

## **SustainUS submission on behalf of the International Youth Delegation Forests and Land Use Working Group**

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### **Views on reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action**

The International Youth Delegation (IYD) is a growing coalition of young people from around the world that are united around a common and shared vision for a bold, just, and long-term global climate treaty that safeguards the survival of all countries and peoples. Comprised of young people working on climate issues from over 50 countries and six continents, the IYD included over 500 members at COP 14 in Poznań. IYD members prepared several interventions and other statements in Poznań, and are looking forward to participating in the various UNFCCC meetings throughout the year in preparation for COP 15 in Copenhagen.

Parties in Poznań this past December repeatedly stressed the need to address deforestation in a post-2012 climate agreement. The science is clear that 20% of world greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation. Moreover, it is clear that we cannot have a healthy planet without the world's forests. It is therefore absolutely essential that a comprehensive and inclusive international effort be devoted to ensuring that forest ecosystems are maintained as they house both wildlife and people, provide livelihoods for millions of global citizens, and significantly regulate atmospheric carbon. The International Youth Delegation has authored a guiding set of principles for the REDD framework, and we request that you consider these principles when forming the framework for this vital area of climate policy.

The best way to stimulate action is to prioritize actions that will be taken to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation. Actions should be taken in the following order:

1. Protect carbon stocks in primary forest and other primary ecosystems (including peatlands) from logging, conversion to plantations or agriculture and other forms of degradation.
2. Recover or restore degraded forest and other degraded natural ecosystems, including peatlands.
3. Develop ecologically sustainable forest management systems in logged areas that are currently the subject of industrial logging practices.
4. Conduct afforestation and reforestation with a diverse range of local species in areas of degraded land incapable of natural recovery.

The conversion of natural ecosystems to plantations is not an acceptable mitigation strategy.

The following principles should be implemented in any REDD program:

- An overarching policy that prioritizes the protection of primary forests and other natural ecosystems (including peatlands), while simultaneously recovering or restoring forests and other natural ecosystems, including peatland.
- Any REDD mechanism must be focused on the reduction of gross emissions from forest, wetland and peatland degradation (including deforestation).
- REDD should explicitly exclude projects that have a negative impact on biodiversity since the biodiversity of natural systems is essential to their resilience and reduces the likelihood of carbon lost to the atmosphere after natural disturbances. Biodiverse, natural ecosystems are more robust ecosystems, and thus biodiversity conservation is a core benefit rather than a co-benefit.
- REDD must primarily be a mechanism for forest protection and climate stabilization, not profit-generation or emissions offsetting.

- The UNFCCC definitions of 'forests', 'deforestation' and 'forest degradation' must distinguish between native, intact, biodiverse, carbon-rich forest ecosystems and agricultural tree crops. Agricultural tree crops should not qualify as 'forests' and conversion of native, intact, biodiverse, carbon-rich forests into agricultural tree crop plantations must qualify as 'deforestation'.
- Developed countries have a responsibility to provide financial and capacity-building support for developing countries to take immediate action to avoid deforestation, permanently protect, and sustainably manage native forests. Developing nations have a responsibility to prevent emissions leakage and to engage their society in all levels of decision-making.
- REDD accounting must be measurable, reportable, and verifiable, and must be designed to provide strong incentives for enforcing governance of forests at the national and local levels, including making obligatory genuine multi-stakeholder engagement, good fiscal governance, participatory law reform and improved forest law enforcement.
- REDD must further include provisions to measure levels of compliance through robust mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and verification incorporating independent third party review, and to address non-compliance.
- Reliable, adequate, transparent and long term funding for REDD must be made available by Annex I countries, in addition to their official development assistance (ODA) commitments.
- Independent and well-governed national trust funds should be established to enable the equitable distribution of benefits, like funds and services, directly to local communities and indigenous peoples.
- In many countries, participatory legal reviews to clarify tenure and access rights will be necessary before funds from REDD can or should be distributed.
- REDD should not impinge on developing countries' rights to development, and financial support for REDD should encourage the development of alternative sustainable livelihoods.
- The International Youth Delegation Forests and Land Use Working Group also support the recommendations made in the Ecosystem Climate Alliance submission on REDD and LULUCF issues.

The points outlined in this submission are of great importance and their consideration and inclusion are essential to forming an effective and inclusive program on REDD.

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For more information on the International Youth Delegation, please visit <http://youthclimate.org>.