

A Good Treaty for Forests at Copenhagen

Why protecting tropical forests is vital to tackling climate change

Tropical forest destruction is responsible for about a fifth of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – more than the emissions from all the world's cars, planes, and trains put together.¹ Consequently, stopping forest destruction is one of the quickest ways we can help achieve the dramatic cuts we need in global greenhouse gas emissions.

At the UN climate summit in Copenhagen this December, Greenpeace is calling on world leaders to take the historic opportunity it offers, to drastically reduce GHG emissions and agree to a fair, ambitious and binding treaty that:

- Ends tropical deforestation by 2020
- Provides at least \$140 billion (€110 billion) annually from industrialised countries to support adaptation, mitigation and forest protection in the developing world. \$42 billion US dollars (€30 billion) of this annual sum should be used to end deforestation.
- Cuts emissions by at least 40% by 2020 from 1990 levels in the developed world
- Cuts the growth in emissions by at least 15-30% by 2020 in the developing world

World leaders are currently discussing how to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in developing countries, a critical element of any effective climate treaty. The outcome of these discussions hangs in the balance. Greenpeace considers that in order to be successful, the REDD agreement must be consistent with the following elements:

1. Creates a global fund to end tropical deforestation and makes it available immediately

Industrialised countries should provide US \$42 billion annually for a forest fund to end tropical deforestation by 2020 in a manner which also protects wildlife and fully respects the rights of indigenous and local peoples.² The funds should come from public and market-linked sources. For example, countries and companies could pay for a portion of the carbon permits that they currently receive free of charge. A fund designed in this way would ensure that the 'polluter', i.e. the industrialised countries who are responsible for the vast majority of emissions in the atmosphere and have accumulated a historic carbon debt by fuelling deforestation through their consumption of timber, palm oil, soya and other products 'pays'. Such funds should start flowing to developing forested countries immediately.

2. Provides emissions reductions that are additional to industrialised countries' domestic actions and the carbon markets

Actions to reduce deforestation must not be used as an excuse by industrialised countries and companies not to reduce their emissions at home. For example, Heads of State cannot use their investment in forest protection as an excuse to continue building

¹ IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), 2007. Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA. http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment_report_wg3_report_mitigation_of_climate_change.htm

² The European Commission has estimated that between €15 billion to €25 billion would be needed reduce deforestation by half by 2020, and that the cost of halting deforestation completely might be two to three times more expensive (€30-75 billion). *Impact assessment study accompanying the Communication from the European Commission on "Addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss", page.41, October 2008*

coal-fired power stations in their own countries. Furthermore, if cheap forest credits are allowed to be directly traded with other carbon units, they could crash the price of carbon and even destabilise or 'flood' the market. This would reduce vital incentives to invest in clean and renewable energy technologies in both industrialised and developing countries.

3. Is accessible to all countries with tropical forests

To be effective, any treaty must include all countries with tropical forests including Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia and respond to their diverse needs. For example, it must balance the requirements for money needed for capacity building in places like Indonesia and also provide funds to prevent forest destruction in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the deforestation rate is currently low but is set to increase dramatically if the forests are not protected. Carbon markets, unlike a fund approach, have historically excluded countries with low capacities or low rates of emissions. In fact, over 90% of the benefits from the world's largest carbon offset market, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), have gone to only four countries (China, India, Brazil and South Korea).³

4. Requires national level actions to end deforestation

Any deal to reduce deforestation, must be designed to ensure action at the national level and not focus on individual protection projects. 'Project-based' approaches have inherent problems including leakage (where industries stop destroying one part of the rainforest but move to another), non-additionality (where money is provided to protect an area of rainforest that would have been protected anyway); and impermanence (funding projects that are not likely to last long-term but instead are susceptible to release carbon stored through fires, infestations, and droughts).

5. Must not support the development of agricultural plantations or subsidise the expansion of industrial logging and agri-business

Only intact and other natural forests (including peatland forests) should be eligible for REDD funding because preventing their destruction has the greatest potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Plantations are not forests. They usually contain only one tree species, sustain very little life and stock much less carbon than natural forests. Yet the UNFCCC's definition of a forest does not differentiate between natural forest and plantations. This is dangerous because the industries that are destroying forests and replacing them with plantations can potentially continue business as usual, and even receive REDD funds to do so. It also means that governments can appear, on paper, to be reducing its rates of deforestation, even though in practice they are not. In addition, Greenpeace does not support the inclusion of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) (also known as 'improved forest management' or reduced impact logging) in REDD. This language is industry-speak for industrial-scale logging. Its inclusion would mean that REDD funds could be used to subsidise the very industries that are destroying the forests.

6. Protects biodiversity and forest-dwelling communities

More than half of the planet's land-based species live in tropical forests.⁴ In addition, it is estimated that some 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods and 60 million indigenous people depend on them for their subsistence.⁵ As such, the treaty must also abide by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and fully respect their land, resource needs and ownership rights, and ensure they are directly engaged in the treaty's development and implementation.

Ending global deforestation is critical to averting a climate disaster. With over a million hectares of forest, mostly tropical rainforest, destroyed every month⁶ – that is an area of forest the size of a football pitch every two seconds – it is vital that world leaders agree a robust climate deal and provide the funds needed to implement it at December's UN climate summit.

³ Jorgen Fenhann, Overview of the CDM Pipeline, 1 Nov 2008 (UNEP Risoe Centre, 2008).

⁴ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Biodiversity Synthesis. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.

⁵ World Bank Press Release, Global Forum calls to curb illegal logging and promote responsible forest investment, 23 Oct 2003 and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Biodiversity Synthesis. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.

⁶ FAO 2005. Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2005. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/fra2005/en/>