



For Indigenous peoples,
for nature,
for all humanity

COP 30 in sight: Carbon credits schemes and threats to Indigenous rights

November 2025

Survival International's statement

COP 30 in Belem is being called 'the forest COP', but it needs a **radical change of direction** to uphold the rights of the Indigenous peoples — including uncontacted peoples — who have always lived in and protected many of these forests.

Conservation organizations, governments and big businesses are using the COP to push schemes such as carbon offsetting. These are a **diversion that gives a green light to continuing consumption and pollution**: nature-based offset projects enable polluters to continue high emissions under the guise of carbon "neutrality." When they promote offsetting schemes, polluters defer or avoid actually reducing their emissions. These schemes are also a huge **threat to Indigenous peoples**. They are a threat because they treat Indigenous peoples' lands as a **carbon stock to be exchanged in the market**, often leaving the land owners dispossessed and stripped of their livelihoods. And also because the schemes are increasingly being used to **fund conservation projects that evict and abuse Indigenous peoples**. They're also a threat to uncontacted peoples, by treating their land as a commodity, rather than their home which is theirs by right, to live in, to use, and to protect – and a violation of international human rights law which requires Indigenous people to give their Free, Prior and Informed Consent for outside projects on their land. As uncontacted people cannot give consent, these schemes on their territories are illegal.

The exploitation of natural resources for profit drives the climate crises and the logging, mining and other **resource extraction that threaten Indigenous peoples' lands and lives, including more than 90% of all uncontacted Indigenous groups**. One of the big pushes at COP30 will once again be to **monetize the rainforests and turn them into giant carbon offsetting projects**. But the markets will not solve the climate crises any more than they will protect Indigenous peoples. The best way to protect the rights and lives of Indigenous peoples and the forests in which they live is not to use their lands to greenwash consumption, but to **recognize and enforce their rights to the territories that they have managed and protected for millennia**.

→ Read Survival's global investigation "Uncontacted Indigenous Peoples: at the edge of survival"
: <https://www.uncontactedpeoples.org/>

1. “Blood Carbon” and Protected Areas

Increasingly, carbon credits projects are being developed in Protected Areas where Indigenous peoples are evicted and dispossessed of their lands. They funnel huge sums into conservation actors and projects that go beyond the reach of existing safeguards, potentially aggravating human rights abuses. Many Indigenous peoples have faced violence at the hands of armed guards — in their own territories. “Blood Carbon” projects in Protected Areas endanger human rights and slow the fight against climate change. This leads to various threats:

- **Human rights abuses and evictions:** The creation or expansion of Protected Areas often comes with forced evictions from Indigenous peoples’ ancestral lands, arbitrary arrests, torture, killings, and violence by rangers or security forces. Carbon offsetting schemes replicate the “fortress conservation” logic: evicting or excluding Indigenous peoples from their lands in the name of “protecting” nature. They reinforce colonial patterns of dispossession and destroy lives and livelihoods.
- **Profits bypassing Indigenous communities:** The bulk of profits from carbon credits flow to intermediaries such as project developers, certification bodies, consultancies, and conservation NGOs — not to the communities whose lands and carbon are being traded.
- **Cultural destruction and undermining livelihoods:** As projects seek to supposedly absorb more carbon in grasslands’ soil, pastoralist peoples are pushed to abandon long-held movements, their traditional grazing systems, customary laws, and social governance. This undermines their resilience, food security, and their capacity to adapt to climate change.
- **Questionable legality and ownership of carbon rights:** There are legal challenges around who “owns” the carbon rights, and many projects do not have the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected Indigenous communities.

→ Learn more about Survival’s campaign against Blood carbon:

survivalinternational.org/campaigns/BloodCarbon

2. Key concerns on COP 30 and Indigenous rights

- **Indigenous rights considerations in the national climate pledges:** New Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) should be assessed on whether they explicitly include and report on Indigenous land rights, tenure security, FPIC protocols, land titling, and funding for Indigenous-led climate action, as most still fail to recognize these as enforceable rights.
- The Global Goal on Adaptation should respect requirements and include **indicators on the rights and knowledge** of Indigenous peoples.
- **Clarification of Indigenous rights, complaint systems, and safeguards under Article 6.4 carbon markets:** The Sustainable Development Tool includes FPIC and other protections for Indigenous peoples, but the enforcement of these safeguards and the

functioning of grievance and appeals mechanisms under Article 6.4 remain undefined — even as carbon projects are about to be approved.

→ Read Survival's detailed briefing on COP 30: survivalinternational.org/documents/briefing-cop30/

3. Indigenous resistance to carbon credits in Kenya, Tanzania, Brazil and Peru

- Northern Kenya

“The project completely destroyed the traditional system and brought another one, which is like a displacement.” Hassan Bidhu, Kenya¹, 2025

Indigenous peoples in northern Kenya are being thrown off their ancestral lands as the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), one of Kenya's largest conservation organizations, establishes “community” conservancies. The areas now under “conservancies” are the ancestral grazing lands of pastoralist peoples such as the Samburu, the Maasai, the Borana or the Rendille, who have managed these lands sustainably for generations.

NRT developed the Northern Kenya Grassland Carbon Project — a carbon credits scheme — in 13 of its conservancies, on pastoralist Indigenous peoples' lands. It claims to store additional carbon in the soil supposedly by changing the traditional grazing patterns. The credits generated are then bought by international companies like Netflix and Meta.

The project breaks down the Indigenous people's long-standing traditional grazing systems and threatens their food security. It did not obtain the affected communities' FPIC.

In January a court in Kenya² delivered a huge blow to the carbon credits scheme when it ruled, in a case brought by 165 members of affected communities, that two of the largest conservancies set up by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) were established unconstitutionally, with no basis in law. One of these, Biliqo Bulesa, contributes about 20 percent of the carbon credits in the project. The ruling could be applied to half of the other conservancies involved in the carbon project.

- Southern Kenya and northern Tanzania

“We don't want the carbon project because it's full of corruption and contradictions ... we should never hand over our land to foreigners for them to tell us what to do with our land.” Maasai community member, Oldonyonyokie, Kenya, 2025

In southern Kenya, another carbon project is being developed on land belonging to Indigenous peoples. The Kajiado Rangeland Carbon Project (KRCP) targets 1.5 million hectares of Maasai land and is run by the US company Soils for the Future.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/climate-environment/netflix-and-metas-carbon-credits-snared-in-dispute-with-maasai-herders-4f01a59f>

² <https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/14121>

The project claims that altering Maasai pastoralists' Indigenous grazing practices will increase the amount of carbon absorbed in the soil. The claim is similar to the flawed method used by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) in the north of the country.

Even though the project is in an initial stage, it is already causing problems and generating conflict among Maasai. In interviews with Survival, they have described it as “a scam to communities” and “neocolonial” in its approach. They blame the carbon company for luring and tricking people into signing agreements which they do not understand, and only involving a small group of community members. Protests have already erupted: in Oldonyonyokie group ranch, the community is resisting Soils for the Future's attempts to force the project on them without their FPIC.

“Maasailand never had a price tag. In Maasailand, there is no privatization. Our land is communal.” Maasai community member speaking anonymously to Survival, Tanzania, 2025

Soils for the Future is developing a similar project in Tanzania, with the involvement of car manufacturer Volkswagen (VW). The Maasai have not given their FPIC for the project. They fear it will restrict their access to crucial refuge areas in times of drought, and threaten their food security.

The Maasai have denounced the “loss of control or use” of vital Maasai grazing grounds, and accused VW of making “false and misleading claims” about Maasai participation in decision-making about the project.

Ngisha Sinyok, a Maasai community member from Eluai village, which is struggling to withdraw from the project, told Survival: “Our livestock is going to be depleted. We will end up not having a single cow.” Asked about VW's involvement in the project, he replied, “It is not a solution to climate change. It is just a business for people to make money using our environment. It has nothing to do with climate change.”

→ Read the report by the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) and its statement calling on VW to withdraw from the scheme.

Report: <https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/misa-carbon-report-full-eng.pdf>

Statement on VW: <https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/volkswagen-counterstatement-rev2.pdf>

- Brazil

“We don't want any more suffering. Carbon credits are coming like the new logger for us.”

Ka'apor community member, Brazil

The Ka'apor Indigenous people in the Alto Turiaçu Indigenous Territory, Maranhão state, who share their territory with uncontacted Awá people, were being harassed by foreign companies. Wildlife Works and Forest Trends were trying to force the Ka'apor to sign a contract to sell carbon credits from their forests. The companies' attempts sparked conflict within the Ka'apor community. Part of the community feared the project could disrupt their way of life, which led to violence and division.

The Indigenous Ka'apor Council Tuxa Ta Pame (Conselho de Gestão Ka'apor Tuxa Ta Pame) rejected carbon credits profiteering and demanded that the company immediately stop its activities

on their land. They asserted that they protect the rainforest with their way of life and they will not tolerate companies on the land that trade in carbon credits.

In May 2025, a Federal Court in Maranhão granted an injunction that temporarily suspended the project. It barred Wildlife Works and its representatives from organizing meetings, developing technical or operational measures, or carrying out administrative or business actions related to the project. The project is on hold until the court clarifies the legitimacy of the organizations involved and the validity of the consultation process.

The Ka'apor made it clear: they don't want the company in their territory and they want them to stop violating their rights.

"We do not accept your company's presence in our territory, which is why we demand its immediate withdrawal." said the Tuxa Ta Pame council.

→ Read the Declaration from the Gathering of Women Resisting Carbon Markets and Fighting to Defend their Territories, Alto Turiaçu Territory of the Ka'apor, Brazil, September 2025

<https://www.wrm.org.uy/action-alerts/sign-on-to-this-womens-declaration-against-redd-and-carbon-markets>

- Peru

"We reject false nature-based solutions because we see it as a threat to the ongoing lives of our future generations."

Marisol García Apagüeño³, Peru, 2025

In the Peruvian Amazon, the Cordillera Azul National Park (PNCAZ) has become one of the most controversial conservation projects in Latin America. The park overlaps with ancestral Kichwa territories, yet it was established without the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the Indigenous communities who have lived there for generations. Instead of recognizing their land rights, the park's administration has imposed restrictions that prevent Kichwa families from accessing, using, or managing their traditional lands. The Kichwa have repeatedly denounced this exclusionary model of management and demanded recognition of their territorial rights and autonomy.

Furthermore, the park has become a focal point of global carbon markets through one of Latin America's largest REDD+ offsetting projects. Promoted as a model for climate change mitigation, the project generates carbon credits from Kichwa ancestral lands and sells them internationally—without the communities' consent. Among the main corporate buyers are TotalEnergies and Shell, which together have purchased the majority of credits issued from the project. Their involvement has drawn widespread criticism from Kichwa organizations, who argue that such corporate offsetting schemes replicate extractive dynamics under a "green" label, allowing major polluters to profit from forests where Indigenous peoples are restricted and criminalized. The Kichwa describe carbon trading as a new form of dispossession that deepens historical injustices and undermines their self-determination.

³ Listen to Marisol's testimony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFloDGS0quM>

In July 2025, Kichwa representatives issued the Declaración de Túpac Amaru, a powerful public statement that was later reaffirmed in September 2025, when Indigenous peoples, nations, and nationalities from five countries — Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, and Paraguay — met in the Kichwa community of Túpac Amaru (San Martín region) for the Gathering of Indigenous Peoples on Carbon Markets. Together they signed the declaration, demanding the titling and restitution of ancestral lands, the suspension of carbon projects imposed without consent, and climate action rooted in Indigenous autonomy, self-determination, and respect for their lands.

→ Read the Declaración de Túpac Amaru and listen to a summary of the gathering.

Declaration: <https://www.idl.org.pe/encuentro-de-pueblos-naciones-indigenas-de-cinco-paises-sobre-mercados-de-carbono-impactos-y-resistencias/>

Summary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1m5JjokCgtw>