

REDD is not a Solution to Climate Change

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In Brief ...

* **REDD is supposed to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, but instead may often contribute to them by putting a total addition of man-made CO₂ into the atmosphere.**

* **REDD includes clear-cutting, logging, and plantations, all which harm the environment.**

* **REDD results in land being taken by corporations from indigenous peoples in violation of their human rights.**

* **REDD offsets allow polluting States and companies to continue to pollute.**

* **REDD makes Mother Earth a mere object of financial worth denying our planet any intrinsic value.**

Action that is needed:

1. States should resist REDD or reduce REDD to non-market mechanisms whose total result is consistent with reducing overall emissions of greenhouse gases.

2. If plans for market-based REDD go ahead, there should be significant safeguards to ensure that these projects really make a contribution to lowering emissions.

REDD or REDD+ or REDD++ or REDD-PLUS are all acronyms for UN sponsored programmes that are supposed to contribute to combating climate change by Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. The cutting-down of forests and other means of deforestation account for at most 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions. REDD alleges to stop the destruction of forests by creating credits for protecting forest that can then be sold or traded on the market giving the holder or buyer a greater right to pollute. This is how market driven REDD works, but REDD can also be non-market project and these are more effective in cutting emissions.

Currently, most REDD programmes reward a State that commits to reducing deforestation below a certain pre-established level in return for receiving carbon credits or the right to continue polluting by some other activity. Admittedly these credits usually accrue to some—a limited number—of developing countries, and can be sold by them to benefit their development. Nevertheless, like other forms of carbon trading it is a zero-sum market, because the buyer of carbon credits is merely buying the right to pollute. Thus, instead of cutting emissions the buyers increase their emissions.

In addition, REDD, as it is understood today, fails to recognize adequate value for conservation and ecosystem services that can not easily be valued in monetary terms or at a merely contemporary value. As many States that preserve their forests for the common good of all humankind do so with significant consequences for their own development, a valuation of their actions must be done across generations, taking into account both what they are giving up over time as well as what benefits accrued to the countless people of future generations. This is not the type of valuation that the carbon market provides as the turbulence in the world largest carbon market, the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme has confirmed.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, in the scramble to profit from REDD credits, the livelihoods, cultures, and rights of indigenous peoples are often ignored or trampled. Ironically, it is the protection of these rights that REDD-proponents argue is an advantage of REDD. But a scheme that trades one form of environmental pollution for another or one State's unused right to pollute for another State's right to pollute run counter to the basic respect most indigenous people have for Mother Earth. While proponents of REDD often assume that indigenous people value their land only in the contemporary sense and in a restricted manner of the protection, in reality indigenous people often value their land for the past, the present and the future. They do not merely seek to protect it, but to use it sustainably and traditionally. For many indigenous people, REDD is not protection, but a form of alienation that takes their land away from them, in one form or another, forever. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation is good, but REDD is not the best way to do it and may not even be a humane way to do it.

Thus the reality with REDD is that it does not help combat the adverse effects of climate change, at least not as much as it should. Instead REDD commoditizes the environment and puts profit over people.

At the same time, there are non-market mechanisms for reducing deforestation and forest degradation that contribute significantly more to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Non-Market mechanisms for reducing deforestation and forest degradation include paying States to maintain their forests, international taxes (for example, on financial transactions and shipping) that go to preserving forest just like national taxes that finance national parks but on a global scale, public funds contributed by governments to promote the common good of our atmosphere and planet, and domestic legislation prohibiting the destruction of forests and mandating that they be used sustainably. The latter are also the best ways to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, but have sometimes been replaced by REDD schemes that have then led to a commoditization of some forests that were previously protected by law.

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What Some States Think About REDD

Brazil, China and India support REDD as they are the largest beneficiaries, but they agree that market mechanisms must be used with great care and that they must be scrutinized to ensure that they actually contribute to reducing emissions.

AOSIS States want to move forward with REDD, including with market mechanisms, but seek the creation of a new international mechanism.

Bolivia has set itself apart in a space of higher ambition by calling for non-market approaches to be the focus of REDD and calling for the support. It also called for non-market mechanisms, market mechanisms, and joint mitigation and adaptation to be considered in a comprehensive COP19 decision.

Least Developed Countries support REDD and have called for the creation of a new international mechanism to ensure support and the operational integrity of REDD, including market mechanisms.

Norway is a primary financial supporter of REDD, seeing it as a good investment for its surplus cash and its private industries. REDD can accrue significant benefits to important Norwegian industries, such as pharmaceuticals, by allowing them to gain significant advantages for acquiring indigenous peoples knowledge even without direct exploitation of their land.

The United States of America also supports REDD and views it as a way to make the private sector share in the responsibility for protecting forests and as a way for providing fast cash without a significant need for public finance. The basis of the assumption that private can replace public finance is viewed with skepticism by most States.

Civil Society is divided between some who have expressed serious skepticism about REDD and some that support REDD. Multiple Civil Society actors have called for a critical assessment of REDD to ensure it contributes to a coherent climate justice strategy.

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Item 6 on both the SBI and SBSTA agenda is being dealt with as the Joint Item of Coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements.