

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, May 2, 2008

Indigenous Peoples Critical of Position on Carbon Trading of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Contacts: Juan Carlos, Amazon Alliance, 202-285-0153 (Spanish)
Marcial Garcia, Kuna People, ariasmarcial@hotmail.com (Spanish)
Jihan Gearon, Indigenous Environmental Network, 218-760-1370 (English)

New York City, NY – Indigenous Peoples attending the Permanent Forum are outraged that their rejection of the carbon market has been ignored in the final report of the 7th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII). The final report of the PFII hails World Bank funded carbon trading, like the Clean Development Mechanism, as "good examples" of partnership despite the human rights violations and environmental destruction they have caused.

"Indigenous Peoples attending the 7th session of the Permanent Forum are profoundly concerned that our key recommendations on climate change are not being taken into account by the Permanent Forum. This Permanent Forum was created precisely to recognize, promote, and support the rights of Indigenous Peoples," says Florina Lopez, Coordinator of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network of Abya Yala.

Throughout the two weeks of the Permanent Forum, Indigenous community representatives have consistently testified about the injustices associated with the clean development mechanism projects and have asked that the Permanent Forum not promote the projects. However, in the final report of the Permanent Forum (document E/C.19/2008/L.2) adopted today, these injustices have been ignored.

In response, many groups under the name of the Indigenous Caucus of Abya Yala took the floor today to express their concerns. Their statement affirmed that the recommendations of the Permanent Forum do not properly reflect their positions. They used the opportunity to affirm their rejection of carbon trading mechanisms and concerns over specific implementations. Over 30 organizations at the forum called for the final report to include a section outlining their concerns.

In the background paper for this session (Document E/C.19/2008/10), three projects are being upheld to illustrate the "clean development mechanism projects that are being implemented in indigenous peoples territories with good results." However, there are grave problems with each of these projects including violations of the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For example, the Jeripachi wind power project in Colombia did not get the free, prior, and informed consent of the Wayuu people to build this wind farm in a sacred territory of the Wayuu People. Indigenous Peoples' organizations contend the assassination of over 200 Wayuu People prior to the implementation of the project was to clear the area for this and other projects.

Additionally, most of the energy generated from the wind farm is used to power the Cerrajon mine, the biggest open air coal mine in the world, which itself is known for numerous human rights violations and environmental damages. Representatives of the Wayuu people who attended the Permanent Forum didn't even know the project was being promoted as a good example.

"In promoting the clean development mechanism projects and carbon trading, the Permanent Forum is allowing oil companies who are the biggest emitters for greenhouse gases, to continue to pollute," says Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network. "Promoting the commodification of the air is a corruption of our traditional teachings and violates the original instructions of Indigenous Peoples.