

# Greenpeace Summary of the “*REDD from the Conservation Perspective*” report

Commissioned by Greenpeace from the University of  
Freiburg, Institute of Forest Policy

June 2009

## Greenpeace Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Biodiversity is crucial for REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and would best be addressed through a well-governed global fund, not through the inclusion of REDD offset credits within the carbon markets (for more information on REDD in the carbon market see KEA3 report: "*REDD and the effort to limit global warming to 2°C: Implications for including REDD credits in the international carbon market*".<sup>1</sup>)
2. REDD must clearly distinguish between forests and plantations and exclude afforestation and reforestation.
3. The first 10-year goal of REDD must be to reduce and stop deforestation, forest degradation and related emissions in developing countries. This can partially be achieved through incentives for:
  - i. dramatic reduction of deforestation and degradation
  - ii. prevention of leakage (moving deforestation or degradation from one place to another)
  - iii. creation of new protected areas in intact forests and other forests crucial for biodiversity
4. The second REDD goal should be future expansion to REDD+ to include ecological restoration of lost or degraded forests in developing countries. This plan must exclude afforestation, all other forms of reforestation and sustainable forest management, which are all threats to biodiversity.

## Background

While it is well known that biological diversity (the diversity of plant and animal species and the diversity of the ecosystems they are part of) is the basis of life and prosperity of humanity, the importance of biodiversity in the fight against climate change is often not properly acknowledged. Biodiversity is crucial for both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

Ignoring biodiversity could have the same magnitude of devastating impacts on the habitability of the Earth as climate change itself. Nowhere does this become more prominent than with the world's forests, which host more biodiversity and store more carbon than almost any other land-ecosystem.

<sup>1</sup> [www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/the-economics-of-redd-summary](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/the-economics-of-redd-summary)

The effective protection of all types of natural forests is crucial for reducing both biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It is also crucial for both societal and species adaptation to climate change.

In order to address the importance of biodiversity within any REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) mechanism, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has established an ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) to explore the links between biodiversity and climate change. The AHTEG's draft conclusions support the need to maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems because of their role in the carbon cycle and provision of vital ecosystem services.

Its initial report also concludes that intact primary forests contain the greatest carbon stocks, harbour the highest biodiversity, and have the highest resilience to climate change.

REDD will be an essential part of a new global climate deal to be agreed at the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen at the end of this year. It is essential to prioritise biodiversity and the protection of existing forests in any REDD mechanism. Furthermore, in the longer term, an expanded REDD+ mechanism should include ecological forest restoration.

## Purpose of Research

Greenpeace asked the Institute of Forest Policy at the University of Freiburg to evaluate the necessity of incorporating biodiversity protection into REDD and how this might be achieved.

The resulting '*REDD from the Conservation Perspective*' report underscores the importance of biodiversity protection in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. It also makes some recommendations for ensuring that REDD does not result in the conversion of vast areas of rich tropical forests (primarily located in developing countries) into monoculture tree plantations in the name of climate protection.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### 1) It is critical to protect natural forests

Forests are more than a collection of carbon sticks. They house plants and animals, sustain freshwater cycles, reduce erosion and coastal flooding, provide shelter, food and medicine and provide other invaluable ecosystem services. The report suggests that a first step is to differentiate 'forests' (both intact and modified natural) from 'plantations'. This could help stop conversion of forests into plantations, which causes both massive carbon emissions and biodiversity loss. Inclusion of plantations in REDD, as afforestation and reforestation activities, would encourage the replacement of forests with plantations. This would have negative climate impacts and would divert the necessary focus and limited resources from stopping deforestation and degradation. Therefore, afforestation and reforestation activities must be excluded from REDD.

### 2) Protect what is left, then restore what is lost

The immediate focus of REDD must be to stop deforestation and forest degradation, as soon as possible. This could be achieved in around 10 years, with an ambitious and well-financed global plan. It is crucial to protect as much biodiversity as possible along the way.

Once the monitoring of forest carbon emissions (both released from deforestation and sequestered by standing forests) is established, the scope of REDD must widen after 2023 to begin restoring what has been lost.

Ecological restoration of degraded forests (or deforested areas) with native tree species, not only provides major climate change mitigation potential, but also significant biodiversity benefits. The AHTEG emphasises that forest restoration is important for climate adaptation as it can facilitate species migration and help maintain vital ecosystem services (like food, water and shelter) under a changing climate.

Ecological restoration of forests is a special kind of reforestation. It is different from afforestation and all other reforestation activities because the prime goal of ecological restoration is the regeneration of the natural forest. Afforestation and most reforestation are more concerned with biomass (for timber or carbon sequestration) production in plantations. Afforestation and reforestation also involve major risks for biodiversity and local people because they could replace native vegetation with exotic flora, degrade natural

forests and result in monoculture plantations replacing natural forests. Therefore, afforestation and reforestation (except the special case of forest restoration) must be excluded, not only from REDD, but also from a later expanded REDD+ mechanism. Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) must also be excluded from a future REDD+ mechanism because it allows the ongoing degradation of forests by logging and could place forest protection under threat. A future REDD+ must focus only on the ecological restoration of forests.

### 3) **Prioritising Protection and Preventing Leakage**

Biodiversity loss caused by deforestation and forest degradation can be kept to a minimum if the REDD incentive system is set up to prioritise biodiversity protection.

Clearly it is imperative that we immediately begin reducing deforestation where it is currently high (e.g. Indonesia, Brazil). It is equally important to prevent the economic drivers of deforestation (e.g. timber, palm oil, soya, cattle pasture) from simply relocating to countries with current high forest cover and low deforestation rates. Reducing deforestation (or forest degradation) in one location, only to have it happen in a relatively intact area elsewhere (a process referred to as 'leakage'), would not achieve reductions in deforestation rates, nor associated carbon emissions. Furthermore, this leakage would be catastrophic for biodiversity because of the extraordinarily high impacts of initial disturbance in intact forests.

Therefore:

- A substantial part of REDD funding should be influenced by a periodically-decreasing tropical target baseline (TTB). The TTB is calculated by subtracting 0.15 percentage points from the current average annual gross tropical deforestation rate of 0.6% of tropical forest areas each 5-year REDD period (i.e starting with 0.45% TTB between 2008-13 and reaching 0 TTB from 2023 onwards). Staying below the TTB would generate surplus payments for a country, thereby creating a further incentive for countries with low deforestation rates to keep them low and reduce them even further.
- A portion of REDD funding should be used for area-based, premium payments for newly-protected forest areas crucial for biodiversity (e.g. Intact Forest Landscapes). Area-based premium payments should also be made available for areas kept free of degradation, as an additional incentive to specifically reduce forest degradation and its associated emissions.