

# **OPEN LETTER FROM THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE WORLD TO THE GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA AND THE GOVERNOR'S CLIMATE AND FORESTS TASK FORCE**

**September 10, 2018**

**Ramaytush and Greater Ohlone Territory (San Francisco, CA)**

Original peoples and Indigenous nations of the world gathered on the Ramaytush and the greater Ohlone territory in California supported by ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) to protest the Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) hosted by Governor Jerry Brown and the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF). The GCAS and GCF must not place a market value on the carbon sequestration capacity of our forests in the Global South and North.

You cannot commodify the Sacred -- we reject these market based climate change solutions and projects such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation program (REDD+), because they are false solutions that further destroy our rights, our ability to live in our forests, and our sovereignty and self-determination. False solutions to climate change and climate disruption destroy both our material and spiritual relationship to the Earth. The GCF does not represent us and has no authority over our peoples and territories.

There is an intrinsic interrelationship between our forests and our peoples of the North and the South. All of Creation is alive and interrelated. The air we breathe has life and gives life to all and cannot be bought, sold or traded. As our Sarayaku brothers and sisters say, KAWSAK SACHA, the forest is alive. The spirits of our ancestors live in these living forests, the tundra, the plains, the deserts, the mountains, and the oceans. We are all children of the same mother, Mother Earth. Our relationship with our forests requires us to abide by the original instructions of Mother Earth.

It has been proven that carbon markets have never worked to reduce emissions. Yet, our communities and territories are under increasing pressure, manipulation and coercion to accept selling forests and air as carbon offsets. Moreover, REDD+ and extractivism are two sides of the same coin. Just like fossil fuels, REDD+ by any name evicts our peoples from our lands and territories, grabs vast tracts of our land, violently and forcibly displaces our people and restricts our lives and livelihoods, and violates our human rights. REDD+ and extraction result in intimidation, the militarization of our communities, arrests, criminalization and even assassination.

The majority of the world's forests are found within Indigenous peoples' territories. It is well known that forests survive and regenerate naturally under Indigenous stewardship. The true

drivers of deforestation and climate change are States, multinational corporations and others that build roads in and to our forests, promote settlers, legal and illegal logging, large scale agribusiness and industries, monocultures, oil and gas exploitation and other unwanted mega projects. These threaten our way of life, our rivers and streams, food security, wildlife and biodiversity and contribute to wide scale climate change.

We are here with the support of small Indigenous and non-Indigenous supportive NGOs. We are aware that other Indigenous organizations are also here, funded by millionaire NGOs, either supporting forest carbon markets or leaving the door open for them. Consultations, if at all, in many cases are simply meetings where state agencies, rich NGOs, and others seek only economic benefits, drown out our voices, and undercuts our right to self-determination. As acceptance of these false solutions is sought, false promises of the titling and protection of our forests and meager economic benefits lead some to accept REDD+.

We are profoundly pained and angered to see how each day our Mother Earth is becoming more and more sick. This is happening because the management of our forests has been left in your hands and your decisions that concern our territories have failed. It is not us but you that have led to deforestation and destruction of ecosystems. The forest is our home, it belongs to us by pure inherent right. We will protect what we have left.

But in order to keep it in your hands you invent forms of state ownership such as “conservation areas” or “sustainable development areas.” You invent more forms of offsets such as “intelligent agriculture” “biodiversity offsets” and even “butterfly offsets” that detrimentally affect our lives, our food security, our forests, our biodiversity, and sovereignty. We will never accept the state’s so-called “Ecological Area for Sustainable Development for the Province of Pastaza” or anywhere else in the 37 provinces, 10 countries, and a third of the forests of the world. Our forests are not carbon dumps, they are our homes.

After many centuries of harming other human beings and Mother Earth, governments now act as if it is time to save and protect humanity. For decades the UN has met to find ways to profiteer from privatizing the air in the name of addressing climate change. Mother Earth will only be saved if you respect her and love her. Mother Earth will only be cured by stopping the extraction and burning of fossil fuels – we must keep fossil fuels in the ground.

We declare this so that our future generations be free as the rivers, mountains, lagoons, and the birds that flood us with their songs. We declare this in the name of our ancestors who reside in these forests, mountains, rivers, and lagoons. We declare this in the honor of our struggle that has always demanded respect and dignity. We have the right to choose how we want to live, how we want to feel, how we want to breathe. The rights of Mother Earth and the rights of Indigenous peoples must not be violated, this is fundamental if we really want to live in harmony and preserve humanity.

The sacred cannot be commodified nor is it for bargaining. We reject and call for the cancellation of the Governors’ Climate and Forests Task Force. We declare this on behalf of our

future generations so that they have the possibility of living free like our forests and as free as the eagle of the Amazon. We demand respect to our right to choose how we want to live, how we want to feel, how we want to breathe.

*No carbon colonialism. No REDD+. No commodification of the air.*

*No land grabs. No carbon pricing.*

*Mother Earth and Father Sky are not for sale.*