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to the
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The 22nd United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), April 17-28, 2023, opened with an emphasis on the need for urgent action to address Indigenous Peoples', human, and planetary health amidst a rapidly changing climate. Despite efforts by the UNPFII and other UN bodies to highlight this important message, the stark reality is that escalating environmental violence against Indigenous Peoples who serve as environmental defenders on the frontlines, remains largely unaddressed. Indigenous Peoples are at the forefront of climate change and continue to survive and resist in the face of environmental violence. This violence is intrinsically linked to an economic development paradigm which gives privilege to extractive industries that continue to mine, frack, combust, and experiment with Mother Earth's blood and bones. These extractive industries are allowed to further benefit from the climate crisis through the legitimization of false solutions like carbon markets, offsets, and geoengineering, all of which are part of the so-called "green economy" that only works to perpetuate such violence.

The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) made interventions at the twenty-second session requesting the UNPFII to recommend a special session to specifically address false solutions of the green economy and their impacts on Indigenous Peoples. The request includes a moratorium on all false solutions activities until affected Indigenous Peoples can thoroughly investigate the impacts and make appropriate demands. Because the UNPFII is a high-level advisory body to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with the mandate to deal with Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights, it has a responsibility to provide the space, such as the proposed special

session, for Indigenous Peoples to thoroughly investigate the repercussions of false solutions. This initiative could act as a starting point to provide the necessary expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the Council, programs, and other agencies and bodies of the United Nations, through ECOSOC, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UN-CBD).

While the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples in a Greening Economy is a starting point, there are key issues that IEN recommends to be addressed. To begin with, the definition of the "green economy" in this context has been understood differently by different actors, the definition provided by the UNEP's seminal report "Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication" (UNEP, 2011) has been widely cited and used as the foundational understanding. Claiming that "greening of economies is not generally a drag on growth but rather a new engine of growth," the definition carries an underlying assumption that there does not need to be a trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic growth. From our Indigenous perspective, this is contradictory because the pursuit of endless economic growth goes hand in hand with colonialism and extraction.

A 'green economy' is an economy that relies on false climate solutions like carbon markets, biodiversity offsets and geoengineering. Furthermore, one of the key objectives of the meeting aims to identify "structural/institutional barriers that prevent the participation of Indigenous Peoples in sustainable development processes." In this context, the definition of the "sustainable development process" should be reevaluated and defined. There is contention related to the definition between either how to better involve or integrate Indigenous Peoples into a 'green economy' and/or sustainable development efforts, or rather to evaluate the impacts of a 'green economy' and sustainable development regarding how these concepts support extractive industries. It is not a foregone conclusion that Indigenous Peoples have a desire to participate in a 'green economy' and/or sustainable development efforts or that doing so would be beneficial. The current dominant discourse and understanding of sustainable development as a concept remain deeply grounded in Western-centric and capitalist values, perspectives, and practices. Historically, these values have persistently excluded, silenced, and contradict Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (Coburn et al. 2013).

This paradigm of a "green economy" was introduced by the United Nations as a way to boost the development of countries at its Conference on Sustainable Development (CSD) Rio+20. The significance of this second convening of Indigenous Peoples of the world in 2012 reaffirmed the historic 1992 Kari-Oca I meeting and the mobilization of Indigenous Peoples around the first UN Earth Summit. It is in this spirit that we bring significant

attention to the Kari-Oca II Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples Global Conference on Rio+20 and Mother Earth, the outcome of the international assembly of Indigenous Peoples at the site of the sacred Kari-Oka Púku, outside of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In response to a framework of growth by extraction, the international assembly of Indigenous People's drafted the Kari-Oca II Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples Global Conference on Rio+20 and Mother Earth. The declaration scrutinizes the Rio+20's goal of a "Green Economy" and its premise that the world can only "save" nature by commodifying its life-giving and life-sustaining capacities.

The drafting of the Kari-Oca II Declaration marks the second convening of Indigenous Peoples from around the world, after the historic 1992 Kari-Oca I mobilization of Indigenous Peoples around the first UN Earth Summit. This moment marked a pivotal milestone towards an international movement for Indigenous Peoples rights and highlights the important role that Indigenous Peoples play in defending the sacred of Mother Earth. IEN is part of that movement.

The Declaration states that, "The Green Economy is nothing more than capitalism of nature; a perverse attempt by corporations, extractive industries and governments to cash in on Creation by privatizing, commodifying, and selling off the Sacred and all forms of life and the sky, including the air we breathe, the water we drink and all the genes, plants, traditional seeds, trees, animals, fish, biological and cultural diversity, ecosystems and traditional knowledge that make life on Earth possible and enjoyable." As articulated in the Kari-Oca II Declaration, approaches to "greening" the economy only work as a continuation of the colonialism that Indigenous Peoples and Mother Earth have faced and resisted for the past 520 years.

The analysis expresses deep concern that the "green economy," despite its promises to eradicate poverty, will only perpetuate a system that favors the interests of multinational enterprises and capitalism (Fox, 2022). This is a continuation of a global fossil fuel-based economy and the destruction of the environment by exploiting nature through extractive industries such as mining, oil exploration and production, intensive monoculture agriculture, deforestation, climate false solutions and other capitalist investments. All of these efforts are directed toward profit and the accumulation of capital for the privileged few. Thus, the 2012 Kari-Oca II Declaration also articulated, "Since Rio 1992, we as Indigenous Peoples see that colonization has become the very basis of the globalization of trade and the dominant capitalist global economy. The exploitation and plunder of the world's ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as the violations of the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples that depend on them, have intensified." Such insights remain true today as the Western and capitalist understanding of the green economy persists and is being implemented across national, sub-national and international climate policy.

Greenwashing and climate false solutions within the Green Economy are creating a cover for historic polluter nation-states, like the United States and Canada, to continue expanding fossil fuels and to continue emitting greenhouse gasses. At the same time, false solutions like experimental geoengineering, carbon markets, and nature-based solutions, have been used to justify a modern-day land grab where projects in developing countries and the Global South are being deployed without the knowledge or informed consent of impacted Indigenous Peoples. Carbon markets, offsets, and increasingly biodiversity markets are linked to "greening" projects that pose significant threats to Indigenous Peoples' autonomy and territories. These development projects are implemented under the UNFCCC and the UNCBD.

At the UNFCCC COP28 last month, the implementation of carbon dioxide removals (CDR) was one of the pieces of the text of Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement that was unable to be agreed upon and sent back to the Supervisory Body. CDR is highly contested and consist of projects falling under two broad categories: biological removals and engineered removals. Both types of carbon removals are deeply troubling in their impacts to Indigenous Peoples, as well as simply ineffective at addressing the current climate crisis

Biological Removals:

At the most basic level, they are ineffective at actually reducing emissions. For example, a 2023 study from UC Berkeley[1] has found that REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) projects fail to offset emissions and over 90% of Verra's rainforest carbon credits have been found to be worthless.[2] In the case of REDD, perhaps the UN's largest and most well-known biological removals project, according to a 2023 study in *Science*, on the whole it did not succeed in reducing deforestation and for the individual projects that did, "reductions were substantially lower than claimed".[3]

From a physical science perspective, the carbon extracted and combusted from the Earth's crust increases greenhouse gasses in a biological system that is already saturated with carbon dioxide. Further, the longevity and exact amount of carbon stored in biological systems ("sinks") lack scientific consensus due to imprecise measuring, or in the case of ensuring longevity of sinks, is virtually impossible to guarantee. For example, in the case of forests, scientists have argued for years that it is old growth and existing forests that have the capacity to contain large amounts of carbon dioxide due to the ability

[1] Haya et al., 2023.
[2] Greenfield, 2023.
[3] West et al., 2023.

to store in trunks, downed wood, leaf litter, and soils (Harmon et al., 1990, McGarvey et al., 2015).

The science surrounding biological removals reveals a false equivocation between fossil carbon and biological carbon (Warton, 2021). Fossil carbon and biological carbon, including terrestrial (land-based) and ocean carbon, belong to distinct cycles. Mackey et al. (2013) effectively explain why using land-based carbon sinks as offsets for emissions from fossil fuel combustion is scientifically flawed. They demonstrate that the current potential for terrestrial removal and storage primarily results from the decline of carbon sinks due to historical land use (Mackey et al. 2013). As forests and ecosystems have finite capacities to sequester carbon, increasing carbon in these sinks merely increases the burden on existing biological systems. In contrast, the formation of fossil carbon was meant to be permanently locked away. When we extract and burn fossil fuels, we release carbon from permanent storage into the active carbon cycle, leading to an overall increase in land, ocean, and atmospheric carbon levels. Once this additional carbon enters the system, natural sinks cannot remove it on a relevant timescale for climate mitigation (Steffen, 2016).

The lack of scientific support for the effectiveness of biological removals is particularly harmful for Indigenous Peoples, as we already bear the brunt of climate change's impacts. In addition to the scientific proofs for why biological removals don't work, projects implemented under the agenda of biological carbon removals have been the site of massive human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples including systematic sexual abuse[4] and forced displacement.[5] Developers and investors of the Green Economy are actively targeting the lands and territories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, which are often deemed "preferable" for biological removals implementation.

Biological carbon removals exploit Indigenous Peoples in more diffuse and systematic ways as well. For example, debt-for-nature swaps, which have been increasingly pushed at the UN-CBD as a tool for reaching 30x30, Indigenous Peoples in the Global South are especially targeted, as buying into biological carbon removals via western restoration and/or conservation projects is rewarded by refinancing foreign debt.

Engineered Removals:

Further, we are witnessing how carbon capture and storage (CCS), bioenergy carbon capture and storage (BECCS) and direct air capture (DAC) as engineered CDR continue

[4] Kenyan Human Rights Commission and SOMO, 2023.
[5] Greenfield, 2023.

to be planned to be sold as carbon offsets under Article 6.4 of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. There should be a clear discussion of engineered removals and a moratorium of them in any environmental or climate policy. Engineered carbon dioxide removals (CDR) do not meaningfully address emissions reductions, nor do they alleviate the environmental burdens impacting Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities.

In the UNFCCC's "Information Note on Removal Activities," the 2023 text warns that "engineering-based removal activities are technologically and economically unproven, especially at scale, and pose unknown environmental and social risks."[6] While CDR technology has existed since the 1970s, it continues to fall short of its promises, overestimate its efficacy, and in some cases, lead to even greater harm. Furthermore, these projects do not mitigate the climate crisis but actively accelerate it. In 21 of the 27 active CCS projects the sequestered carbon is injected underground to extract remaining oil from depleting wells through the process of enhanced oil recovery.[7] This is not only counterproductive, but it ensures the damages wrought by the fossil fuel industry will continue. When emissions are injected underground, there is no guarantee it will sit comfortably in one place; instead, injections could contaminate water sources of up to 100 km from the site,[8] and induce seismic activity that presents safety risks.[9]

Carbon Markets:

Yet, carbon pipelines, emissions trading platforms, and voluntary accounting systems are among the most favored so-called "solutions" because they provide an achievable path to "net zero" without requiring the work of actually reducing fossil fuel emissions. While it is crucial that responsible action is taken for emissions, it must not be pursued through carbon offset markets. Offset markets are fraught with concern, including recent investigations that find over 215,000 projects were either over-credited, or should not have been issued in the first place.[10] In California's carbon offset market, for example, research into its Cap-and-Trade program finds that companies participating in the market are disproportionately located in poor and low income communities, meaning the purchase of emissions offsets without reductions will continue to impact the health of vulnerable communities.[11] In fact, a five-year analysis of the state-run offset program finds

[6]UNFCCC. 2023. "Information note: Removal activities under the Article 6.4 mechanism."
[7] Global CCS Institute. 2022. Global Status of CCS 2022.
[8] Kelemen, et.al. 2019. An Overview of the Status and Challenges of CO_2 Storage in Minerals and Geological Formations.
[9] Chen, et. al. 2022. A critical review on deployment planning and risk analysis of carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) toward carbon neutrality.
[10] Rathi, Akshat. 2022. Inside the billion-dollar market for junk carbon offsets.
[11] Cushing, et. al. 2018. Carbon trading, co-pollutants, and environmental equity: Evidence from California's cap-and-trade program (2011-2015).

that GHG emissions and co-pollutants have actually increased in some facilities and communities.[12]

Carbon markets hinge on verification in order to secure value to the purchaser. In voluntary carbon markets, third party carbon verifiers have a vested interest in the continued promulgation of carbon credits. Contractors cannot be entrusted to provide unbiased and rigorous accounting. In fact, recent reporting has found many creditors to be lenient, and to be operating according to their own standards.[13] Project developers too are concerned with loss and gain, reputation, and livelihood, and are therefore incentivized to provide communities with favorable information that will allow carbon offset projects to go forward; but at the same time, this can lead to an underselling of the risks and concerns inherent in carbon dioxide removal.

In a November 2022 note on removals, the UNFCCC recommends that "a removal activity, CCS or DAC shall minimize and, where possible, avoid, negative environmental and social impacts of an activity involving removals including impacts on biodiversity, land and soils, ecosystem health, human health, food security, local livelihoods, and the rights of the Indigenous Peoples."[14] It cannot be overemphasized enough, carbon removal technologies are not just solutions to the climate crisis. Instead, they ensure that systems of oppression and extraction will continue well into the future.

All the while these technologies are exposing Indigenous Peoples to toxic materials, risking drought, flooding, hurricanes, melting glaciers and sea ice, rising sea levels and irreversible damage to the ecosystems we have been in relationship with since time immemorial.

Imposed energy extraction in conjunction with more preposterous false solutions is a continued vicious attack upon our ancestral homelands and the very essence of our inherent sovereign rights and self-determination. Extractivism and false solutions perpetuate destruction and climate chaos and do not actually address the current state of global climate crisis we are in. This is to the detriment of our way of being, and the benefit to the colonialist fossil fuel and carbon based economy.

<u>Financializing Nature:</u>

We are increasingly concerned about forests and nature used, sold, bought and traded as commodities. These distortions of treating nature as capital go against the sacred.

[12] Pastor, et. al. 2022. Up in the air: Revisiting equity dimensions of California's cap-and-trade system.
[13] White, Natasha. 2023. Bogus carbon credits are a 'pervasive' problem, scientists warn.
[14] UNFCCC. 2023. Activities involving removals under the Article 6.4 mechanism.

Whether from forest, soil, agriculture, biodiversity or ocean offsets, selling nature or Mother Earth's sacred processes to extractive industries or large corporations to continue to pollute is a violation of the sacred. These processes are seen in various UN environmental and climate policies including biological carbon removals in Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement, the privatization of nature in Article 6.8 of the Paris Agreement, debt swaps for nature and climate programs in the UNFCCC, and in the biodiversity offsets and other programs like global 30x30 proposed in the UNCBD. The history of carbon offsets and debt swaps for nature have, in many cases, increased land grabbing and in some cases caused illegal evictions.[15]

Not only are the programs false solutions mentioned above harmful and ineffective, they block climate change mitigation efforts from phasing out fossil fuels and other extractive energies. Compared to 2020, the World Bank estimated a record 60% increase in global carbon pricing revenue (USD 86 billion) in 2021. Voluntary offset markets have also increased reshaping incentives for carbon brokers and managers to pressure Indigenous Peoples into offsetting their territories resulting in more environmental and climate violence. Governments increasingly justify the revenue as a way to increase market-based mechanisms for "broader policy objectives" and to restore depleted public finances, while ignoring how Indigenous Peoples' territories are targeted and co-opted by this misleading agenda.

In addition to climate market regimes, the UNFCCC and UNCBD increasingly promote geoengineering technofixes. These include solar radiation management (SRM) projects like the Stratospheric Controlled Pertubation Experiment (SCoPEX) and the Arctic Ice Project. These false solutions are in experimentation phases and continue to be tested on Indigenous Peoples' territories. The injustice of these experiments must stop!

Indigenous Peoples are environmental defenders fulfilling our responsibilities as guardians of almost 80% of Mother Earth's biodiversity on our lands, waters, and territories. Protecting and restoring Mother Earth is at the heart of Indigenous Peoples' cosmologies and original teachings. These acts of labor and care keep the planet alive. In addition, Indigenous Peoples continue to resist and defend territories from the violence of extraction from the fossil fuel and agribusiness regimes. According to Human Rights Defenders Memorial data, just five countries including Colombia, Ukraine, Mexico, Brazil and Honduras made up for over 80% of killings of human rights defenders in 2022 with Colombia accounting for 46% of the total. Indigenous Peoples working on land and environmental rights were the most frequently targeted, accounting for almost half of the total killings. Indigenous Peoples are at the forefront of evacuations and escalating

[15] Marshall, 2023.

environmental violence, while holding the most valuable and biodiverse lands and waters on this planet. Multinational extractive corporations hire private security to target, pressure and threaten Indigenous Peoples. Environmental violence has a multitude of impacts on Indigenous Peoples. Multilevel impacts related to environmental, cultural, and social violence include: traumatic violent events, evictions, cultural erasure, death threats, racism and discrimination, food and water scarcity, contaminated water and food, as well as missing and murdered Indigenous women, children and relatives.

We urge the UNDESA Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples in a Greening Economy to address these critical issues expressed in this document. The critical points from the Kari Oka declaration on the Green Economy, the false solutions to climate change including CDR, carbon markets and offsets, geoengineering technologies and the financialization of nature should be deeply explored and discussed. We recommend a moratorium on these climate false solutions and increased pressure to protect Indigenous environmental defenders and a phase out of fossil fuels at source. We ask for a workshop on these issues to be held in the next year.