

Forest Watch Special Report – UNFCCC climate talks, Bonn June 2010

REDD update

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Introduction

Governments of the 192 nations who are Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met in Bonn, Germany in June 2010 for a new round of climate talks. The purpose of the meeting was to reactivate a process that suffered a serious setback in Copenhagen, due to a lack of political will and conflicts among Parties. The June talks provided further evidence of the ongoing conflicts, with Northern governments continuing to attempt to force the adoption of the Copenhagen Accord, which was strongly criticised by countries from the global south. The Accord does not include binding reduction targets but a 'pledge and review' system, with no aggregate targets, compliance mechanisms or comparable rules. The consequences of this deadlock are two-fold: a lack of confidence in multilateralism and a multitude of bi-lateral and pluri-lateral initiatives outside of the UN remit.

Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) is a good example of this dynamic.¹ REDD discussions in Bonn were limited, since Parties consider this an area in which consensus is more advanced, and hence immediate attention is not required. This standstill in the international REDD debate is quickly being filled: the Interim REDD+ Partnership, launched in May, aims to coordinate the growing number of initiatives. Additionally, several new bilateral agreements on REDD have been signed this year and both the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and its Forest Investment Programme (FIP) are attempting to encompass a wide variety of REDD actors.

REDD discussions under the AWG-LCA²

REDD text: During a brief session convened by the LCA chair, Parties exchanged views on capacity building and sources of finance for REDD without adopting any changes to the text, leaving it virtually unchanged from the final draft text in Copenhagen.³ Although Parties adopted language to "support and promote" safeguards on indigenous peoples' rights and biodiversity, many consider that the lack of reference to the implementation of safeguards demonstrates a very weak commitment. No consensus has been reached on how or if safeguards will be monitored, reported and verified (MRV). Other critical issues yet to be decided are (1) whether deforestation

must be monitored at national level or at sub-national level; (2) sources of finance; and (3) whether REDD should have a clear objective of stopping deforestation. The text remains weak on rights, although it contains reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁴

REDD discussions: The discussion focused on two issues: (1) what Parties need to do to support REDD readiness and (2) the type of financial resources that would provide for both short-term and long-term financing.

Annex I countries, joined by Guyana, Ecuador, Suriname, and Papua New Guinea (PNG), supported market-based⁵ sources of financing. Many Annex 1 countries stressed the need for a 'basket approach' of public finance for capacity building and both carbon trading and public finance for long-term financing, which obscures the relative dominance of carbon trading in this mixed approach. The EU referred to the need to create an international carbon market while Tuvalu and Bolivia strongly opposed the preference for market-based finance and urged Parties to reject offsets and carbon trading. Tuvalu proposed a Multilateral Climate Fund under the UNFCCC, which was supported by the majority of developing countries in the wider discussions on finance.

Tuvalu urged the adoption of clear guidelines on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and to address governance issues, whilst focussing on drivers of deforestation outside of the tropical countries. Bolivia urged parties to recognise the multiple values of forests, and address forest definitions in the UNFCCC to ensure they clearly distinguish natural forests from plantations. Norway, Bolivia, Tuvalu and the Philippines all stressed the importance of recognising indigenous peoples' rights.

China and Brazil did not endorse carbon trading, with China declaring its support for additional public finance as a main source of funding for REDD+. Brazil suggested that public funding including funds generated from the auctioning of AAUs be dedicated to capacity building and demonstration activities. Full implementation of REDD+ activities should be monitored nationally as opposed to following a project based approach.⁶

The Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change finalised its position, reiterating that no REDD activity should occur on indigenous land before indigenous peoples' rights are respected, and that Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) should be ensured.⁷



Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Assistance

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) is the technical advisory body to the UNFCCC. A draft SBSTA decision⁸ was put forward which will be brought to the Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 in Cancun for approval. The decision focuses only on the need to ensure capacity building for Parties to apply the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines for carbon reporting and assessment. Recommendations made in Decision 4/CP.15⁹ namely that SBSTA develop guidance on indigenous peoples' engagement in MRV for REDD and on drivers of deforestation were left aside, although there are indications that these might be considered in Cancun.

The Interim REDD+ Partnership

No proper participation: The Interim REDD+ Partnership was announced last January by France and Norway as a high level initiative to coordinate and harmonise activities around the REDD 'fast start' funds pledged in Copenhagen. An initial meeting was held in Paris in March 2010, which was heavily criticised for the lack of inclusion of indigenous peoples and civil society. Since then an Interim REDD+ Agreement was developed with minimal civil society input.¹⁰ Lack of reference to the rights of indigenous peoples in the principles of the Agreement is seen as cause for additional concern. Despite the concerns, the Partnership was officially launched on May 27 in Oslo.

Brazil hosted a technical meeting from 15-17 July to prepare for the second Ministerial meeting of Partners to the Agreement which will take place in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. NGOs have again voiced strong criticism of the poor process of engagement of civil society.¹¹ Indigenous peoples pointed out that they were not even invited to participate, which contradicts relevant international standards and obligations. Whilst determining rules for stakeholder engagement was discussed in Brazil, the outcomes suggest that the likelihood of the initiative adopting an open and transparent self-selection process to determine civil society and indigenous peoples' engagement in this Partnership is slim.

Moving outside the UN: In the context of lack of agreement on outstanding issues in the REDD negotiations at the UN level, the

political importance of external processes such as the Partnership increases, with the increasing risk of pre-empting UN decisions on various critical issues which are still pending. Concerns raised during the UN climate talks that the Partnership might "take over" the REDD processes at the UN level, together with providing an enlarged role for the World Bank were heightened when Norway, PNG and Japan¹² did not provide concrete information of how the Partnership will operate, how stakeholders will be engaged or why explicit reference to the rights of indigenous peoples is lacking in the Partnership's principles. Lack of a sunset clause in the Agreement sparked further concern. Elsewhere outside the UN REDD negotiations, multilateral institutions involved in REDD initiatives are beginning to harmonise their approach to applying safeguards, as well as proposals to increase the number of delivery partners. Many see this as significantly watering down compliance requirements with a view to buying in more support from reluctant REDD countries.¹³

Conclusion

In conclusion, the recently held meetings of the UNFCCC, FCPC, FIP and the REDD+ Partnership suggest that REDD-related processes outside of the UN are speeding up and that Northern governments are keen to see results for their agreement to commit funds to forest protection. In turn, social and environmental requirements for REDD initiatives are becoming weaker as Southern country governments insist that obligations to implement safeguards impinge on national sovereignty.

Such reluctance to respect indigenous peoples' rights and protect biodiversity as part of any REDD initiative lends weight to the growing chorus of voices highlighting how the focus of the REDD debate on finance has distracted from the need to first and foremost mobilise the political capital required to halt deforestation. They point out that rights, biodiversity and the climate can only be protected by dealing with the drivers of deforestation and that the funding required to implement such action must be linked to strict eligibility criteria which ensure international standards on human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples and environmental protection are adhered to. At the same time there is an urgent need to address industrialised country demand for timber and agricultural products that continue to drive deforestation.

ENDNOTES

1. Forest Peoples Programme: "The emergence of the REDD hydra. An analysis of the REDD-related discussions and developments in the June 2010 session of the UNFCCC and beyond. Francesco Martone. http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/forest_issues/bases/forest_issues.shtml
2. Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action
3. http://maindb.unfccc.int/library/view_pdf.pl?url=http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/awgla10/eng/06.pdf For the initial LCA negotiating text and page 33 for the section on REDD+. The advanced draft proposed at the end of the session by the LCA chair: http://unfccc.int/meetings/ad_hoc_working_groups/lca/items/4381.php
4. See FERN's Forest Watch Special Report on Copenhagen: <http://www.fern.org/node/4660>
- 5 'Market-based' refers to finance sourced from carbon trading, while 'market-linked', 'non-market based' or even 'funds' can be used to refer to raising finance through taxes, levies or auctioning emission allowances.
6. Assigned Amount Units, which are allocated to countries with assigned commitments under the Kyoto Protocol
7. http://www.indigenousclimate.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112:iipfcc-position-june-bonn-climate-talks&catid=3:news
8. http://maindb.unfccc.int/library/view_pdf.pl?url=http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/sbsta/eng/102.pdf
9. <http://unfccc.int/documentation/decisions/items/3597.php?such=j&vlltext=/CP.15#beg>
10. <http://www.oslocf2010.no/partnershipdocument.cfm>
11. <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2010/07/15/civil-society-excluded-from-interim-redd-partnership-meeting-in-brasilia/comment-page-1/#comment-31160>
12. PNG and Japan will co-chair the Partnership in the second half of 2010
13. NGOs highlight serious concerns over proposals that could weaken safeguard and accountability standards for REDD readiness funds managed by the World Bank. 27 June 2010. http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/forest_issues/bases/forest_issues.shtml