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World Bank's forest and carbon fund is failing forests and peoples

Poznań, Poland - A new report released today by FERN and Forest Peoples Programme at the start of UN climate negotiations in Poznań, finds that the World Bank has been cutting corners during the first stage of its new mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, known as 'REDD'.

The World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility has approved 25 national concept notes presented by countries for REDD financing and the report, examining nine of these, finds that the process has been rushed, is implicitly linked to a market based REDD, is dominated by central governments, and has so far involved little or no consultation with indigenous peoples, local communities or civil society organisations. Furthermore, the report shows that the World Bank's forest fund is not following its own rules or safeguard policies.

The way the Bank's fund operates is of major concern to forest peoples because it plans to support governments to formulate national REDD strategies that could shape official conservation and land use policies in tropical forest countries for years to come.

Governments meeting at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Poznań, Poland, until 14 December 2008 are engaged in fast-track negotiations to secure a deal on REDD by the end of 2009. Many organisations and individuals, including Lord Stern, have recognised that local peoples' tenure rights is an essential first step for any effective REDD mechanism. Under statutory or customary law, most tropical forests are owned by indigenous peoples or forest dependent communities and so if REDD schemes really are to reduce deforestation, these peoples must play a key role in all negotiations.

Marcial Arias, from the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, said: 'We have met in Poznań and analysed the implications of mitigation and adaptation programmes on our rights. We reiterate our previous and long established opposition to the commercialisation of forests and life. The potential negative impacts of REDD have been confirmed by the UN-REDD Programme Framework Document and other reports. In spite of this, the UN, the World Bank and many countries and other institutions still push forward this scheme. We call for the suspension of all REDD initiatives and carbon market initiatives in Indigenous territories until such a time that Indigenous Peoples' rights are fully recognized and promoted.'

Saskia Ozinga, Coordinator of FERN said:

'In this flawed process forest communities have not been properly consulted. As a result, donors could be complicit in a new global drive reinforcing old top-down policies that will only lead to more forest destruction. We have seen from the EU's FLEGT process, which aims to control illegal logging, that a proper consultation process will take years, but trying to shortcut consultations will just lead to long-term failure.'

Tom Griffiths, Coordinator, Responsible Finance Programme, Forest Peoples Programme said:

'If measures to respect the rights of forest peoples are at the heart of efforts to combat deforestation, then forest and climate policies could do some good. It is alarming that the early government plans, approved by the World Bank, are simply business as usual. None of these REDD plans deal with the critical issues of governance, human rights, land tenure reforms and Free, Prior and Informed Consent. To attain sustainable forest and climate initiatives, forest peoples must be fully consulted about their design. International donors must also ensure that human rights and forest sector reforms are guaranteed before any international funding is released to developing countries for their national actions on forest and climate issues.'

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Notes

1. The full report *Cutting Corners – World Bank's forest and carbon fund fails forests and peoples* can be downloaded at www.fern.org or http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/ifi_igo/cutting_corners_redd_nov08_eng.pdf
2. The World Bank launched its Forest Carbon Partnership Facility in December 2007 to act as a 'catalyst' to promote public and private investment in REDD and to support demonstration pilot projects for developing and implementing national REDD strategies. Countries become 'REDD country participants' in the FCPF once Readiness Plan Idea Notes (R-Pins) have been approved by FCPF.
3. In 'The economics of climate change' Lord Stern stated: "At a national level, defining property rights to forestland, and determining the rights and responsibilities of landowners, communities and loggers, is key to effective forest management. This should involve local communities, respect informal rights and social structures, work with development goals and reinforce the process of protecting the forests." Recognition of local peoples' tenure rights as key to any forest conservation measure and certainly to any global forest and climate framework is also widely acknowledged elsewhere, e.g. see www.rightsandclimate.org
4. The fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference will take place from 1 – 14 December in Poznań, Poland.
5. The EU FLEGT Programme is a programme to improve forest governance, strengthen local peoples' tenure rights and control illegal logging. As part of this programme the EU is developing partnership agreements with over 10 countries. Once an agreement has been finalised and implemented only timber licensed as legal will be allowed to enter the EU.
6. FERN (Forests and the European Union Resource Network) is an international NGO, founded in 1995 that works towards greater environmental and social justice, focusing on forests and forest peoples' rights in the policies and practices of the European Union. For further information visit www.fern.org
7. Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is an international NGO, founded in 1990 to promote forest peoples' rights. FPP supports forest peoples in their efforts to secure and sustainably manage their forests, lands and livelihoods. For further information visit the website at www.forestpeoples.org