



**SUBMISSION FOR THE FIRST GLOBAL CONSULTATION
ON 'NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS'**
IBON International
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IBON International welcomes the opportunity to submit our input in the UN Environment Programme's First Global Consultation on 'nature-based solutions' (NBS). IBON International, as a service institution closely working with people's movements across the global South, registers our concerns with what has long been regarded by civil society as a distraction from the real solutions to mitigate the impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises.

The push for so-called 'nature-based solutions' has only created opportunities for carbon colonialism and greenwashing by fossil fuel, agro-chemical, and plantation companies who have co-opted and corrupted the concept. Not only is it questionable that these offsetting programmes even work; more importantly, these corporate-led 'nature-based solutions' divert us from the goals of a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels and truly sustainable land and water use with people's rights at the centre.

A significant fuel for attention to NBS is the illusion that the carbon-sequestering capacity of nature can offset the continued burning of fossil fuels. Notably, corporations such as Shell have pledged a significant sum of \$300 million to establish forests in an area where there was no previous tree cover, while Eni, an Italian energy conglomerate, has committed to achieving net-zero exploration and production by 2030 by planting an expansive 81,000 square kilometres of trees across Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. These are mere attempts to conceal their harmful activities through greenwashing, delaying the need for immediate and drastic reductions in emissions by scaling down fossil fuel extraction.

These NBS are not only incapable of sequestering carbon as effectively as complex, multi-layered forest ecosystems but also pose negative consequences. Its possible impacts include land grabbing, community displacement, monoculture plantations, human rights violations, depletion of freshwater resources, and a reduction in biodiversity, among others. These issues are especially prevalent in marginalised communities.

Sustainability is a more expansive concept than merely addressing the environmental pillar of sustainable development. It needs to consider its rights impact. Solutions that do not address the rights of frontline rural communities, women, the urban poor, Indigenous Peoples, and other sectors are simply not real solutions.

To move towards sustainable land and water use, we need to address systemic patterns of unsustainable consumption and production promoted by neoliberal globalisation.



Decades of trade liberalisation have fostered Africa's dependence on crop and mineral export. This has led to the expansion of transnational extractive industries and the clearing of biodiverse carbon sink forests for livestock pasture and agricultural export crops, such as cocoa, cotton, soy, and maize. In 2020 alone, the world lost forest cover the size of the Netherlands, mostly because of these agro-conversions. To put this into perspective, emissions due to deforestation tied to commercial agriculture will be third behind China and the US if it were a country.

IBON International calls for a truly systemic and rights-based response to the current crises. Climate justice requires that the polluters who have caused the most damage take the lead in reducing emissions. This should be done without false solutions, colonial appropriation of the South's resources, and corporate control over technologies and knowledge. Instead, democratic decision-making and participatory socioeconomic planning at the local level should be central in governing resource use and management.

Rather than enabling false solutions which allow corporations to maintain the appearance of 'balanced' carbon ledgers while continuing to burn fossil fuels, we recommend that the UN Environment Programme mobilise support for people-powered climate actions and solutions—those developed and owned by grassroots communities themselves in the context of their struggle against corporate encroachment on their land, water, and resources. These solutions include the promotion of agroecological farming systems and food sovereignty, support for community-based renewable energy and community conservation of biodiverse ecosystems, and securing land and tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

IBON International looks forward to further engaging with the UN Environment Programme in pursuit of our shared agenda of climate justice. ###