

ECO

www.cbd-alliance.org - linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 72, Issue 7

Tuesday, 28 Oct. 2025



In this issue

- Indigenous people oppose GM trees
- Turn harmful finance into finance for biodiversity stewards

Indigenous Peoples Defend the Trees of Life, Oppose GM Trees of Death

*“Many Indigenous Peoples’ **traditional knowledge systems**, crucial for biodiversity, as enshrined in Article 8J, celebrate the **sacredness of trees**. In addition to being a source of **food, shelter and medicine**, for many Indigenous Peoples, trees are **living beings** with **spiritual significance** and **deep ancestral connections**. The **2008 CBD COP 9 Decision IX/5** mandates the **precautionary approach to genetically modified trees**. Unfortunately, pulp company **Suzano** (and its subsidiary FuturaGene) has received **permission to release several varieties of genetically modified eucalyptus trees** for commercial production. **Gene-edited GM trees** are also being developed. The commercial release of GM/gene edited trees would worsen the already devastating impacts of **industrial plantations** on global biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples’ rights. We call on all Parties to fully implement the CBD’s 2008 decision and stop all GM trees.”*

- Anne Petermann, Campaign to STOP GE Trees

Indigenous Peoples on the sacredness of trees and the dangers of GM trees:

According to **Frank Billie** of the **Seminole Nation**, “the forest **gives life to The People**, but these **GE trees mean death**. They are not for The People, they are only to make **money for a few rich people**.” GE trees “need to be stopped immediately,” he added.

Celerina Sánchez is a poet and linguist of **tu'un savi (Mixteco)**, originally from Mesón de Guadalupe in Juxtahuaca, Oaxaca, México. Here is an authorized translation of her poem **Yùtú – Tree**.

I am tree, I am the ancient twisted root, soul of my culture

A towering tree who flirts with the sun, and cries sap; a strong and noble tree

I am tree, who has flourished throughout eternity, bathed in rain,

Guarding our ancestor’s umbilical cords

Gustavo Ulcué Campo of the **Nasa People** and the **National Commission of Indigenous Territories (CNTI)** of

Colombia explained that “**GM trees threaten the way of life, ancestral knowledge and food systems** of Indigenous Peoples. **Defending territories is defending life!**”

Casey Camp-Horinek, Ambassador on the Environment, Ponca Nation, stresses that GM trees must be stopped immediately. “**Everything that has to be done, has to be done now. The urgency is here.**” The distinguished Indigenous elder and actor beloved for her role in the hit series *Reservation Dogs* is utterly appalled by GM trees. “Who has the **foolishness and ugliness** to take the seed from this relative and alter it in whatever manner they do? It hurts how these humans are coming up with these **false solutions** to what they have created – what they call climate change.”

Francisco Calí Tzay, Maya Kaqchikel from Guatemala, the **former UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples**, insists that to protect the Amazon and global biodiversity, “**we must not allow GM forests to be created.**” He also stressed that one of the best ways to **protect the environment and forests of the world** is by titling and demarcating of Indigenous Peoples’ territories.

Stop harmful biodiversity finance and turn it into direct finance for biodiversity stewards

Mirna Ines Fernandez (Third World Network) & Heitor Dellasta (Global Youth Biodiversity Network)

Target 19 of the KMGBF calls for the increase of financial resources from all levels, among others, through labelled “innovative” financial schemes, such as payment for ecosystem services, green bonds, biodiversity offsets and credits, with environmental and social safeguards. However, evidence shows that a decade of experience with these mechanisms has failed to meet the scale and pace requirements of biodiversity finance. In many cases, these schemes resulted in negative impacts on ecosystems and their stewards, especially Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including the displacement of these groups and the violation of customary rights, without effectively reaching the communities on the ground.

The labelled innovative financial schemes are proving to be reliant on and a shortcut for carbon and biodiversity credits and offsets. This is because many of these schemes only meet demand when they can be used to compensate for or replace emissions or biodiversity destruction. When used for crediting and offsetting schemes, these mechanisms allow further ecosystem destruction and delay urgent action to halt biodiversity loss. Moreover, these market-based approaches usually render minimal or no benefits to communities on the ground because the biggest portion of the economic benefits goes to intermediaries. This has been the case with the so-called “carbon cowboys” from the carbon markets, who many times received money from carbon sequestering activities in lands that were not even theirs.

In essence, labelled innovative financial schemes divert attention and efforts toward the implementation of more effective and fairer biodiversity finance. Therefore, if we truly want to promote transformative change to

biodiversity finance, we must work together to strengthen impact assessments and ensure direct funding mechanisms.

Further development and implementation of labelled innovative financial schemes should not happen without a comprehensive assessment of their impacts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and ecological integrity. Only after having these impacts appropriately understood, financial decisions should prioritize mechanisms that have proved to bring more benefits for the communities on the ground without compromising human rights or ecosystem integrity. This was a specific proposal from civil society that is still missing attention from the CBD Parties.

While these mechanisms receive increasing attention, grant-based direct funding mechanisms, which have proved to bring more tangible and long-term benefits for the ecosystems and their stewards, are still limited. Funding mechanisms remain largely inaccessible, with complex selection criteria and requirements that are very difficult to meet by Indigenous, local communities, women, and youth organizations. Direct access means that funding designated for biodiversity stewards should be granted directly to their organizations or their chosen and self-determined representative institutions, ensuring they have full autonomy over resource allocation.

The so-needed transformation of biodiversity finance to ensure it reaches the biodiversity stewards will not be possible without the elimination of unnecessary intermediaries and bureaucratic barriers. Direct access for finance to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth is the proven, best, and most cost-effective way to fund the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

Submissions are welcome from all civil society groups.
Email: flaus.gonzales@gmail.com