair share of tourism development and allow them to control development that impacts their cultural heritage.

"Nature for Sale" can be downloaded from January 2005 in English, Spanish and French from <http://www.foei.org/publications>.

Reports on Other Forest-related Meetings

CITES Regulates Ramin Trade

From 2 to 14 October 2004, the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took place in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting decided, among other things, to regulate trade in ramin timber strictly.

The meeting also discussed the relationship between CITES and the Convention on Biodiversity, including the relevance of the Addis Ababa Principles and the Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cites.org>.

Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings

More information on these and other intergovernmental meetings can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages>.

- ** The tenth Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held from 6 – 17 December 2004 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. For more information, please visit: <http://unfccc.int>.
- The Expert Meeting on Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge and the Implementation of Related International Commitments will take place from 6 – 10 December 2004 in San Jose, Costa Rica. For more information, please visit: <http://www.international-alliance.org>.
- The thirty-seventh session of the International Tropical Timber Council will take place from 13 – 18 December in Yokohama, Japan. For more information, please visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>.
- The country-led initiative on the International Arrangement on Forests will take place from 25 – 28 January 2005 in Mexico. The meeting will discuss the future of the UN Forum on Forests. For more information, please visit <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>.
- The World Social Forum will be held from 26 – 30 January 2005 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. For more information, please visit: <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

The tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biodiversity will take place from 7 – 11 February 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand.

For more information please visit: <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings>.

- The third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing of the Convention on Biodiversity will take place from 14 – 18 February in Bangkok, Thailand. For more information please visit: <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings>.

- The second session of the UN Conference for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 will take place from 14 – 18 February 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, please visit: <http://www.unctad.org>
- The twenty-third session of the UN Environment Program Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be held from 21 – 25 February in Nairobi, Kenya. For more information, please visit: <http://www.unep.org>.
- The seventeenth Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry will take place from 15 – 19 March 2005 in Rome, Italy. For more information, please visit: <http://www.fao.org/forestry>.
- The fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will take place from 9 - 20 May 2005 in New York, USA. For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii>
- The fifth session of the UN Forum on Forests will be held from 16 – 27 May 2005 in New York, USA. For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>.

(**Meetings at which the Global Forest Coalition can facilitate Southern NGO or IPO participation.)

Editorial Team:

- Simone Lovera, Friends of the Earth International
- Larry Lohmann, Corner House, UK
- Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement
- Sandy Gauntlett, Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, Aotearoa/New Zealand
- Andrei Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia

This publication was made possible through a financial contribution from Netherlands Development Assistance.