

For Immediate Release
21 September, 2011

Environmental Groups Denounce Diversion of Forest Funding to REDD Plantations

21 September 2011 - On the World Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations [1], a coalition of environmental groups and Indigenous peoples organizations [2] has launched a call to the international donor community to halt the diversion of forest conservation funding to dubious schemes to “Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and enhance forest carbon stocks” (REDD+), which are being promoted within the framework of the United Nations Climate Convention.

The groups charge that climate policy makers are working with a flawed definition of “forests” that includes monocultures, genetically engineered trees and agrofuel plantations.

“This erroneous definition allows REDD+ funding to finance the expansion of monoculture tree plantations, which are implicated in serious environmental and social impacts and human rights violations all over the world,” said Winnie Overbeek, coordinator of the World Rainforest Movement.

More than five hundred scientists have called on the UN Food and Agricultural Organization to review the definition of forest [3], so that a clear distinction can be made between biologically diverse forest ecosystems, which provide a broad range of values and products for humanity, and monoculture tree plantations.

Also on the World Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations, the World Future Council will hold a ceremony in New York to hand an award to the most inspiring, innovative, and influential forest policy [4]. Simone Lovera, Executive Director of Global Forest Coalition, and one of the jury members of this year’s award, points out: “It is important to note that the six countries nominated, The Gambia, Rwanda, United States, Bhutan, Nepal, and Switzerland, have developed their successful forest policies without any REDD+ support” [5].

“Most of these successes are based on a combination of political will and the recognition of the rights of local communities and their valuable role in conserving and restoring forests,” Lovera said. “Forest donors should support initiatives and policies that ensure rights-based, socially just forest conservation rather than diverting their funding to risky REDD+ experiments that promote tree monocultures and human rights violations.”

Tom Goldtooth, director of Indigenous Environmental Network adds: “All over the world, monoculture tree plantations and other REDD+ projects are triggering conflicts with Indigenous Peoples and local communities and environmental devastation. Meanwhile, support is lacking for socially just and successful policies that support real community forest conservation.”

Many REDD+ donors speculate that their projects will soon be financed through mandatory carbon offset markets, which they expect will bring significant additional investment. However, carbon offset markets are collapsing due to fears that countries will fail to reach an agreement on legally binding emission cuts beyond 2012.

“Without global caps, there will be no global trade,” says Tamra Gilbertson of Carbontradewatch. “The European Emissions Trading Scheme – the world’s primary carbon exchange – excludes REDD+ due to well-founded concerns that forest carbon offsets undermine real efforts to reduce emissions. REDD+ funding has proven to be highly volatile, inequitable and uncertain. In order to both combat climate change and to value forests in their own right, forest conservation policies need reliable, stable and equitable support – not disingenuous and patently false solutions like REDD+.”

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Notes:

[1] See <http://www.wrm.org.uy>

[2] The No REDD Platform is a loose network of researchers, activists, organizations and movements that work together by sharing information, organizing collective strategies and supporting each other. By connecting with global justice movements committed to climate, environmental and social justice the No REDD Platform aims to expose the injustices inherent in REDD+ projects globally. See <http://noredd.makenoise.org>

[3] http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/letter_to_the_FAO.html

[4] See <http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/4398.html>

[5] Please note that of these countries, Nepal is the only country that currently receives significant amounts of REDD+ support, but its successful policy on supporting community-based forest management was developed long before the first REDD+ support started to arrive.