

## **Some Good News from Cancun.**

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Very often the news coming from UN Climate Change meetings is bad. Nations which should be cutting their carbon omissions are not doing so, or are using loopholes to avoid sanctions. So, a good news story is welcome.

On December 1, 2010, Brazil announced that deforestation in the country had fallen to another record low level. The reduction in Amazon deforestation, from over 27,000 km<sup>2</sup> in 2004 to below 6,500 km<sup>2</sup> in 2010 is the largest reduction in emissions made by any country anywhere in the world. And so Brazil, a tropical emerging economy, has done what rich, industrialized countries promised to do almost a decade ago, but have yet failed to deliver.

According to the US based Union of Concern Scientists, Brazil's reduced deforestation emissions in five years from 2005 to 2010 average, that serves as a baseline, amounted to 870 million tones of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

How does this compare with other countries? Well, the EU's pledge of 20% reduction by 2020 corresponds to just below 850 million tones and the U.S. pledge of 17% reduction (below 2005, not 1990 as it is the case for other rich countries) is about 1,200 million tones.

Brazil originally set a goal of reducing deforestation by 80% by 2020. However, since it has already achieved 67% reduction, the outgoing President Inacio Lula da Silva recently moved that date back to 2016. Brazilian Civil Society Organisations (CSO) here at Cancun are rightly proud of this record, but they feel that their country can do better. They are campaigning to eliminate deforestation by the year 2015. They want the incoming President-elect Dilma Dousseff to support this position.

These organizations realize that the struggle to eliminate forest destruction has been very costly. Dorothy Mae Stang an American born, Sister of Notre Dame de Namour was brutally murdered on February 12, 2005 for opposing logging. She had previously received death threats from both loggers and large land owners. Almost one decade earlier Chico Mendes (,1944 –1988), a rubber trapper, trade unionist and environmentalist was also murdered by ranchers who were opposed to his campaigns to protect the forest and the people of the forest.

The forces that killed these two people and hundreds of others like them are still active in Brazil. At this moment there is a major struggle under way in the Brazilian Congress with loggers and ranchers doing everything possible to oppose the Forest Code which has contributed some much to reducing deforestation.

A recent study by the Observatoria do Clima coalition has shown how the proposed amendments to the Forest Code would create loopholes that could increase emissions very substantially. If these amendments are not rejected then the Brazilian government's record on protecting the forest and fighting climate change will be called into question.

Brazilian CSOs are at the forefront in Cancun in promoting action on REDD (reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), which will promote the protection of large sections of the forest while, at the same time, promoting the human well-being of the indigenous people and other poor forest dwellers.

But at the moment, Brazil is an example which other countries, especially rich ones, should emulate in the drive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow down climate change.