

HOW TO PROTECT RAINFORESTS

IN THE CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

Most people are not surprised to learn that China and the United States are the two largest greenhouse gas emitting countries in the world – but the third and fourth largest emitters are not industrialized, Global North nations: they are Indonesia and Brazil, respectively. But whereas China and U.S. emissions are almost completely from burning fossil fuels, about three quarters of the national emissions in Indonesia and Brazil are from spreading destruction of their rainforests each year. In fact, tropical forest destruction is now responsible for approximately one-fifth of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Protecting these forests while also reducing fossil fuel emissions is critical to stabilize the climate, preserve global biodiversity, sustain the economy and protect the livelihoods of billions of people.

That's why the UN global climate conference in Copenhagen this December and the rainforest provisions in the US climate bill now under negotiations are so important. In 2009 we have one of the best opportunities for a breakthrough U.S. and global commitment to protect tropical rainforests. If done well, actions for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation, also known as REDD, will ensure strengthened protection for forests, defense of the rights of Indigenous peoples that are their customary inhabitants and address underlying causes that drive deforestation. To this end, tropical forest provisions in the US climate bill and under the UN climate convention deal must:

1 PRIORITIZE FOREST PROTECTION THAT DELIVERS STRONG BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION BENEFITS AND PENALIZE LOGGING OF NATURAL FORESTS AND CONVERSION OF FORESTS TO PLANTATIONS.

Any REDD mechanism must adopt an overarching commitment to protect primary forests as its highest priority. Tropical forests cover just seven percent of the Earth's land surface, but contain nearly half of all species on Earth. Ending greenhouse gas emissions from loss of intact and old forests goes hand in hand with protecting the Earth's irreplaceable natural diversity.

The key to preventing REDD from subsidizing industrial logging

lies in the definition of the word 'forest'. Currently, the UN climate convention's definition of a forest, unlike those used by other UN agencies, makes no distinction between an intact natural forest and a monoculture tree plantation. Until the definitions are fixed, countries will continue to clear valuable natural rainforests and replacing them with commercial monoculture plantations, while claiming that they are not "deforesting."

2 PROTECT AND ENFORCE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS TO FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT; IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

An estimated that 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods, including 60 million Indigenous peoples¹. REDD mechanisms in the US and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) must be compatible with the UN Declaration on the Rights

of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and fully respect rights to lands, territories, environment and natural resources, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples and affected communities to say "no" during all stages.

3 ENSURE THAT REDD MEASURES ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTES FOR AGGRESSIVE DOMESTIC EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS

Stabilizing global CO2 concentrations at 350 ppm requires that governments move very quickly to both deeply reduce fossil fuel emissions AND to stop tropical deforestation and degradation. The U.S. has contributed more cumulative greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than any other country. Our coal, oil, and gas industries generate too much pollution; our utilities include many that are among the largest climate

polluters on the planet; our buildings and cities waste energy; our cars, trucks and SUVs keep us addicted to oil. The list goes on and on. To prevent dangerous climate change, our responsibility, challenge and biggest opportunity starts right here at home with building out the new low-carbon clean energy technologies and infrastructure that will carry us through the 21st century and be a model for other countries

4 CREATE AN INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR REDD

In order for REDD to succeed in keeping forests standing, it must help countries overcome their high rates of illegal logging, poor enforcement of environmental and social laws, corruption and other indicators of weak governance. And, it must be adequately and securely funded. The House bill, for example, provide for a supplemental fund to address deforestation,

supported by auctioning 5% of U.S.' total emission allowances. However, this still falls short of U.S. contributions for an adequately scaled global REDD fund, and the Senate version of the bill should increase this number to 15% of the emission allowances each year under its domestic carbon cap.

5 BUILD A FIREWALL TO KEEP REDD CARBON EMISSION REDUCTIONS OUT OF MARKETS FOR FOSSIL FUEL EMISSION REDUCTIONS. THERE SHOULD BE NO OFFSETS TRADING BETWEEN FOREST AND FOSSIL CARBON.

A buyer of carbon offsets is essentially buying a permit to pollute. Carbon offset mechanisms of all sorts have so far proven deeply problematic, with as much as two-thirds of the industrial sector offsets offered under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol considered to be non-additional, or for activities that would have occurred any way without the carbon offset money, and thus contributing to

higher total emissions to the atmosphere, not less.

We want to build a system that works. Introducing large volumes of low-priced, easily reversible rainforest backed offsets into the market could create the next "sub-prime" credit crisis, destabilizing not only an emerging trillion dollar carbon market but also the climate system itself.

6 STRENGTHEN WEAK FOREST GOVERNANCE

Tropical forest regions suffer from widespread poor governance that must be improved; REDD should provide strong incentives for building good governance of primary forests and other natural ecosystems. Good governance would include transparency of forest management plans by governments and private sector, multi-stakeholder engagement, good fiscal governance and lack

of corruption, participatory law reform and active enforcement of forest laws, and independent and binding complaint and conflict resolution mechanisms. More money under existing governance regimes will worsen corruption rather than improve it.

HEARD ENOUGH ABOUT REDD?

Now is the time to take action. Join the RAN campaign calling on President Obama to push for a strong climate deal in Copenhagen this December, one that secures BOTH deep reductions in fossil fuel emissions AND an agreement on REDD that saves tropical rainforests and respects the rights of Indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent. Visit http://ran.org/obama_REDD to take action today!



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