

Accra Caucus on Forests and Climate Change

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A robust agreement in Copenhagen to save rainforests is stripped of a global objective on halting deforestation and operative safeguards, as developing country governments react to lack of commitment by rich countries.

Non-governmental organisations from around the world today strongly condemned negotiators at the Copenhagen climate summit for removing key content from a draft agreement aimed at protecting the world's rainforests, and downgrading language protecting local communities and indigenous peoples in the text.

In the draft text, released late last night by government negotiators following three days of closed-door discussions, the objective for reducing deforestation by at least 50% by 2020 that had been included in an earlier 'pre-Copenhagen' draft of the agreement has now been removed.

"It's hardly surprising that developing countries won't agree to commit to global targets for reductions in deforestation, when rich countries aren't prepared to commit to global targets for reductions of industrial emissions and adequate financial commitments. We are watching an historic opportunity turn into a monumental disaster" said Kate Dooley of FERN, speaking on behalf of the Accra Caucus on Forests and Climate Change [1].

The loss of the specific target for reducing deforestation is believed to have come about as a result of pressure from tropical countries, who have been angered at the lack of financial commitments from the rich world to help them develop without destroying their forests and the lack of binding and adequate commitments to reducing industrial CO2 emissions by those responsible for creating the climate crisis.

Moreover, safeguards that would have protected biodiversity and the rights of indigenous peoples have been severely weakened, by moving them from the operative part of the agreement to a non-binding preamble [2].

"Parties have to use the last chance to make REDD a way of securing rainforests and its peoples' rights, and not to create a narrow carbon accounting mechanism. We risk getting a REDD agreement which would not have any strong provisions to prevent violations of forest-dependent peoples rights and the replacing of natural forests by industrial tree plantations", said Yuyun Indradi, Greenpeace SEA, Indonesia.

As developing countries rally around the call for emission reduction targets that will keep temperature increases below 1.5 degrees, so the need for tougher

targets for REDD become critical if REDD is to be a part of a meaningful outcome from Copenhagen.

“The key to saving forests and the climate is that binding targets to reduce industrial emissions, as well as long term financial commitments from developed countries, must be struck at the same time as a deal to reduce deforestation”, said Natalie Unterstell of Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), Brazil.

“The outcome of the negotiations of REDD under the UNFCCC will be crucial for the future of tropical rainforests and forest-dependent peoples. If we lose the battle against deforestation we lose the battle against climate change,” said Jérôme Sitamon of Maison de l’Enfant et de la Femme Pygmées (MEFP), Central African Republic.

Notes to editors

[1] The Accra Caucus consists of over 100 non-governmental organisations from 30 countries, (including all the major countries with tropical rainforest)

[2] The former text stated “parties shall”, but the new wording removes a specific obligation on 'parties', and simply says that safeguard activities should be promoted without specifying by whom