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Environmental Defense Fund ~ Rainforest Alliance ~ Natural Resources Defense Council ~
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REDD+ Policy Agenda 2010

Key Issues that Need to be Addressed this Year

Though negotiations on policy approaches and positive incentives for REDD+ have made significant progress over the last year, a final agreement was not reached in Copenhagen, thereby extending negotiations into 2010. In the absence of incentives for reducing deforestation and for forest conservation, this one year delay will result in the loss of 13 million hectares of tropical forest and the emission of 5.8 billion tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere. The destruction of these forests represents a mitigation opportunity that cannot be regained and every year of delay means the world loses out on one of the most immediate and cost-effective ways of addressing climate change. A deal on REDD+ must be reached in 2010.

There are several key elements that must be addressed before final agreement can be reached. This brief describes these remaining questions and explains why they must be addressed immediately.¹ Sufficient understanding of each of these issues exists and substantial progress toward consensus has already been made.

REDD+ Issues to be addressed in 2010

Objective: A global goal for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation that contains specific emissions reductions targets for a defined period of time is necessary to achieve tropical forests' full potential to contribute to climate change mitigation. This goal must be associated with levels of financial support provided by developed countries to developing countries in order to achieve the desired REDD+ outcomes.² Many developing countries have shown willingness to take serious steps toward reducing their emissions from deforestation and degradation by putting voluntary targets on the table; Parties should capitalize on the momentum of these targets to define a global goal this year. However, implementing the necessary activities to achieve both national and global goals will require a great deal of political capital from leaders in developing countries; they will not get very far in their efforts without specific, quantitative financial commitments by developed countries that can make those goals achievable. That is why the global goal must be supported by concrete financing commitments from developed countries from new and additional financial resources derived from a broad range of sources.

Reference Levels: The establishment of a reference level against which performance can be judged and incentives can be granted is a fundamental first step in setting up REDD+ programs. Clear rules on how these reference levels can be set are needed to ensure the environmental integrity, effectiveness, and equity of a global REDD+ framework. Many countries are already moving forward with the technical capacity-building and analytical studies necessary to establish

¹ For more information about our recommendations regarding the elements described in this brief, please reference our documents regarding Financing Options for REDD+, REDD+ Scope/Participation, The Scale (national/sub-national) of REDD+, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and REDD+, and Ecological Co-benefits of REDD+.

² The global goal and associated levels of financing are discussed in more depth in our paper on Financing Options of REDD+.

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reference levels. Clear guidance from the international community on the establishment of reference levels is crucial to developing a common, transparent and equitable system as soon as possible.

Scale of Accounting/Compensation: One of the pending issues in the REDD+ negotiations is the scale (national or sub-national) of REDD+ strategies, monitoring systems, and reference levels. Many countries are currently undertaking activities at various scales, with some developing readiness plans at a national level and implementing pilot activities at a sub-national level. Further and expanded investment at either scale requires clear guidance from the international community regarding the scale at which performance will be judged and the accounting systems that will be accepted.

Financing: Some concrete commitments were made in Copenhagen on short-term finance for REDD+; these commitments represent a first step and countries need to follow through on these commitments during 2010. Delivery of these funds will be essential to ensure that progress on REDD+ is not further delayed. Furthermore, in order to really start to gain momentum in developing countries to make the big changes necessary to make REDD+ successful, there needs to be assurance that long-term, adequate and predictable finance will be provided. Developed countries need to define this year how much of their long-term commitments made as part of the Copenhagen Accord will be dedicated to REDD+. The financial mechanism will also be important. Although financing is addressed in both the Copenhagen Accord and L.7/Add.6, clarity still does not exist regarding whether market finance will be made available for REDD+ implementation; uncertainties remain due to ongoing negotiations within the context of both REDD+ and the broader LCA process. Developing countries need greater clarity this year as to whether REDD+ will be eligible for market finance for performance-based rewards as this will impact their current and future preparations and investments.

Definition of scope: Negotiations on the scope of REDD+ have not progressed beyond what was defined in the Bali Action Plan. For many, the definition of the 'plus' elements of REDD+ (conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement) remains unclear. In order for governments to define their national strategies for REDD+ they need a clear definition of which activities will be eligible for support under an international framework. Without that guidance, strategies may be developed to address only those areas facing the threat of deforestation while disregarding other parts of the forest sector. For decades, the world has tried to tackle deforestation as a stand-alone activity, with limited success. The Bali Action Plan embraced a more comprehensive approach to land management that Parties have agreed will make REDD+ more successful. Yet without clear definitions, actions on the 'plus' elements will lag behind reducing deforestation and forest degradation and will not be well integrated into comprehensive sustainable land use strategies in developing countries.

Social safeguards and protections for biodiversity and ecosystem services: The principles on Indigenous Peoples' rights and biodiversity/ecosystem services included in Annex G (REDD+ text) of the report of the eighth session of the AWG-LCA provide a strong foundation for REDD+. However, little or no language exists in the draft that provides guidance on how to operationalize those principles. The REDD+ agreement needs to request guidance from SBSTA about

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monitoring and reporting requirements for all safeguards. These requirements must be decided as soon as possible in order for countries to move forward in developing national strategies and systems that respect rights, provide for full and effective participation, and protect biodiversity and ecosystem services. In the absence of such guidance, countries may move forward with plans that do not incorporate these key principles. The REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards (www.climate-standards.org/REDD+/) provide a useful framework for monitoring and reporting social and environmental impacts of national or other government-led REDD+ programs.

MRV of carbon: The ability to accurately measure forest carbon (/forest cover/biomass) underpins a results-based REDD+ mechanism; the effective design and implementation of REDD+ relies on the ability to accurately map, assess, and monitor changes in forest carbon. The timely development of institutional, financial and technical capacities for MRV of carbon depends on the designation of MRV as a priority objective within the policy process. The UNFCCC should task SBSTA with coordination of an expert panel/working group including or led by the IPCC to make specific recommendations on the key parameters of MRV frameworks, including the scales of potential systems (global vs. regional vs. national vs. sub-national), relevant technological options, and coordination of independent large-scale terrestrial carbon monitoring activities with regional and national programs and goals.