



**drynet**

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# News from Drynet

A global initiative giving future to drylands

Drynet is a project of 15 organisations from all over the world. They work together to combat land degradation

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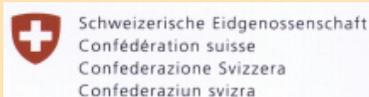
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## The World Day to combat Desertification and Drought

**June 17:** The celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought this year took place in the midst of a developing national movement protesting against the mega-economic projects that degrade the land and affect the lives of communities.

It has been 14 years since Chile subscribed and ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD). According to this convention, governments should, among other things, implement a National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, with the participation of both Civil Society organizations and affected communities. They should also regularly report on the activities and actions they carry out and develop a diagnostic system of the desertification process in their country.

Instead of complying with these internationally agreed upon commitments, the government is promoting business based on the exploitation of common goods at a scale never seen before. In essence, these are ventures with guaranteed profit, such as mega-mining projects, agribusiness and forest monocultures, and energy projects, all of which use a huge amount of toxic substances, exhaust water resources, seriously contaminate the environment where they operate, and destroy the nutrients of soils within the extensive territories they use. The result of these activities is exactly what the convention proposes to combat: expansion of arid lands, drought, poverty, and forced migration.

In order to efficiently address desertification and drought in Chile, it is essential to stop the abusive expansion of mining and the promotion of intensive agriculture based on industrial-scale monoculture-species immediately. It is equally important to ensure that no genetically modified species are introduced in Chile and to reject the validity of decree 701, which calls for the continued expansion of industrial plantations of pine and eucalyptus trees by 3 million hectares, at the cost of the lands of small farmers and

indigenous peoples.

For these reasons, we reiterate our demand that, in fulfilling its commitments to the Convention, the Government of Chile:

Arrange the active and informed participation of Civil Society organizations and affected communities in the revision and implementation of the National Action Plan Against Desertification,

Give citizens clear information about the actions and activities developed by Chile's office of co-ordination for the UNCCD,

Quickly establish and put into practice a diagnostic and monitoring system of the desertification process in Chile that has clear mechanisms for the participation of civil society.

Repeal Legislative Decree 701, which promotes forest plantations, and the other legal provisions that indiscriminately facilitate increased monocultures and the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which degrade soil in large parts of the country.

Stop the application of the current energy model aimed at satisfying the needs of large extractive projects that accelerate the desertification process in the country.

The United Nations recognizes that desertification is a major problem for both the environment and human development. The advancement of this process leads to environmental degradation, which, consequently, undermines communities' subsistence practices. The current predicament requires more effort from all sectors, particularly that of government, which is responsible for designing and implementing the environmental policies necessary for the welfare of the country.

*Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales*

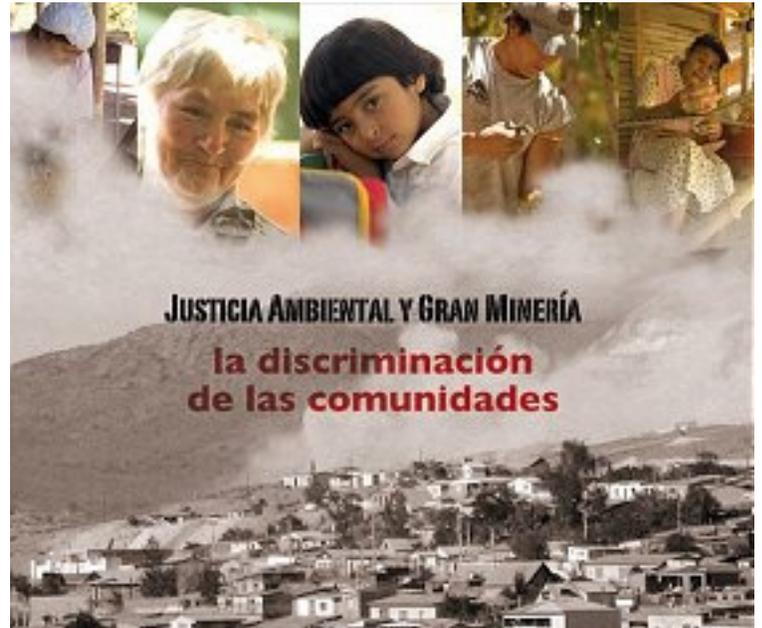
## Environmental Justice and large scale Mining. The Discrimination against Communities

The Latin American Observatory on Environmental Conflicts (OLCA), published a report on the research they conducted in northern Chile on the state of environmental justice and mining in that part of the country. The document is titled, "Environmental Justice and Big Mining. The Discrimination against Communities."

During the past two decades, Chile has become entrenched in an economic model that promotes the ever-increasing exploitation of natural resources within its territory, affecting communities, impacting the environment and generating negative socio-environmental consequences.

In Chile, the exploitation of natural resources generates the most important income for the country. Among the most relevant economic activities are mining, forestry, and fishing industries. Within the current economic model, it is clear that most of the capital in these three areas is transnational, and that operations in all three have a heavy impact on the land, the environment and the communities, generating conditions of social unrest that result in conflict.

Although mining is recognized world-wide as the activity that impacts the environment the most, through its great consumption of water and highly contaminating and destructive practices, this industry has a fundamental role in the so-called economic growth of Chile. Consequently, Chile's environmental legislation is weak, because it does not regulate preventatively, but rather, aims to streamline extractive processes and maintain the interest in foreign investment in the country. Furthermore, Chile's environmental legislation gives territorial, customs, and tax privileges to corporations, and fails to consider mechanisms to distribute environmental costs and benefits in a just way or legal tools to protect the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights of communities.



The unfair distribution of costs and benefits with the economic model imposed in Chile, has led the people - and entire communities- affected by mining to organize themselves and to build socio-environmental movements. These movements arise from the need for environmental justice, with socio-economic, cultural and political connotations.

The state has presented the expansion of mining as a highly recognized model of success, ready to be replicated throughout Latin America, even though it creates conditions of abuse and injustice.

The communities of northern Chile are the ones who live with the heavy burden of the socio-environmental consequences of the mining expansion. The mining activity is more extensive and intensive in the north, where the largest mineral deposits of the country are located. These communities have spent many years fighting for the environment and their rights, but their efforts have been undermined by environmental policies that do not address the crises that occur in the productive zones of this industry.

OLCA's investigation led to a diagnosis that accounts for the problems that afflict those communities. The report includes a map that shows the geographic location of the areas affected by mining projects, in addition to displaying information about the characteristics of each community and the problems that affect them, the number of projects, and other relevant data to contextualize the situation in each location.

Along with this, the document contains recommendations and discussion points to encourage the diffusion of the subject within and outside the communities.

They plan to expand monoculture tree plantations by three million hectares:

## Forestry Corporations want to transform southern Chile into a green desert

Speaking to the media, the Chilean Wood Corporation (CORMA) revealed corporate plans to increase large forestry plantations by three million hectares on lands currently belonging to small proprietary owners.

The corporations, the majority of which are in the hands of the Matte and Angellini groups, have planted until now roughly 2.5 million hectares of pine and eucalyptus, wiping out native forests and agricultural lands that were the livelihood of many farming and indigenous communities. This was done with the help of undemocratic subsidies granted by the Legislative Decree 701 on Forestry Development established in 1974, by the military regime.

Official data show that the communes occupied by these forestry plantations -and related pulp mills- recorded the highest levels of drought and the largest rates of unemployment, migration and poverty in the country. A recent monitoring done by the Forestry Engineers for Native Forests organization concluded that in the Los Ríos region, "the water cadaster demonstrates the seriousness of the problems that the forestry activity in the rural population generates. The communities most affected by the lack of water in the La Araucanía Region are precisely those where the model of economic development based on forest plantations has been more thoroughly implemented.

Instead of recovering soil and curbing desertification, these types of extensive monoculture plantations deplete water sources, causing a loss of fertility, and the end of traditional agriculture. In addition to consuming the lands' nutrients, the industrial process of plantations and pulp

manufacturing seriously contaminates the soil, water, and air with the use and intensive production of toxic substances. The economic parties that profit from this extraction are the only ones who benefit from these destructive processes.

Desertification is a serious problem that affects communities, increasing poverty and leaving their soil infertile and unproductive. It has been close to 14 years since Chile ratified the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, but instead of producing a change in national policies on these issues, our government continues to support a model that has been condemned by the Mapuche people and other farming organizations, as predatory and an enemy of life.

In this context:

We demand the rejection of any new state subsidy or other incentive for projects that destroy native forests, replace agricultural lands, exhaust water sources and degrade soils.

We demand that public studies be conducted regarding the impacts of the plantations and pulp mills, as well as an evaluation of the consequences of State subsidies and policies on this matter.

We demand an end to decree 701, and the transfer and increase of resources for programs dedicated to the recuperation of degraded soils, the promotion of small-scale agriculture, and to ensure food sovereignty.

*Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales – OLCA*



*Photo Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales (RADA, Temuco).*

In protest of the boost given to energy supply for the profit and expansion of mining:

**“We will march by the millions, and if they don’t listen, there will be nothing left to say but to demand that they leave”**

## **Northern Environmental Network (RAN)**

According to publications by various media, a “Citizens’ Technical Committee for a Sustainable Energy Matrix for Chile” was recently established as an alternative to the Committee of Experts in electrical matters implemented by the Government. The decision was made by various lawmakers and a few environmental organizations. In opposition to this committee, as an Environmental Network we must consider the following:

Since project HidroAysén was approved, citizens have been the protagonists of the large demonstrations in the capital, in other major cities across Chile, and even in other countries. The youth have been prominent in the most diverse cities; there have been 7 demonstrations against the project over the past two weeks in the city of La Serena alone. In northern Chile, convocations of the organizations of the Northern Environmental network (RAN) have led a variety of demonstrations against HidroAysén in conjunction with local issues such as the installation of power plants, mega-mining projects, and other demands. Apart from La Serena/Coquimbo, there have been repeated demonstrations by citizens in Arica, Copiapó, Vallenar, Huasco, Salamanca, Ovalle, Illapel, and Valparaíso, none of which required experts, an elected official or a NGO. This relentless

mobilization against environmental degradation, and its impact on communities, has fostered a greater awareness among citizens as a whole, throughout the region.

RAN, which includes more than 46 environmental organizations from Arica to Valparaíso and will soon hold its Fourth Environmental Meeting, is structured horizontally, letting citizens organize themselves to address local environmental conflicts. RAN doesn’t have a centralized structure, and only uses temporary spokespeople when necessary. Decisions are made in the Meetings, and we promote base assemblies and respect the self-organizing forms of each of our organizations; citizens are the focus of our activity.

As stated previously, the view of this alternative Committee of experts, as well as that of the Government, conflicts with what we have been doing as a network for over two years. We are a part of the citizenry, and we organize the struggles for the defense of the environment and against the devastating consequences of contamination in our communities. We worry that those in high places of power and wealth will promote solutions to the environmental problems without the participation or leadership of the citizens, and without conducting an

analysis of the problems’ origins.

Nobody has delegated these citizen faculties on those who appear as the head of the movement today, and nobody wants to place this responsibility on those who try to represent us in a bureaucratic way. Many of those who sit at these tables are the very ones responsible for institutionalizing environmental issues, and for imposing laws on us that have left us in this current predicament, such as the Water Code and the Mining Treaty.

The issue of the energy matrix is being treated as a technical-environmental problem, without considering the factors that led to the increase in energy supply, like mining expansion and big profits. Since our 2nd Meeting, we, as a Network, have concluded that it is necessary to explore the root causes that generate environmental degradation, and harm our citizens’ health. It is this current economic model, in which the quest for infinite profit leads to the appropriation and then transformation of our natural resources into commodities. In this economic model, it is no longer enough to take what we need from nature; we take everything that we can sell in the market. The water, converted into private property, should be used to make a profit: that is one of the reasons



behind the HidroAysén project. Why do we double or triple the energy matrix? The only response seems to be, to enable the installation of 16 new mega-mining projects the size of Pascua Lama in the north, which will provoke unprecedented environmental degradation, occupy the water of our valleys, and cause deadly contamination. With these megaprojects, it will be impossible to conduct environmental management of any kind due to the intensity of the operations, and the impact they will have on the ecological equilibrium of our valleys, which will dry up like those of Copiapó.

So, one does not need experts to solve this problem, but need only listen to what the people say, that nature must not be transformed into merchandise. We don't want destructive mega-

mining. We must consider mining in accordance with our national needs and not the needs of transnational corporations, where we proceed to exploit our basic resources rationally, while preserving those resources in the medium and long term. We want a diverse energy matrix in harmony with nature and the environment. We can not rely on others to solve the problems in our communities. Our high level of independence from the current government, generated by this new citizens' movement, will allow us to solve the crisis in which we live today.

We encourage those in every region to create social and environmental institutions that are representative, that use their problems to develop alternative proposals for a new institutional environmental platform, and a project

of harmonic development that is both comprehensive and sustainable for each locality. The citizens' movement has much to say, and will write new pages on this struggle, until polluting and destructive projects like HidroAysén and Castilla are put to a stop. We will march by the millions, and if they don't listen, there will be nothing left to say but to demand that they leave.

*RAN (Northern Environmental Network), Chile*

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Only transgenic monoculture businesses that degrade the earth benefit from UPOV 91:

## Alarm over the sale of Chile's farmers' and indigenous seeds to transnational corporations of agroindustry

On May 11, the Chilean Senate passed the UPOV 91 Convention, without consulting the affected sectors and openly opposing farming organizations, indigenous peoples, organic agriculture associations, and other civil society groups. The Convention privatizes seeds and gives agro-industrial corporations the power to monopolize the marketing, importation, and exportation of seeds. It will prevent farmers from storing seeds and will extend the rights and guarantees of transnational corporations that sell hybrid and transgenic seeds in the country.

For the National Rural and Indigenous Women's Association (ANAMURI) the passing of the Convention signifies that farmers "must buy their seeds every year if they don't want to see their harvest, crops, and plantations confiscated. The Convention does not guarantee the best varieties or that they be accessible in Chile. It could be the case that they stop the entry of a certain variety into Chile for business reasons. Sole requisites to register a plant are that it is not already registered and that the variety is homogenous and stable."

It is precisely in this homogeneity, sought after by big corporations that monopolize the business of seeds in the country, where one of the most negative impacts of the implementation of the Convention on Chilean agriculture resides. As Alicia Muñoz, director of ANAMURI, highlighted: "As plants become more homogeneous, they will have less capacity to resist phenomena like drought or climate change, contrary to what occurs when there is biodiversity."

### Other governments did not pass this privatization of seeds

Lucía Sepúlveda, of the Pesticide Action Network, RAP-Chile, explains that the UPOV 91 Convention does not protect the country's plant genetic heritage, but rather, "it is an international organization that protects private rights with governmental support and is orientated to guarantee individual companies' investments."

But not all governments have bowed to the pressure of privatization agendas imposed by free trade agreements. Lucía Sepúlveda, who recently published the book "Chile: Peasant Seed in Danger," says that, "In Latin America, the countries with the most biodiversity and the most important agricultural economies such as Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay, have not signed UPOV 91, and neither has Canada."

According to the author, as of March 31, 2011, there have been more than 700 "patented" plants, meaning that they were registered by a breeder. In the majority of these cases, the 'breeder' corresponds to foreign companies, mostly from the United States, whose government, Lucía Sepúlveda points out, "is among the principle lobbyists for intellectual property and transgenic materials." The rest of the patents are in the hands of big corporations from Canada, New Zealand, Israel, South Africa, China, and Europe. With the passing of UPOV 91, a wave of new registrations of farmers' and indigenous seeds is expected.

### Highlighting the resistance against the drought in genetic diversity of farmers' seeds

When the issue was still being debated in Parliament, a diverse group of organizations and individuals made public their rejection of the passing of the UPOV 91 Convention, and of the many bills regarding seeds, intellectual property, and genetically modified organisms, as they all have serious social, environmental, productive, and economic impacts. The statement issued by the National Director of ANAMURI that prompted these protests, reads:

"It has been scientifically proven that the resistance to drought and adverse environmental conditions—caused by climate change and other events—is largely associated with the genetic diversity of local and farmers' varieties. The commercial varieties that the UPOV Convention promote are highly homogenous and are

therefore highly susceptible to drought, plagues, diseases, and poor environmental conditions. To obtain crop varieties resistant to climate change, Chile must protect its seeds and small-scale agriculture, which historically have been and continue to be the source that sustains the breeding programs."

Confronted with this situation, ANAMURI, the Ranquil Confederation, the Organic Producers, the Bishop of Aysén, RAPAL, Alliance for a Better Quality of Life, GRAIN, OLCA, Terram, and other regional and local organizations, expressed our rejection of Chile's adoption of the UPOV 91 Convention to the House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture, and then to the Senate's Committee on Agriculture.

A similar pronouncement was issued in early June by a large group of organizations linked to the rural world and the protection of the environment, including CLOC, Vía Campesina Chile, Asamblea Mapuche de Izquierda, Coordination of Students for Agro-ecology, CEPA, World March of Women-Chile, CENDA, CEDEM, and others. All of these organizations agree that the privatization of seeds and the reproductive capacity of plants, "is one of the pillars of neoliberalism in agriculture," and that the evidence for this is that legislations such as UPOV 91 derive from the World Trade Organization and the International Seed Federation, the main umbrella organization of major seed corporations around the world.

The manifesto also highlights the close relationship between the adoption of UPOV 91 and the bill on plant varieties (seeds) with the large-scale introduction of genetically modified crops in the country. The Convention will guarantee the royalties of transnational corporations who commercialize seeds, since they will be able to prohibit the reproduction of varieties that they claim as their property, and to impound what is produced and even exported by those who don't pay such royalties

## Fear of the increased control of the food chain by large agro-industrial corporations

The adoption of the Convention has also raised strong opposition in the Araucania Region. Indigenous communities have made known their concern for the loss of agricultural biodiversity, the consequences of the elimination of small farmers and food gatherers, and the expected increase in the control of the food chain by large agribusiness.

For some small and medium-scale producers in the region, the adoption of UPOV 91 may also have other negative consequences for agriculture in Araucania and other regions of the country. This is how Paulina Pozo, of Ecoinvernaderos, synthesizes the situation: "Once the seeds are patented, the transnational company enters with its entire agrochemical package to develop their work and to make farmers and communities dependent on their products, because the seed is made to withstand certain pesticides and herbicides that the same company produces. In addition, communities are forcefully displaced from the countryside to the city because they can not continue to practice their traditional agriculture."

Since June 21, these protesting voices and many others are being heard by the Constitutional Court, which accepted the request to determine whether or not there were any illegalities in the adoption of the Convention.

The defense of UPOV 91 will be presented by the Asociación Gremial Chile Bio CropLife (that represents Monsanto, Bayer, Pioneer, and other corporations), Seminis (a producer of GMOs), Agrícola Panam Seed (linked to Seminis, and producer of hybrid corn), among others.

Among those intervening in opposition to the Convention are: ANAMURI, Asociación Gremial de Agricultores Orgánicos de la Región (Union of Organic Farmers in the Region), Agrupación Tierra Nueva de Limache, Socio-Environmental Network of Valparaíso, Aymara Indian Community of Ancovinto, Ranquil, Lonco A.N.M.I., Cloc-Vía Campesina, RAPAL, OLCA, the Terram Foundation, the Sustainable Societies Foundation, Chilean Citizens Organization, and others.



"We reject this Convention until there is a real debate with clear information for the entire community. UPOV is part of a package of legislation that seeks to not only introduce genetically modified crops, but also to appropriate plant and seed species by way of registration regulations. This is equivalent to place a mortgage on life, on the possibility of food development, and on the genetic heritage of the country," said Lucio Cuenca, director of the Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts.

Guillermo Riveros, president of the Union of Organic Farmers of Bio Bío, noted that the Convention destroys the country's image, built over the past years, "because we have just lost our food security. In this situation, it will be difficult to become 'Chile, a forestry and agricultural power'."

### **"This law is incompatible with the life of the Mapuche people."**

On behalf of the Mapuche communities of southern Chile, the lonko (spiritual leader) Domingo Marileo, of Nehuen Domo, stated: "We have traveled more than 600 kilometers from Wallmapu, to express our profound rejection of the implementation of this Convention, because it endangers the lives of our people. It is not conceivable in our philosophy that someone should want to take ownership of the seeds and the natural wealth that mother earth has given us and

that we have used for centuries... This law is incompatible with the life of the Mapuche people."

The proclamation of CLOC, Vía Campesina Chile, and the other organizations cited above, summarizes the position of the people of the countryside regarding the unrelenting privatization of traditional agriculture by transnational corporations and the Chilean government:

"We farmers do not want the privatization of our seeds, and we won't accept that a single seed be privatized. The seeds are a collective, social, cultural, historical and constantly evolving product. The breeding work that seed companies have done is insignificant in comparison to what we indigenous and farming people throughout the world have done for more than ten thousand years. It has been our breeding work that has made agriculture possible and that has produced the immense diversity of crops that sustains us today. Without our seeds, not even Monsanto, Von Baer, INIA or any other corporation could have produced a single seed nor could they produce any in the future."

Drynet members get trained in intercultural communication:

## How to share experiences between different cultures in an effective way

In January 2011, representatives of Drynet attended a course on the "management of cultural dynamics at a distance" as a part of their annual reunion in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, convened this year to begin the second stage of the project.

The two days training workshop was led by

Jitske Kramer, of Human Dimensions, and was sponsored by PSO (Capacity Building in Developing Countries) from Holland.

Drynet participants studied and practiced ways of sharing experiences in an effective way among different cultures and of addressing the challenges faced by teams

that work with members spread throughout the world. Participants agreed to implement the useful applications of the training both in the global work and within their local networks.

### Keep the inspiration of the network alive

Working in an international network has a number of challenges that must be faced, like overcoming the distance between time zones, geographic distance, as well as cultural distance. In the training sessions, participants discussed how to address these challenges, using practical examples of how to improve co-operation in an intercultural context. In the debate, key questions were raised regarding "how we can keep each other motivated when we are back in our own countries" or "how can we keep the inspiration of the network alive." They also discussed issues of differences in communication styles, which resulted in the development of a set of "golden rules" of communication in the network. Through the proper use of these tools it is possible to develop a stronger, more active network.



Drynet members visiting PROBIOMA labs, during the training course. (Photo: OLCA)

Historic town meeting in the region that concentrates a large portion of the organic and agro-ecological production in Chile:

## Farmers unite to stop the imposition of genetically modified organisms

The construction of an urban-rural alliance, able to generate the social force necessary to demand a moratorium on genetically modified organisms, was the ultimate goal of the Open Council held on April 2 in the Chillán Viejo commune, a farming area with the highest organic and agro-ecological production in the country.

The organizations that participated in the Council emphasized the serious harm that will be inflicted on the rich biodiversity of the area and on the natural resources, like water and agricultural soils, by the introduction of plantations of genetically modified monocultures. This has already happened in Argentina, Brazil and other countries that have opened their doors to

the transnational corporations that drive this lucrative, global market, as Chile is doing today.

In his welcome address as the host of the meeting, Felipe Aylwin, the mayor of Chillán Viejo, said, "We need everyone to unite in order to stop the advance of genetically modified organisms, because the driving forces behind this project are those guided only by their personal ambitions to increase exportation. The big economic interests represented by the transnational corporations are not at all concerned with protecting our heritage."

There was consensus among participants that the task that befalls them is to

"strengthen the development of organic and agro-ecological agriculture in order to achieve food security, ensure the right of the producers to choose their crops, preserve the free access to seeds, and guarantee that the consumers have the option to eat food that is healthy, culturally appropriate, and free of pesticides and transgenics."

The Open Council culminated with the approval of a motion in favor of a total moratorium of the introduction of genetically modified organisms into the country, in addition to the establishment of an obligatory labeling of the imported final products that are genetically modified.

Comunicaciones OLCA