

Creating new from the old: how the REDD+ Partnership plans to create a REDD market, plus!

by Oscar Reyes
Tuesday, 20 July 2010

The REDD+ Partnership intends to facilitate controversial forest payment schemes in advance of any UN climate agreement on an international framework to tackling deforestation.

Forget about the complex realities of forest protection: a "new" grouping of 58 countries keen to start trading REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) payments recently announced that it will take the Nike approach and "Just do it!"

The REDD+ Partnership, established in Oslo on 27 May, euphemistically refers to itself as "an action track to supplement the UNFCCC negotiation track." Loosely summarised, it seeks to create a de facto international architecture on REDD in advance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference in Cancun. With the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the UN-REDD Programme involved, it no doubt seems like a partnership created to "side step" decision-making and "fast track" a new market.

AWOL: Indigenous Rights and civil society participation

Just doing it has its pitfalls, however. The protection of basic rights tends to disappear from the picture altogether, as is the case with Indigenous Peoples' Rights "a subject of ongoing struggles at the UNFCCC, but ignored entirely by the REDD+ Partnership in its statements to date.

Civil society participation also suffers. Before adopting the REDD+ Partnership moniker, the same grouping of countries engaged in the Paris-Oslo process, which held its first meeting behind closed doors in Paris in March. The latest meeting of the REDD+ Partnership, held in Brasilia on 14-15 July, added insult to injury by inviting 12 arbitrary selected NGOs, businesses and civil society networks on less than a week's notice.

Money talks

In the absence of peoples' voices, it is the money that is left to do the talking. To date, the REDD+ Partnership has pulled together more than 4 billion USD of the "fast-start financing" proposed in the Copenhagen Accord to ensure that it has a booming voice in the REDD debate. The USA and Norway have pledged around 1 billion USD each, while Germany, Japan and the UK are the next largest contributors, will pledges of almost 500 million USD each. However, the money comes with strings: it can take the form of conditional loans as well as grants, and there is no clear statement that such funds will not simply be "recycled" cash from existing aid pledges. While the UN continues to discuss how REDD funding will be delivered and governed, the REDD+ Partnership is already establishing an agency to monitor this money, which it hopes will be up and running by the time of the Cancun climate talks. The process is being chaired by Japan and Papua New Guinea, with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the UN-REDD Programme providing a secretariat.

From REDD+ to biodiversity offsets

The next meeting of the REDD+ Partnership will take place in Nagoya, Japan in October, on the eve of the UN Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This scheduling, and the "plus" that is now routinely incorporated in REDD discussions, signals that REDD is now about much more than forests. REDD+ incorporates agriculture and concerns general debates about land use including pastoral lands.

The CBD will discuss the "eco-benefits" of REDD in the context of biodiversity conservation, taking its cue from a "Business

and Biodiversity initiative that it launched in 2008. Its proposals to date mirror many of the problematic elements of the UN climate change architecture, with a potential "Green Development Mechanism" (GDM) to compensate biodiversity loss. This fails to learn the basic lesson of the Clean Development Mechanism: namely, that offsets allow businesses a cheap and unjust way to buy off their responsibility for environmental damage.

Further reading

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REDD Monitor

IEN No REDD! Pamphlet

REDD+ Partnership Interim Agreement, 27 May

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Francesco Martone, "The emergence of the REDD Hydra"

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