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Plantations will turn the CDM into a mechanism for continued devastation says Jutta Kill of SinksWatch

Negotiations about carbon sinks in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) have been a slow race to the bottom: From at least some governments cautioning about their inclusion because of a long list of scientific and other uncertainties, through the inclusion of sinks projects into the CDM despite these uncertainties, to the continued evaporation of proposals that might have prevented some of the most devastating social and environmental side-effects of carbon sinks projects. COP 9 will show how low the bar will be fixed in the end.

visible. The local communities and former workers from the company testify that the management of these plantations – including the significant application of herbicides – has been everything else but clean and that any expansion of these plantations will bring continued devastation rather than clean development.

Similar stories about the impacts of industrial monoculture tree plantations on indigenous peoples and rural communities are plentiful and well documented in many different regions. Judging from proposed CDM sinks projects, there is no indication that CDM registration for any project will prevent these negative social and environmental impacts.

It will be a sad outcome of the sinks negotiations at COP9 if the Clean Development Mechanism ends up structured to provide a new subsidy for the industrial tree plantation industry. Indigenous peoples and rural communities already struggling against the encroachment of these 'green deserts' onto their lands will be hit twice by climate change. They are likely to bear the brunt of the impacts caused by global warming in general while the CDM also stands to finance environmentally damaging tree plantations they have been struggling to halt for decades.

There is still time to change course. CDM carbon sink projects require buyers for the credits they generate. Governments serious about addressing climate change or promoting truly sustainable development must refrain from buying carbon credits originating from CDM sinks projects, especially those from industrial tree plantations.

Fail to do this, and the Clean Development Mechanism will become a Mechanism for Continued Devastation.

While governments haggle over the final details of the rules, the tree plantation industry has been quick to grasp the looming opportunity. In Brazil, Plantar S.A. has already begun expanding its vast eucalyptus tree plantations by another 23,000ha. Local small peasant communities have been opposed to the expansion of Plantar's eucalyptus tree plantations for many years. They have witnessed their lands slowly but surely dry up as new plantations encroach, followed by a slow process of seeing their wells drying out and their lands desiccated to a point where it does not support a meagre subsistence livelihood anymore. The environmental impacts of these plantations are readily

Raising public awareness in Italy

Serena Calvi, Legambiente, Coordinator COP9 Campaign

In the run up to the 9th Conference of Parties to be hosted in Milan next month, many Italian environmental NGOs have been working hard to co-ordinate their climate campaigning. They now have high hopes that events and activities planned to take place beyond the confines of the UNFCCC's negotiating halls will help to greatly improve public awareness and participation in Italy's climate agenda.

With a government largely disinterested in public debate, information concerning climate change and its impacts remains scarce to non-existent in much of Italy.

For this reason alone, Italy's environmentalists regard the Milan climate talks as a major opportunity to fight both institutional silence and public disinformation in order to persuade civil society it must pay urgent attention to domestic policies (and to a common international strategy) for responding to climate change.

To that end, several public debates have been scheduled around COP9 at which leading political commentators, scientists and jurists will talk about the causes and likely impacts of climate change, the importance of the Kyoto Protocol and the need to continue the development of an effective multilateral framework of environmental law for collective action to limit the dangers arising from human induced climate change.

Italian environmental groups have also come together to produce *The White Book on Climate* continued overleaf