

Implement safeguards on REDD Plus, indigenous caucus demands

(15 December 2011) - Indigenous peoples called on the immediate implementation of the safeguards on REDD Plus.

In a press conference a day before the end of the Durban Climate Change Conference, indigenous peoples belonging to the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) called on state-parties for human rights to be central in any agreement on climate change.

The recognition of rights, including rights to land, territories and resources, and Free, Prior Informed Consent is crucial for indigenous peoples as this will rectify violation of their rights in the implementation of climate change solutions.

The safeguards identified in the Cancun Agreement include the "full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders...including indigenous peoples," respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples, "taking into account relevant international obligation,...noting the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." The other safeguard refers to the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity, and ecosystem services to enhance other social and environmental benefits.

These safeguards must be implemented to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are recognized, protected and fulfilled in REDD Plus activities.

The indigenous caucus also clarified its position amidst calls for a moratorium of REDD Plus. Joan Carling, speaking on behalf of the indigenous caucus, said "... this call for moratorium...is not the position of the indigenous caucus [IIPFCCC]" as there was no consensus on this.

"Our common position is the immediate implementation of safeguards under the Cancun Agreement, which include the respect for indigenous peoples' rights and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples."

She stressed that what is needed is that safeguards are properly implemented. REDD Plus is currently in the preparation stage and what is very much needed is to influence the way REDD Plus is being developed in the national levels. "What everybody feels is an urgency for us to make sure that our safeguards are included in the design of REDD Plus at the national level."

"If these safeguards are not part of the national design and this will be implemented, then there is going to be a lot of problems for all the millions of indigenous peoples that are going to be affected by REDD Plus." States must implement these safeguards now to avoid further violations of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Jose Antonio Medina of Mexico also called for a "balanced allocation of funds to mitigation and adaptation" and the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the governance structure of the Green Climate Fund.

In addition, Ms. Victoria Haraseb from Namibia called for "direct access by indigenous peoples to funds on adaptation, as well as to technical support for capacity building initiatives." In Africa, the impacts of climate change have been profound, causing increased drought, massive floods, destruction of livestock and cattle. Thus, urgent and immediate access by indigenous peoples to these funds, and compensation for their losses, are crucial to their survival.

Almost 100 indigenous representatives from Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific, and North America who are members of IIPFCC were present in the Durban Climate Change Conference held from 27 November to 9 December 2011 in South Africa.

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