

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE - TUESDAY APRIL 13, 2010

\$6 BILLION PLAN TO SAVE WORLD'S RAINFORESTS RISKS DERAILMENT BEFORE IT BEGINS, WARN LEADING ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Indigenous peoples and other NGOs are being excluded from key international climate meetings taking place this week that could determine the future of the world's rainforests, say a network of forty environmental and human rights organisations denouncing the lack of transparency and participation in the discussions.

Organisations including the Rainforest Foundation UK, Friends of the Earth (USA & France (Les Amis de la Terre France)), Global Witness and The Wilderness Society are criticising the Paris-Oslo Process, which aims to establish an 'Interim Partnership' agreement between rich and poor countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, for lack of genuine consultation in the drafting of the agreement, and failing to take into account underlying issues that need to be tackled in the fight against deforestation. The Paris-Oslo Process, developed when Prime Minister Stoltenberg of Norway and President Sarkozy of France coordinated countries to gather outside the UNFCCC mechanism after the failure to agree a climate deal in Copenhagen, also brings capital negotiations to the table for discussion, with interim funding of USD \$6 billion expected to be pledged by May for spending by 2012. They say that a failure to address underlying problems could lead to so-called fast-start financing becoming a "false start for REDD".

The group is also concerned with the lack of clarity on how the Process would link with or report back to the UNFCCC, in the lead up to the global climate summit in Cancun in December, and that it could run the risk of undermining social and environmental safeguards close to finalisation in what is the legitimate forum for agreement.

A statement issued by the group today stated, "The [Paris-Oslo] process to date has lacked genuine transparency and openness with lack of participation of civil society or indigenous peoples' representatives at the table in either the first meeting in Paris on 11th March or the second meeting in Bonn on 12th and 13th April."

It continued, "A bad REDD system is worse than no system at all for the world's climate, its forests and its people. If the Interim REDD Partnership focuses narrowly on emissions reductions and fails to take into consideration the need to establish mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the safeguards, ignoring the potential effects of REDD on human rights, biodiversity, and poverty, it sets itself up for failure and could easily do more harm than good."

"Forest dwellers like indigenous peoples have a right to full and effective participation, in accordance with international human rights norms and principles, and in particular a right to give or withhold their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) regarding decisions affecting their rights, including customary land rights. A failure to do so would be a violation of their rights."

The group, citing compelling evidence that deforestation rates are lower and forest restoration improves with Indigenous Peoples, civil societies and local communities' involvement, calls for deadlines finalising the Interim Partnership Agreement to be extended beyond May 27th so that indigenous peoples can participate meaningful. Many believe the current deadline to finalise the Partnership Agreement will not provide adequate time for consultation on the globally important issue, and will largely exclude indigenous peoples.

The group also calls for more transparency in these meetings to ensure that they do not undermine the UNFCCC negotiation process.

“To be successful, the Interim REDD Partnership Agreement must be a partnership not only of developed and developing states but also of civil society and indigenous peoples. Peoples living in and near forests will be most directly affected by REDD activities. They must, therefore, have a seat at the table and adequate time to understand and comment on the proposed Interim REDD Partnership Agreement.”

The full statement as referenced above is copied below.

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CIVIL SOCIETY AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' STATEMENT ON PARIS-OSLO PROCESS

Monday 12th April

The Paris-Oslo process, which aims to establish an Interim REDD Partnership in Oslo on 27th May, must become more transparent and participatory, allow more time for genuine engagement with civil society and indigenous peoples' organisations and ensure that it does not undermine the UNFCCC negotiation process.

A bad REDD system is worse than no system at all for the world's climate, its forests and its people. If the Interim REDD Partnership focuses narrowly on emissions reductions and fails to take into consideration the need to establish mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the safeguards, ignoring the potential effects of REDD on human rights, biodiversity, and poverty, it sets itself up for failure and could easily do more harm than good.

Make Paris-Oslo process more transparent and participatory

The process to date has lacked genuine transparency and openness with lack of participation of civil society or indigenous peoples' representatives at the table in either the first meeting in Paris on 11th March or the second meeting in Bonn on 12th and 13th April.

To be successful, the Interim REDD Partnership Agreement must be a partnership not only of developed and developing states but also of civil society and indigenous peoples. Peoples living in and near forests will be most directly affected by REDD activities. They must, therefore, have a seat at the table and adequate time to understand and comment on the proposed Interim REDD Partnership Agreement.

Beyond information-sharing to genuine consultation

Although we recognise the efforts of some countries to hold conference calls with civil society and indigenous peoples' organisations, this is far from satisfactory and amounts to information-sharing at best, rather than genuine participation or consultation which would allow these stakeholders and rightsholders to influence the outcomes of the process.

Information-sharing must be accompanied by opportunities to engage in consultation through which civil society and indigenous peoples can provide meaningful inputs throughout the process – from framing the agenda to proposing workable solutions – and where clear feedback loops for the consideration and incorporation of such inputs exist.

Forest dwellers like indigenous peoples have a right to full and effective participation, in accordance with international human rights norms and principles, and in particular a right to give or withhold their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) regarding decisions affecting their rights, including customary land rights. A failure to do so would be a violation of their rights.

Benefits of wider participation

Making space for meaningful consultation would greatly benefit the process. Civil society and indigenous peoples can contribute first-hand information and highlight issues before they become serious on-the-ground problems. There is compelling evidence that deforestation rates are lower and forest restoration improves where indigenous peoples and local communities have secure rights and are able to protect and manage their lands and forests. Early involvement of rightsholders will lead to a more effective (and ultimately faster) process to reduce forest loss over the long term. In contrast, a hastily developed agreement could generate more problems and unforeseen delays than solutions.

Extend 27th May deadline

The imposed timeline, which aims to finalise an Interim REDD Partnership Agreement by 27th May, does not allow enough time for meaningful participation of civil society and indigenous peoples in the process. It is likely to lead to resentment, lack of support and rejection of REDD by civil society and indigenous peoples at Cancun.

The proposed timeline does not allow adequate time for addressing the many issues at stake in the process, which include, inter alia: the support, promotion, operationalisation and MRV of safeguards; ensuring environmental and social integrity throughout the REDD cycle and establishing a specialised international complaints and recourse mechanism. Thus, the Oslo meeting in May should rather be a stepping stone that ensures a truly transparent and participatory process for developing the needed global framework for effective forest protection.

Avoid a rush to disburse funding rather than addressing underlying problems

Ambitious steps must be taken now to reduce deforestation, but we also highlight the danger of donor countries rushing to disburse funds allocated for REDD on unsuitable projects that do not address underlying problems. Rushing to channel money to REDD where the necessary governance and legislative 'readiness' is not yet secured would result in negative social and environmental outcomes overall. Difficult but much-needed policy and governance reforms are required in many countries to tackle the underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in order to develop a more sustainable forest sector on a broad scale. Unless underlying problems are addressed, so-called fast-start financing would be a false start for REDD.

Do not undermine UNFCCC process

In addition, we underline that the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties remains the legitimate forum for agreement on REDD. The Paris-Oslo process must not undermine

this. We are concerned with the lack of clarity on how the process would link with or report back to the UNFCCC.

Signed:

ARA (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Regenwald und Artenschutz) Germany
Australian Orangutang Project
Bank Information Centre, Washington DC
Centre d'accompagnement des Autochtones Pygmées et Minoritaires Vulnérables (CAMV), DRC (Africa rep UNREDD)
Centro Alexander von Humboldt, Nicaragua
Centro de Planificación y Estudios Sociales (CEPLAES) Ecuador
Civic Response, Ghana
ClientEarth
Community Research and Development Services (CORDS), Tanzania (IPs of Africa rep UN REDD)
Dignité Pygmée - DIPY (Pygmy Dignity), DRC
Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA), DRC
Eco Forestry Forum, PNG
Environmental Investigation Agency
FERN
Foker LSM Papua/Papua NGOs Cooperation Forum
Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)
Friends of the Earth Norway
Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone
Friends of the Earth US
Global Witness (Northern rep UNREDD)
Indigenous Peoples Links (PIP Links) London
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) London
Les Amis de la Terre France
Nepenthes, Denmark
OCEAN, DRC
Practical Solution Nepal
Pro Natura - Friends of the Earth Switzerland
Pro REGENWALD, Germany
Rainforest Action Network
Rainforest Foundation UK
Rainforest Foundation Norway
Reseau des Communicateurs de l'Environnement (RCEN)
Tebtebba
Tibet Justice Center and Tibet Third Pole
SONIA, Italy
Sustainability Watch Network, Central America
The Wilderness Society, Australia
Urgewald, Germany
WALHI - Friends of the Earth Indonesia
Wetlands International