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Fraudulent emissions accounting threatens to undermine progress on climate *Logging loophole in developed countries could be finalized at climate talks in Bonn*

Progress towards a meaningful climate deal in 2010 could be significantly undermined if developed countries succeed in their bid to avoid accountability for their emissions from forestry and bioenergy use, according to forest and climate experts from the Ecosystems Climate Alliance (ECA).

Major developed countries including Austria, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and Sweden proposed an emissions accounting loophole at the UN Copenhagen climate change talks in December that would allow significant emissions increases from forestry and bioenergy without penalty. The loophole would hide increased greenhouse gas emissions of about 400 megatons (CO₂ equivalents), and represents a weakening in the forest provisions of the Kyoto Protocol, which are already regarded as weak and ineffective.

John Ashe, the Chair of the negotiations under the Protocol, has formally called on countries to finalize their negotiations on forestry and land-use at the upcoming climate change talks in Bonn, Germany, May 31 to June 11. Campaigners are worried this is likely to mean the loophole is accepted, rather than reformed.

“Conceding that developed countries can hide their emissions from forestry and bioenergy would set an awful precedent for future climate negotiations,” said Rebecca Bolt Ettliger of Nepenthes. “It would be climate fraud.”

The loophole would work by allowing developed countries to continue increasing their emissions for several years and only measure their reductions against this elevated future level. Countries are setting this ‘reference level’ by forecasting increased logging to produce paper, lumber and energy. European countries in particular are keen to avoid accounting for these increased emissions so they can claim that the production of tree-based bioenergy is ‘carbon neutral’.

“The sad part about all of this is that forests could be part of the solution, rather than a thorn in the side of the negotiations,” said Alistair Graham from Humane Society International. “Developed countries must commit to reducing emissions from forestry, and increasing the protection of natural forests. The atmosphere and the forests would both be winners.”

“We need to see these loopholes tossed out in Bonn, not finalized,” said Peg Putt from The Wilderness Society. “Committing to reduce emissions from forestry should strengthen Copenhagen pledges to make real cuts in terrestrial carbon emissions, rather than undermine them.”

The Ecosystems Climate Alliance is an alliance of NGOs committed to keeping natural terrestrial ecosystems intact and their carbon out of the atmosphere. We work to ensure this is done in a way which is equitable, transparent, consistent with the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and which takes place alongside deep and urgent cuts in fossil fuel emissions. ECA comprises Australian Orangutan Project, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Global Witness, Humane Society International, Nepenthes, Rainforest Action Network, Rainforest Foundation Norway, The Rainforest Foundation U.K., Wetlands International, and The Wilderness Society.