Forest Peoples, Plantations and Intensively Managed Forests

Marcus Colchester,
Forest Peoples Programme,
Presentation to The Forests Dialogue,
Gland, 21st June 2005
Planting forests with respect for human rights
Forest Peoples and Plantations:

- Forests cover 12% of the world’s land surface.
- Almost all forests are inhabited.
- Half of the world’s one billion very poor people can be considered to be forest-dependent.
- At least half of these are long term forest residents with legitimate rights to derive their livelihoods from forest lands.
- About half of all timber plantations and most tree crop estates established in converted forest.
Problems of Plantations (1)

- Concessions or title issued without respect for indigenous interests
- Removal of original ecosystem
- Livelihoods lost or at best transformed
- Culture lost
- Wealth and land concentrated
Problems of Plantations (2)

- Rights extinguished, displacement common
- Benefits limited
- Impoverishment
- Loss of political control
- Protests
- Repression and human rights abuses ensue
- Conflict
Protests
Conflict
Reclaiming the land
Not a certifiable plantation
RSPO

- Consumption of edible oils forecast to double by 2025
- 5-10 million hectares of oil palm planned to meet this ‘need’ (similar targets for soya)
- Concerns about deforestation
- Business community with WWF set up RSPO
- Business to Business initiative, voluntary
- Standard setting, adoption and 3rd party verification
Emerging RSPO standards

- Plantation land not legitimately contested
- No land acquisition without Free, Prior and Informed Consent
- Recognition of customary rights in land
- Negotiated agreements, recognition of peoples’ institutions
- Labour standards (ILO) or above
- Protection of children, women, migrants
- No clearance of primary forest or HCVF
Unresolved issues

- GMOs
- Pesticides: current wording allows eg paraquat and aldicarb
- Small holder representation
  - Unfilled place on board
  - Not directly represented on CWG
  - Standards not suited to small scale production
  - Unclear re gaining fair prices from mills
Successful conflict resolution

- Recognition of rights
- Good participation (FPIC)
  - In negotiations with the companies
  - In setting national standards
  - During audits
  - In dealing with specific disputes
‘Win win scenarios’?
Role of State

Can these problems be resolved project by project?

- Land Use planning
- Recognition of local community and indigenous peoples’ rights
- Regulation of private sector
The Way Forward

• In the long term, national legal and policy reforms are needed in many countries if local communities and indigenous peoples’ rights are to be accommodated by plantations.

• The private sector can lead the way in pioneering just and sustainable solutions, respecting forest peoples’ rights and encouraging governments to reform accordingly.