

## Greenpeace and World Rainforest Movement Misguided?

Contributed by Ross Spencer

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The International Carbon Action Partnership was formed by senior officials from the EU, 3 US States, Canada, Norway and New Zealand in Lisbon to fight climate change by building a global carbon market.

This brave and innovative scheme aims to add momentum towards low carbon economies by grouping countries and regions that cap and trade environmentally damaging CO2 emissions. The IACP intends to push for a worldwide marketplace that will allow cross-border trading in permits that are bought and sold like commodities.

Under the scheme, local authorities place an annual ceiling on CO2 emissions and issue "pollution permits" to companies, which can then buy and sell them.

British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, who signed his country to the IACP said that the NGO is a "significant step forward" for the creation of a global carbon trading system that will be "fundamental in arresting and reversing climate change."

In publishing data on CO2 Emissions per capita however, some interesting facts have emerged. Asia posted the second lowest emissions per capita of only 1.3 just above Africa (0.9) and below Latin America (2.1). Surprisingly, China which has often been touted as the second worst polluter after the USA, posted a low reading of 3.9 vis a vis Canada (17.0), Australia (18.4) whilst the USA posted a staggering reading of 19.6.

This calls the lie on the many claims made by such diverse organizations such as Greenpeace and the World Rainforest Movement who've made the rather tenuous claim that palm oil is responsible for the destruction of rainforest which makes it a major contributor to climate change! Deforestation Watch is perturbed by this development as any wild and unsubstantiated position papers such as these can only damage our cause in the long run as it will ultimately destroy the credibility of our movement!

Let's take a look at the two offending Position Papers. Greenpeace Netherlands in a paper entitled "The Dutch Economic Contribution to Worldwide Deforestation and Forest Degradation" puts forth the rather convoluted argument that "in the period 1996 - 2000 Dutch economic activities contributed annually to about 14,000 ha of deforestation in Indonesia, compared to an annual contribution of about 12,000 ha in the period 2001 - 2005. The decline took place in spite of increasing palm oil and pulp imports from Indonesia, but because the increase of palm oil and pulp plantations has been less in this second period." Jumping through verbal hoops, the paper then sought to show that in Malaysia "there are indications that deforestation has been strongest in the period of 1996- 2000 when the initial palm oil boom took place." What the Paper fails to highlight is that deforestation has moderated in Malaysia somewhat in the last five years (from 2001-2005) despite the palm oil boom continuing unabated in that country!

The World Rainforest Movement in a recent paper curiously entitled "Oil Palm: From Cosmetics to Biodiesel - Colonization Lives On" seeks to paint a picture of indiscriminate clearing of forest land in Indonesia. Says the paper: "In Indonesia, nearly seven million hectares of forest had been approved for conversion to estate crop plantations by the end of 1997, and this land has almost certainly been cleared. But the area actually converted to oil palm plantations since 1985 is about 2.6 million hectares, destined for export to feed the palm oil industries."

What is most disconcerting is the Rainforest Movement's confession of sort: "Indonesia has 10% of the world's remaining tropical forests which are home to over 20,000 plant species - accounting for 10% of the planet's total - 12% of the world's mammal species and 17% of bird species, many of which are unique. The magnitude of this lush biodiversity can be pictured by the data that 25 acres of Borneo's rainforest were found to contain 700 tree species, equal to the total number of species for the whole of North America." The confession? Indonesia is still rich in diversity and it is in the United States where bio-diversity is under serious threat!

Scraping the bottom of the barrel against Malaysia, the Paper attempts to paint a picture of indiscriminate clearing of traditional lands thus depriving the local indigenous tribes of their customary land. The paper describes a march on the office of the Deputy Chief Minister of Sabah by a coalition of indigenous tribes: "Representatives of the Murut, the Kadazandusun, and the Rungus, and some 30 more tribes coming from the remote region of Tongod, traversed in July of this year northern Borneo to reach the gleaming office of Sabah's Deputy Chief Minister of Land, Datuk Lajim Haji Ukin at the capital city of Kota Kinabalu." Then the giveaway: "With the assistance of community support organizations, Wilster and others from Tongod are now trying a new strategy - they've filed a court case against the State and two plantation companies: Hup Seng Consolidated Berhad and Asiatic Development Berhad.

The case is the first deliberate test of Sabah's land tenure laws with regards to indigenous peoples. In a land where indigenous people can file suit in court surely lays to waste the claims that such tribes are being deprived of their customary land with impunity!

What these papers tries to conceal (which is obviously un-concealable) is that palm oil is largely grown in Asia, Africa and Latin America, all 3 of which are continents with the LOWEST emission data per Capita of any place in the world! Deforestation Watch takes the view that such unwarranted and unjustified attacks against a commodity that is contributing to uplifting the economic and social wellbeing of the peoples in the palm oil belt can hardly be described as "colonization". Rather than colonization, the growing of palm oil actually serves to liberate economically and uplift the peoples of the lands in which palm oil is cultivated!

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