

# No REDD! No REDD Plus!

## Global Sign-On Campaign against Schemes for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

As part of a mounting global civil society criticism of the ineffective and unjust solutions to climate change – including carbon trading and geoengineering – representatives of peoples' movements and independent organizations oppose the schemes for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) currently being formulated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – and already piloted in schemes such as the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and the United Nations REDD Programme.

The proposed UN climate negotiator's 'forest deal' jeopardizes the human future by serving to further entrench fossil fuel use – the major cause of the climate crisis – while at the same time failing to safeguard the future of forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities over their territories and knowledge. Further, there is a clear disregard from Northern countries to address the high levels of consumption in those countries as a driver of deforestation.

The projected growth of carbon markets in the US, Australia and elsewhere is set to trigger a huge new demand for imported pollution rights to allow industrialized countries and industries to continue business as usual and avoid emissions cuts at home. Norway has already calculated, for example, that Amazon forest conservation could "offset" or compensate for ten times its yearly emissions. However, a drought in 2005 turned the Amazon forest into a carbon source, not a carbon sink, and such events could occur in the future.

The REDD or "REDD-readiness" programmes in Southern countries that currently receive public funding do not constitute evidence that REDD will be pursued independently of carbon markets. On the contrary, such programmes are taxpayer-funded means for setting up the technical, legal and political infrastructure for the expanded market in forest carbon that will ultimately be demanded by big polluters in the US and elsewhere.

The new pollution licenses to be generated by REDD are designed in a way that obstructs the only workable solution to climate change: keeping oil, coal and gas in the ground. Like the carbon credits produced under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), they are not intended to result in any net climate gain, but merely to "compensate" for excessive fossil fuel use elsewhere. In reality, they fail to achieve even this null result. Like CDM credits, they exacerbate climate change by giving industrialized countries and companies incentives to delay undertaking the sweeping structural change away from fossil fuel-dependent systems of production, consumption, and transportation that the climate problem demands. They waste years of time that the world doesn't have to solve this problem.

Worse, biotic carbon—the carbon stored in forests— can never be climatically equivalent to fossilized carbon kept underground. This is because carbon dioxide emitted from the burning of fossil fuels adds to the overall burden of carbon perpetually circulating between the atmosphere, vegetation, soils and oceans. However, carbon dioxide stored in forests is not a permanent sink for carbon in the same way as fossilized carbon. This inequivalence, among many other complexities, makes REDD carbon accounting impossible, allowing carbon traders to inflate the value of REDD carbon credits with impunity and further justify the increased use of fossil fuels. In 2009, even Interpol has warned against the vulnerability of REDD to international fraud and corruption.

REDD's focus on the mass production of pollution licenses for industries in rich countries would inevitably neglect the needs and violate the rights of ordinary people throughout the world. In the South, REDD would transform the carbon in living trees into private property so that it can be awarded or transferred to private corporations in the North. Despite efforts to create safeguards to prevent the violation of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dwelling communities, there is no guarantee to their effectiveness. In the worst case, REDD could inaugurate a massive land grab that would leave Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities with nothing. In the North, meanwhile, REDD credits would enable fossil fuel-related corporations to maintain business as usual, to the detriment of communities affected by fossil fuel extraction and pollution.

In this context, the idea that REDD could help secure the territories or consolidate the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples is ludicrous. In the voluntary carbon markets, carbon forestry and REDD-type projects have already resulted in land seizures, violent evictions, forced displacement, violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights, militarization, loss of access to land and livelihood, loss of biological diversity, fraud, coercion and the corruption of the sacred. Inclusion of forests and tree plantations in the giant compliance carbon market could only multiply such abuses.

In addition, climate policy negotiations at the international and national levels are considering the inclusion of soils and agricultural practices into REDD and other carbon marketing schemes. Just as Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities are threatened by forest-based REDD, agriculturalists, pastoralists and peoples' food sovereignty will be seriously threatened should this come to pass. In effect, this will extend the commodification of lands as offsets for wealthy polluters over much of the earth's surface. As well, we reject any incentive to use the oceans for REDD projects as well.

Further, because every REDD project would affect not only forest communities, but also people suffering from the operations of companies buying REDD offset credits and indeed those impacted by the climatic damage incurred by the project, the consent of vast numbers of people would need to be obtained for each project – something REDD practitioners have no intention of attempting.

REDD would also endanger forest conservation itself, by giving short shrift to many of the characteristics of forests essential to survival – the complex and diverse ways in which Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities constitute homes, livelihood sources, storehouses of biodiversity and medicines, regulators of watersheds, and centres of culture and spirituality – while failing to address the underlying causes of deforestation. REDD initiatives are set to include industrial plantations and even the planting of genetically modified trees. REDD could indeed become, in the words of The New York Times, a “cash cow for forest destroyers.”

Forests have been and can only be protected through locally-led forestry governance, strong rights and institutions for forest-dependent people, especially Indigenous Peoples, locally-initiated investments, strictly enforced bans on trade in timber products, addressing excessive consumption in the North and so forth. Fixing a climate crisis caused in the main by the large historical fossil fuel users in the North must not be a burden borne by disenfranchised Indigenous and forest-dependent peoples in the South. There is indeed a climate debt the North owes the South and to imagine that it could be paid off by investments in REDD projects that generate carbon credits for industrialized countries would be the height of irony.

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