

LETTERS

COMMUNITY RIGHTS

A massive rally and a public meeting was held in Alipurduar town on 14 January 2012 in which more than 2000 forest dwellers from the Doars area participated, marking the culmination of a month-long Jatha on establishing Community Forest Governance in the area. The rally and public meeting was organised by the North Bengal Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, a constituent of NFFPFW in collaboration with Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR).

The forest dwellers demanded the following:

- effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006
- punitive action against the Forest Department staff responsible for the murder of adivasis in Buxa Tiger Reserve
- immediate recognition of community rights over the forests

This has heightened and intensified the campaign on establishing Community Forest Governance in the area.

Manohar Kothekar & Alistar Bodra,

Conveners,

“Protect Livelihoods–Protect Resources”

National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW)

DURBAN PLATFORM

The world’s major industrial powers and other major countries cobbled together a last-minute agreement at the UN-sponsored international climate talks in December 2011 at Durban, South Africa. As with agreements at similar talks held previously in Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010, the deal that came out of the Durban talks will do nothing of meaning to stop the immense damage to the planet’s ecosystems from climate change.

The European Union (EU) and the US claimed the new agreement (known as the Durban Platform) was a success in addressing climate change because it supposedly builds on past agreements and because it calls for all countries to “launch a process” to produce a legally binding treaty or agreement. Some mainstream news sources called this a breakthrough.

In reality, this agreement does nothing to enforce actual cuts in emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases produced by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation that is driven by industrial production, transport, and wasteful consumption. Instead, the Durban Platform actually obstructs and further delays urgently needed action. Under the Durban agreement, the

"road map" for a binding treaty won't be finished until 2015-and if a treaty does come out of that process, it would not even take effect until 2020!

Promises have been made that in the meantime, countries will voluntarily begin to cut their emissions. But such pledges have been declared before, and emissions of greenhouse gases in the world as a whole have continued to rise each year, with a massive rise in CO₂ (carbon dioxide, a key greenhouse gas) of 6% in 2010.

To put off until 2020 any actual enforcement of cuts in greenhouse gases is a criminal and horrendous act that guarantees even more damage and increasing danger to living ecosystems (webs of life interacting with each other and their physical environment as a unit) and the people of the world.

Climate change tied to human activity is already transforming ecosystems and leading to extinctions of species around the world. It is causing more intensive storms, more extreme droughts and flooding, and rising sea levels that threaten island nations. In terms of the impacts on people, the most devastating effects of climate change have been in the poor, oppressed countries that have contributed the least historically to the causes of global warming. But these problems will become much, much worse for the planet and humanity as a whole-because the greenhouse gases, already at destructive levels, are continuing to build up, and because these gases last for long periods of time in the atmosphere. The do-nothing agreement out of the Durban talks furthers the possibility that climate "tipping points" will occur, where more extreme changes happen quickly....

○ Reed, New York