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New REDD text drops targets; dilutes critical safeguards

Campaigners say ministerial-level action may be needed to ensure final deal protects forests

Copenhagen – Targets for ending deforestation have been removed and safeguard language has been significantly weakened in a leaked text on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) at the UN climate talks in Copenhagen, the [Ecosystems Climate Alliance](#) revealed today.

“Without targets, REDD becomes toothless,” said Peg Putt of the Wilderness Society. “The so-called safeguards will be nothing but fancy window dressing unless they are given legal force.”

Targets for deforestation in the previous REDD text, which is expected to be one of the stronger parts of a climate deal, aimed to cut deforestation by 50 percent by 2020 and eliminate it by 2030. These targets have been removed.

Of equal concern, language ensuring critical safeguards for biodiversity, forest conversion, indigenous rights, and monitoring has moved from operational text into the preamble. “Limiting safeguards to the preamble weakens the agreement and deprives it of any assurance of compliance,” said Dr. Rosalind Reeve of Global Witness.

Start-up costs for REDD are estimated to be €15-25 billion (£13.6-22.7 billion; \$22.4-37.3 billion) from 2010-15 to support preparatory activities, although some experts challenge those figures as far too low. Rich countries haven’t yet provided the necessary financing for REDD or agreed global targets for deep reductions of industrial emissions. “Given the lack of funding and adequate emissions reductions commitments from the rich countries, it’s hardly surprising that developing countries won’t commit to global targets for deforestation,” said Nathaniel Dyer of Rainforest Foundation UK.

Language on the underlying drivers of tropical deforestation, which now appears in the preamble, recognizes consuming countries’ role in fueling deforestation but puts no obligation on them to address the problem. “Global demand for forest commodities like illegal timber and palm oil is one of the leading causes of tropical deforestation around the world,” said Andrea Johnson of Environmental Investigation Agency. “If we don’t address the causes of the problem, how can we find a solution?”

Protection of natural forests appears explicitly in the text for the first time, and a safeguard on conversion of natural forests to plantations has reappeared, but both are still not required actions.

Still missing in the text is any provision to protect and restore the world's peat soils, which account for six percent of all global CO2 emissions.

"Peat soils are a key part of many countries' plans to reduce their emissions, including large emitters like Indonesia," said Susanna Tol of Wetlands International. "If peat soils are not in REDD, these efforts will go unsupported."

A weak REDD deal will fail to reduce emissions from deforestation, threaten the indigenous peoples who rely on forests for their livelihoods, and have severe negative impacts on biodiversity.

"Currently, an acre of forest is cut down every second, depriving the world of critical carbon reservoirs and creating huge emissions bursts into the atmosphere," said Stephen Leonard of the Australian Orangutan Project. "A REDD deal without global deforestation targets or safeguards makes it much more likely that the orangutan and other critical species that rely on the forest will become extinct."

While text can still be changed, campaigners say that ministerial level actions beginning next week may be required to reinsert targets and strengthen safeguard language.

"Clearly, everyone agrees that the world's tropical forests need to be protected," said Bill Barclay of Rainforest Action Network. "But good intentions aren't enough; they have to be paired with action. Ministers must act to strengthen the REDD text next week if we have any hope of a REDD that will be effective in protecting tropical forests."

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The Ecosystems Climate Alliance (ECA) (www.ecosystemsclimate.org) is an alliance of environment and social NGOs committed to keeping natural terrestrial ecosystems intact and their carbon out of the atmosphere, in an equitable and transparent way that respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. ECA comprises Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Global Witness, Humane Society International, Rainforest Action Network, Rainforest Foundation Norway, The Rainforest Foundation U.K., Wetlands International and The Wilderness Society, Nepenthes, and the Australian Orangutan Project.