

Statement on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+)

Presently, discussions continue on REDD+ in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA), under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as in the REDD+ Partnership.

Meanwhile, measures addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation must not be overlooked. Moreover, REDD+ rules, depending on how they are decided, could result in substantial barriers to genuine efforts against climate change, while significant risks may also arise, such as adverse affects on biodiversity and local communities. There are also many concerns about the ongoing processes of the REDD+ Partnership.

1. On REDD+ Partnership Processes

(1) Must Maintain Consistency with Agreements of UN Negotiations

REDD+ rules must be discussed in accordance with discussions held under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The REDD+ Partnership at present is a voluntary discussion among countries and institutions. Stakeholder must avoid making premature conclusions about the REDD+ system based on these discussions.

(2) A Process without Stakeholder Participation Cannot be Justified

At its inception, REDD+ Partnership stated that in their actions under the Partnership, the efforts of the Partner are to “be inclusive of all committed countries as well as representatives of relevant stakeholders including indigenous peoples, local communities, civil society and the private sector.” However, there has been very little participation of such stakeholders. Many NGOs have criticized this point. This situation goes counter to the principles set by the very countries participating in the REDD+ Partnership, leading many to question the legitimacy of this process.

2. Details of REDD+

(1) Definition of Forest

In the discussions about REDD+, if measures against deforestation / forest degradation and plantation projects are treated equally within the same framework, this could permit carbon emissions from deforestation / forest degradation to be offset by monoculture plantation projects. To maintain the original purpose of REDD to prevent deforestation / forest degradation of natural forests, plantation projects should not be treated equally with REDD+ within the same framework.

Developing countries today experience clear cutting of natural forests, the planting of plantations for palm oil and soybean production, and wood, rubber, paper-pulp, paper plantation for chip-production expanding, biodiversity degradation and ecosystem destruction, and the loss of livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities.

If, under REDD+, natural forests and plantations are treated as equivalent, the result is that economic incentives are generated by the conversion to plantation forests as the total “forested” area not being reduced, even though this means the clear-cutting of natural forests, . In effect, this would accelerate the problems mentioned above.

REDD was essentially aimed at avoiding the loss of natural forests, so it is not acceptable for REDD+ to become the cause of further forest loss.

In order to maintain diverse forest ecosystems, going forward, the definition of forest should distinguish primary forest, natural forests subject to forestry use, and plantation forest, and the loss of primary and natural forests due to REDD must be prevented through safeguards and MRV (measurement, reporting and verification).

(2) Addressing the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation: Governance Issues

Illegal logging is already a serious problem, and some of the underlying causes of deforestation and degradation include corruption, fraud, collusion, and the lack of law enforcement over forests and land rights.

The influx of funds by REDD+ into the forestry sector has the potential to accelerate the decline of forest and land governance. REDD+ itself may harm efforts to fight climate change and to conserve forests if illegal activities occur due to improper design and operation of REDD+.

(3) Addressing the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation: Consumption and Investment by Developed Countries

Ultimately, to halt deforestation and forest degradation, it is necessary to deal with large-scale clear-cutting projects and land-use conversion projects for wood products, cash crops (paper-pulp, palm oil, rubber, soybean, etc.) and mineral resources. It is also necessary to address the enormous pressure of demand and investment from developed countries, which encourages such projects. In the long run, we must move beyond the mass consumption society, and shift the structure of societies toward the local production and consumption of wood products, to make producers closer to users.

Developed countries should strengthen measures to prevent the import of timber from destructive logging, and should cease investments into businesses involving deforestation and forest degradation.

(4) Ensuring Safeguards and Independent Review Board

While considering REDD+ impacts on ecosystems and land-use, measurement measures that focus solely on carbon storage in forests are inadequate, so safeguards to prevent adverse impacts on biodiversity and local communities must be integrated into REDD systems.

Following measures are required, for example, to ensure these safeguards.

- In the planning phase, adequate environmental and social impact analysis should be carried out, and biodiversity and impacts on the community should be evaluated properly. Plans should reflect their findings in order to avoid negative impacts.
- In the planning phase of REDD, consultation is carried out with the participating stakeholders including local communities, and the results should be reflected in the plan. Information should be properly disclosed.
- Natural forests should not be converted to plantations and farmland.
- Forests with high conservation value should be preserved.
- Rights of indigenous people and local community over the use of land and natural resources (including customary rights) should be protected.
- Indigenous people and local community should be able to participate in all processes, including decision-making, while sufficient information is provided in advance, through free and prior informed consent (FPIC).

- An official mechanism to voice objections should be established, allowing affected residents to challenge projects.
- The benefits of REDD should be distributed equitably through transparent procedures.
- Contracts should be signed regarding benefit sharing amongst governments, project developers, and communities.

Some of these points have already been referred to in negotiation texts (FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/L.7/Add.6) upon which REDD+ is based, and submitted to the 15th Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP15). However, phrases such as "promote" and "support" are used in those texts, and phrases such as "ensure," with higher applicability, should be used and included in future agreements.

Furthermore, in accordance with rules that include safeguards, reviews by independent third party organizations are imperative.

(5) On Baseline Setting and Scope of MRV

To avoid "leakage" of deforestation and forest degradation (seeping of forest reduction and degradation outside of designated region), it is necessary that baseline setting and MRV be performed at a national level.

(6) Financial Mechanisms: Concerns about Credits

In achieving domestic reduction targets, it is not appropriate for developed countries to purchase REDD+ credits from abroad to alleviate efforts to reduce domestic emissions from fossil fuel use. Doing so would mean using highly uncertain REDD+ credits for offsetting or avoiding the required reduction of GHG emissions from fossil fuel use.

In other words, conducting REDD offsets by purchases of large amounts of credits will delay the reduction of domestic fossil-fuel emissions, and as a result, increase the possibility that humanity will be unable to reach the substantive emission reduction needed to limit the global temperature increase to 2 degrees. Developed countries need to set higher goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels in a post-Kyoto regime. On the other hand, there is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. It is essential to carry out a substantial reduction in fossil fuel use at the same time as a reduction of deforestation and forest degradation.

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