Carbon markets are trading systems in which carbon credits (generated primarily from greenhouse gas emissions being reduced or sequestered) are bought and sold. Countries, companies, or individuals engage in a carbon market by buying a carbon credit sold by another entity to compensate for their own greenhouse gas emissions.

While carbon markets are envisaged under the Paris Agreement as a means for States to have “higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions”\(^1\), credit-generating activities, by allowing for one entity to offset their ongoing emissions rather than reduce them, merely rearrange emissions rather than reducing them overall, thus failing to effectively tackle climate change. Often, these activities also result in human rights violations of the communities involved as they entail land grabs, lack of Free and Prior Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples, and heavy impacts on the right to food, water, livelihood, etc. as well as human rights violations of fenceline communities in the area of continued fossil fuel production. A growing number of corporations are portraying carbon credits and other hypothetical and uncertain technologies (for instance, carbon capture and storage or direct air capture) as well as carbon credits derived from these uncertain technologies as a way to reduce their emissions, which is fundamentally misleading. This is particularly relevant in the context of fossil fuel companies, which are using carbon offsetting activities and technologies as a justification for the further expansion of oil and gas production.

The recent report by FIAN International on “Coffee and Carbon in Colombia – Human Rights Concerns at the Intersection of Food Systems, Climate Change and Data-Based Technologies” exposes how a carbon trading project for peasant farmers in Colombia with massive data extraction jeopardizes their control over their own farms. The recent report by Human Rights Watch on “Carbon Offsetting’s Casualties - Violations of Chong Indigenous People’s Rights in Cambodia’s Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project” assesses the impacts on the rights of Indigenous people of Cambodia’s largest carbon offsetting project, highlighting the human rights abuses that the involved communities are still facing in connection to this project.

This side event will discuss carbon markets, explaining why they cannot be seen as a viable mitigation tool, and shedding light on the human rights violations that are caused by credit-generating activities, including by presenting the recent reports by FIAN International and Human Rights Watch.

Speakers:
- Elisa Morgera, Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change
- Richard Pearhouse, Human Rights Watch
- Ana Maria Suarez Franco, FIAN International
- Ghazali Ohorella, Alirufu Council

Moderator: Francesca Mingrone, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

\(^1\) Paris Agreement, Article 6.1