



CLIMATE CHANGE

THE CHALLENGE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**OILWATCH INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION
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Oilwatch International

**10 Ibaa Street, Off Okomoko Street, D-Line, P. O. Box 13708 Port Harcourt,
Nigeria**

info@oilwatch.org – www.oilwatch.org

INTRODUCTION: Climate Change is beyond an Oscar

Climate change has gone from the realm of debate into the realm of accepted reality. This is proved by the tornados, the hurricanes, the floods and the melting of the polar icecaps. All types of evidence exist about the consequences, and the certainty that actions to solve the problem can not be delayed. Climate change stopped being a scientific question and has moved entirely to the political and obviously also economical scene.

We agree that the Oscar Award received by the ex- vice president of the United States, Al Gore, stimulated a lot of media attention and debate on the issue of Climate Change. However, his film and his Oscar should be understood as part of a media campaign to start what is really at stake: a new market, the emissions market. In other words, the film is key for the stimulation of the new and *fictive* carbon market.

It is a market for whom the central question isn't avoiding the impacts, nor helping the millions of persons who already suffer from the impacts, but where the aim is to increase profits and to increase even more the ecological debt which the north has towards the south of the world. It is a market which transfers the impacts of global warming to the poorest countries of our planet.

The carbon market and environmental services

The carbon market is simply the purchase of carbon absorption capacity and the consequent sale of emission rights of CO₂. The market is also known as the emissions trading market.

This new and flourishing market is not aimed at reducing the burning of fossil fuels -which are the main cause of global warming- but to the contrary, it will allow further consumption and at the same time reward those who consume most, because they have more opportunity to enter in the subsidized market at the expense of climate change.

The emissions trading market is a method to move the responsibilities and impacts to the South of the world, creating new threats to communities, whose territories will be occupied by plantations to capture CO₂; whose forests will be handed over to private companies to conserve (and sell) the carbon stored in them; whose agricultural land will be destined for growing bio-combustibles; whose lands will be mortgaged and who will suffer from expropriation and will suffer displacement as protected areas are privatised.

The countries and companies of the North want to use and control forests which are great reservoirs of carbon. Their conservation implies avoiding carbon emission, which compensates industrial emission. Very often, so-called "degraded forests" are replaced by monoculture plantations of exotic species – or in the near future possibly genetically modified species- to use these lands to absorb carbon from industrial origin.

This mechanism is created by the companies for their sole benefit and to the detriment of Southern countries.

The more contaminating a company is, the more profit it will earn, because these companies utilise the emissions quota of the countries obliged to make reductions. These companies can save money by avoiding to make technological changes in their place of origin, and in exchange they will receive state subsidies, credits of Multilateral Banks and earn profit from the projects they set up in the South, be they plantations, biofuels, technological transfer. In this way, they will receive fiscal return for their so called "green" investments.

It is a contradictory situation whereby organizations which finance billions of dollars in oil projects also finance projects for capturing carbon, to supposedly alleviate the effects of global warming.

To make emissions trading efficient, it was necessary for the northern countries to invent the new merchandise which is called environmental services.

Environmental services are a new way to convert into merchandise that which never has been traded before: the air, the water, the maintenance of biodiversity, the photosynthesis, the carbon cycle.

At first, environmental services are proposals which appear to be beneficial to local communities, because it allows them to gain money from the maintenance of forests, the riverheads, hydrographic river basins etc.

However, in reality, environmental services reduce the rights of local people, they are deprived of the control and loose the right to use their land and its resources. These rights are usurped by the buyers of the environmental services.

The sale of environmental services goes with a campaign to obtain control over extensive areas of land. These lands are very often protected areas, or areas that are strategic for their climatological or biological functions. Transnational conservation NGOs who cooperate in these suspicious deals, are obtaining administration, planning and research rights to these areas. Doing so, they meet two simultaneous objectives: on the one hand they deprive the local communities and the States the right over their lands, and on the other hand they provide access to the resources of these lands to companies.

When the sale of an "environmental service" doesn't take place in a protected area, the local communities are obliged to abandon their traditional ways of agricultural production and food gathering. They are transformed as mere park securities and common labourers while these small scale farmers, indigenous and local people are precisely the people who have the capability to conserve and reconstruct ecosystems.

AN UNEQUAL CARBON MARKET

The carbon market is colonial, unequal, unjust, monopolistic and promotes the theft of resources of others.

It is **colonial**, because it promotes a new process of colonization of foreign territories and areas.

It is **unequal**, because the south possesses the resources which the north plunders.

It is **unjust**, because it moves social and environmental impact to the south while financial benefits and wellbeing is concentrated in the north.

It is **monopolistic**, because it tries to apply individual and corporate property laws on lands, knowledge and biodiversity, for example through biotechnology.

AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

From the industry viewpoint, energy is part of a process, subject to monopolistic control, and dependent on the product cycle and obviously on the prices.

From the viewpoint of communities, whether or not an energy source can be qualified as alternative, has to do with its accessibility, the control, and the fact that it doesn't harm their, nor nobody else's ecosystems.

In this framework, alternative energies are sovereign, ecological and just proposals made in solidarity.

They are **sovereign**, because they shouldn't compromise the food sovereignty nor the subsistence base of communities.

They are **ecological**, because they are based on diversity, on the concern for the environment and on the recognition of future problems.

They are **just**, because they raise themes of justice and diversity.

They are based on **solidarity**, because they are not based on competitiveness.

THE SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In the last few decades energy has been in the heart of structural reforms. A model has been consolidated in which energy is no longer a right, but has been transformed into a service. Citizens have become customers of companies -almost always private - which control the investments of States. The only role left for the States, is to guarantee the rights of corporations.

Climate change has renewed the debate about energy. The focus is now on seeking access, at all cost, to all gas, oil and the lands in which they can be found, through agreements, free trade agreements, contracts, invasions etc. But it has also renewed the debate about the development of alternative energy sources, as if the energy problem were merely a technological problem, creating ambiguity about the responsibilities of resolving this global crisis in a sustainable.

The current energy matrix is predominated by fossil fuels, but with high oil prices, there is renewed interest in nuclear energy, and biofuels are promoted

strongly.

First the atmosphere of the south was used and now the lands of the south must be sacrificed to satisfy the insatiable energy needs of the north.

The yearly world energy consumption in fossil fuels is equivalent to the energy used by all plants and animals in 400 years. If the world energy were to come from crops to produce biofuels, we would require a surface area four times bigger than the Earth's surface.

If we were to use solar energy, to satisfy just the needs of New York, we would need to cover the complete Amazon basin with photovoltaic solar panels.

If we were to use hydroelectricity, we would have to flood land the size of Costa Rica, to satisfy the needs of the United States. If we were to use nuclear energy we would require more uranium and spaces to dump radioactive waste.

WAY FORWARD: FACING GLOBAL WARMING

- Understand that the fossil fuel civilization is on its way out irrespective of what corporate interests may wish.
- Resist new fossil fuel extraction projects.
- Stop projects which destroy our forests and other ecosystems, our only protection against global warming
- Demand the reparation of the ecosystems destroyed in a history of plundering and unequal exchange; demand the restitution of the full rights in sustainable societies.
- Oppose and denounce environmental services projects and the trading of emissions.
- Reflect and share ideas, not only about the type of energy used in our society but also fundamentally about the type of society we want.
- Regain control over our sovereignty as a key to a sustainable future.

The OILWATCH Network was born because of the need to develop global strategies for the communities harmed by oil activities, and to support their resistance processes in the fight against these activities. Among the functions of the organization are: exchange of information about the oil companies activities in each affected country; about their operational practices as well as about the different resistance movements and international campaigns against specific companies. Oilwatch strives to make grow, worldwide, environmental awareness, exposing the impact of oil activity in tropical jungles and in their local inhabitants, also establishing the relationship between this activity and the destruction of biodiversity, climatic change and the unpunished violation of human rights. Oilwatch is a network made up of almost 100 organizations in Southern countries.

We are one more voice of the South, more than a voice, a cry.