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PAPUA NEW GUINEA: LAND SUMMIT OR LAND GRAB?

Jubilee Australia and the Oakland Institute denounce the National Land Summit (May 2019), organised by the Papua New Guinea (PNG) government, as a dangerous attack on the country's unique customary land tenure system.

They see it as an attempt by the PNG government to 'mobilise' customary land so as to give greater access to multinational companies and commercial banks for logging, mining and industrial agriculture leases.

'The government claims that customary land is under-utilised and so prevents economic progress and development', said Dr Luke Fletcher, Executive Director of Jubilee Australia. 'It is actually the opposite. Over the past few decades the extractives sector (usually defined as mining, oil and gas) has not benefitted most people in PNG. Nor have the logging and associated oil palm plantations'.

Frederic Mousseau, Policy Director of the Oakland Institute commented, 'The government claims that the objective of the Land Summit is *not* to take away customary land from its owners - as stated in the country's 2019 budget. However,

land reform is a key strategy to favour land-based private sector growth. This growth will result in an expansion of logging, palm oil, mining and oil and gas sectors, which have already exploited and depleted much of PNG's natural resources. They have led to poor development outcomes, destruction of livelihoods, environmental degradation and social conflict and have contributed to climate change through deforestation.'

The informal economy and the agriculture sector in PNG depend heavily on the maintenance of the customary land tenure system. Jubilee and Oakland Institute detail a myriad of commercial and productive activities, even for the export market, that can be developed without destroying the land rights of the communities. They contend that, instead of devising new schemes to steal customary lands from their owners so that foreign businesses and banks can profiteer, the PNG government should focus on local initiatives that will help maximise the benefits for the national economy and the people.

Source: Jubilee Australia Research Centre, 2 May 2019, www.jubileeaustralia.org; Oakland Institute www.oaklandinstitute.org

AMAZON SACRED HEADWATERS INITIATIVE

The Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative (ASHI),¹ formally launched in 2017, has made some significant strides in the first half of 2019. The ASHI vision of permanent protection of nearly 60 million acres of rainforest territory in the headwaters of the Amazon has inspired a

whole new level of collaboration among the indigenous groups in Ecuador and Peru.

A series of ASHI meetings, attended for the first time by representatives of the various indigenous nations from Peru, were held in early 2019. One

¹ Pachamama Alliance and Amazon Watch are NGOs working to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. CONFENIAE is a federation of nine indigenous nations

in Ecuador's Amazon region. Together they launched the ASHI.

specific gathering in Peru in March, to which many indigenous leaders from Ecuador travelled, was particularly significant. The border between Ecuador and Peru was redrawn in the midst of World War II and it arbitrarily sliced through indigenous territories separating families and cultures. a number of those attending the meeting movingly spoke of how this gathering and the vision of the Sacred Headwaters Initiative fulfilled prophecies they remember hearing from their grandfathers: that one day their people would be united once more.

Recently an ASHI governing council was created, made up of representatives from the indigenous people of all nine Amazon countries and NGO partners, who will be responsible for budgets, plans and the overall direction of the Initiative.

This year ASHI has received nearly \$1.2 million funding from international foundations, allowing

a new and critically important phase of the Initiative to be launched in late July 2019.

An ASHI Commission, made up of 18 international experts in the fields of regional planning, indigenous rights, ecological development, conservation finance, has been formed. The very existence of the Commission will bring national and international credibility and visibility to the ASHI. Over the next year, the Commission will work on an ASHI regional ecological development plan that is supported by all of the key stakeholders of the Initiative: indigenous groups, NGOs, and local and national governments. This is an ambitious plan, but consistent with a visionary initiative. We will keep you posted on progress.

Source: *Pachamama Alliance Summer Newsletter*, www.pachamama.org Edited by Alison Healey.

CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS IN THE PACIFIC: NADI² BAY DECLARATION

Endorsed at Nadi Bay, Fiji, 30th July 2019

We, the People of the Pacific Islands Development Forum:

striving to advance the sustainable and inclusive development of Pacific Island nations;

dedicated to the goals of poverty eradication, environmental preservation and to addressing the challenges of the current anthropogenic climate change crisis;

advocating for a paradigm shift to foster coherence between Climate Change mitigation and adaptation actions, environmental protection and resilience;

declare that we:

1. **Express deep concern** about the lack of comprehension, ambition or commitment shown by developed nations of the world regarding the impending grave consequences that the current and ongoing Climate Crisis poses for vulnerable Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), which contribute negligible amounts of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to this human-caused global problem;
2. **Recall the Suva Declaration on Climate Change³** that called for the need to limit the

global temperature increase to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels, which was eventually and legally adopted as the target for GHG emissions and temperature in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change;

3. **Underscore the serious concerns** and the stark warnings by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that GHG emissions must be reduced immediately. The science warns of the real possibility that coral atoll nations could become uninhabitable as early as 2030. By 2100, the coral atoll nations of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati,⁴ Tokelau and the Maldives and many small island developing states (SIDS) could be submerged.
4. **Emphasize** the important relationship between the ocean and climate change in terms of the management of carbon, the absorption of heat and regulation of the global climate system;
5. **Reassert the serious effects** of loss and damage on PSIDS, including their impact on territorial baselines and Exclusive Economic

² Pronounced *Nandi*. Fiji's international airport is located at Nadi.

³ September 2015. Suva is the capital of Fiji.

⁴ Pronounced *Kiribas*.

Zones, and on the current degradation of ocean health, ice-sheets depletion and sea level rise, all affecting the survivability, livelihood and sovereignty of PSIDS;

6. **Affirm that** climate change poses the single greatest threat to the human rights and security of present and future generations of Pacific Island peoples;
7. **Strongly support** the need for a UN Resolution to establish a Legal Framework to protect the rights of people displaced by climate change that impedes their access to basic rights to life, water, food and housing for many millions of people around the world;
8. **Support** the statement of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to ‘tax pollution, not people, and end subsidies for fossil fuels’;
9. **Call for urgent actions** by all countries, to fully honour and implement their Kyoto Protocol and its amended GHG emissions reduction targets, as well as to meet their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement;
10. **Recognize** the urgent responsibility and moral obligation of fossil fuel producers to put an end to fossil fuel development, to manage the decline of existing production and to ensure the phase-out of coal power to achieve the Paris climate goals. These are not

just economic issues; they are of widespread detriment to human health through acute respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

11. **Recognize the ambitions** of the Tony de Brum⁵ Declaration and encourage all countries to support efforts aimed at decarbonizing the transport sector, particularly the maritime sector, and seek Pacific partnerships working to advance these efforts;

WE the People of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, declare a Climate Change Crisis in the Pacific.

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The Declaration concludes with a further 12-points, which specify particular actions required to deal with the realities so strongly and clearly enunciated above. These are addressed to the United Nations and a number of its agencies, to the countries and people of the world, especially the highly emitting nations and their governments, to the fossil fuel industry and all other industries and corporations implicated in this global crisis of climate change.

Countries signing this Declaration are Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu. Also attending this meeting were representatives of NGOs and the private sector.

Sources: Declaration at www.brigidine.org.au; Pacific Islands Development Forum at www.pacificidf.org Sent by Marilyn Aitken. Abridged by Alison Healey.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL IS WORKABLE : FIVE REASONS WHY

The *Pact for a Green New Deal* is a coalition in Canada calling for a far-reaching plan to cut emissions by half in 11 years in line with Indigenous knowledge and climate science, create more than one million good jobs and build inclusive communities in the process. Its bold, justice-based vision is galvanizing thousands of people by recognizing the multiple crises we face and working to respond to them. On May 6, 2019, the coalition began with listening to people from coast to coast discovering what a Green New Deal would be for their community.

The Green New Deal (GND) began in Spain and is spreading into many countries,

⁵ Tony de Brum was the Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands influential in the development of a

promising massive job creation and an increase of unionized jobs and workers’ rights for all, especially the most vulnerable. Switching to renewable energy and efficiency creates many more jobs than investment in fossil fuels. But that only scratches the surface of the transformation that can be achieved. The job creation potential in the Green New Deal is far greater in other areas of the low-carbon economy, e.g., health care, education, local agriculture, land and water protection. Further job creation lies in retrofitting buildings and building hundreds of thousands of new units of public and non-market housing, planting hundreds of millions of trees, building

Declaration in 2017 calling on shipping nations to commit to reducing shipping’s carbon footprint.

free electrified mass transit in every community, universal day-care and rebuilding our education system with thousands of new teachers. For a country like Canada, these measures could create more than a million jobs within a decade - the greatest job creation program in our history, doubling the unionization rate, and extending collective bargaining rights and protections for workers.

Ignoring the Climate Crisis will bankrupt us.

The GND is our chance to create a much fairer economy than we have now. The economic damage from allowing global temperatures to rise by 2 degrees C would amount to \$69 trillion globally and we are heading for at least twice that level of warming. Big polluters have been let off the hook entirely. Fairness demands that they pay for their pollution. The biggest polluters are the 100 corporate and state fossil fuel giants responsible for a huge 71% of total greenhouse gas emissions since 1988; the richest 10% of the world's population produce almost half of all global emissions today. We can increase royalties on extraction, slash absurd fossil fuel subsidies and sue for climate damages. Fossil fuel companies are not the only ones failing in their obligations to the rest of society. There are other corporations not paying their taxes at the legislated rate and many conceal huge amounts of their money in overseas tax havens. All these measures would make the GND affordable.

This is our chance to defend life on earth and indigenous land rights at the same time. At least a quarter of the land on earth is traditionally owned, managed, used and occupied and has been defended for thousands of years by Indigenous peoples. These territories – although under intense pressure from industry – are also significantly better protected than lands under the control of settler societies. The United Nations (UN) Report on Biodiversity states that the ‘knowledge, innovations, practices, institutions and values’ of indigenous peoples are vital to protecting the biodiverse systems on which all life depends.

When we defend indigenous land rights and respect indigenous knowledge, we defend the health of our entire planet. And in rising to the climate crisis, we have a chance to redress and make reparation for foundational and ongoing genocide in these lands.

The GND can raise an army of supporters. The GND seeks ‘climate *justice*’ which is morally right and a winning strategy. It goes beyond reducing emissions only, to include also action for economic and social justice. Herein lies its strength: its capacity to attract wide support from people.

The Green New Deal will be good for our souls.

We need a collective project, a higher purpose, right now. It is not only the planet's life support systems that are unravelling. So also is our whole social fabric. In the rise of fake news, of fascism and conspiracy, of loneliness and isolation resulting from late capitalism, we are losing shared assumptions about what we can trust, even about what is real. No surprise then that the biggest obstacle to widespread change in the face of climate breakdown is hopelessness, a feeling that it is all too late. A common project the size of the GND gives us a sense that we are working together for something bigger than ourselves, which we each have a part in creating. It challenges the endlessly promoted narratives of fear and division with a positive and powerful vision of what humanity can be. This vision is already emerging from the streets, the schools, workplaces and Unceded Territory. It says that, when the future of life is at stake, there is nothing we can-not achieve. That is why we will win a GND.

We have to. We will lead from below and force our so-called leaders to follow. We will build a safer, fairer future for the many, not the few.

Source: Avi Lewis, husband of author Naomi Klein, an address to Canadians across the country, May-June 2019.

www.act.greennewdealcanada.ca

Condensed and edited by Mary Boyd.

Contributions to Bulletin and responses to its content are welcomed.

Publication bi-monthly from office in Sydney. Deadline: 14th of each publication month.

The Bulletin is currently produced by two networks: *Justice and Trade Agreements* and *Human Trafficking*.

Coordinators: JTA - Mary Boyd (maryboyd@live.ca); Alison Healey (grailsydney@ozemail.com.au);

HT – Patricia Foito e Camisao (pcamisao@gmail.com); Angelina Kyondo (mksgrail@yahoo.com).

Design: Thanks to Marian Kelly for her donation of time and talent.