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Developed countries seeking loopholes to avoid emissions cuts at UN climate talks

BONN, Germany – Rich developed countries are attempting to cheat on accounting for their carbon emissions from logging and will only agree to ambitious overall greenhouse gas reduction targets if they get the forestry loopholes they demand, warned the Ecosystems Climate Alliance today.

Under this unacceptable approach, the atmosphere would see substantially more emissions in greenhouse gasses.

Over the past few days at UN climate change talks in Bonn, a growing number of countries, almost exclusively from the developing world¹, have challenged developed countries to genuinely reduce emissions from forestry and land use (known as LULUCF²).

Developed countries, however, are solidly resisting, preferring to hide increased emissions from forestry and create the illusion they are doing more than they are to stop catastrophic climate change.

“We need at least a 40 percent reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions, yet pledges on the table amount to less than 25 percent,” said Peg Putt of The Wilderness Society. “Now developed countries are demanding a new logging loophole and threatening to weaken their pledges if it is not granted.”

Scientific consensus warns that greenhouse gas emissions must decrease between 25 and 40 percent by 2020 to avoid dangerous climate change impacts that will ensue if global temperatures rise above 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

“The lack of a goal to actually reduce logging emissions is undermining the talks,” said Alistair Graham of the Humane Society International. “A graph presented at yesterday’s session painted a very clear picture – all but one developed country has proposed a ‘forward-looking’ baseline³ that either completely erases all debits or yields massive credits. It’s a huge scam.”

“A dirty LULUCF deal is a dirty climate deal and the consequences will be disastrous. Developing countries, especially the G77, must step up and stop this impending disaster and disgraceful scandal,” said Sean Cadman of The Wilderness Society.

“Creative accounting also means cherry picking in accounting for other land uses. For instance, the 500 Mtons per year from wetland drainage in developed countries are largely ignored and should be accounted for,” said Susanna Tol of Wetlands International.

“LULUCF must be about real emission reductions and not about accounting procedures that undermine overall ambitions,” said Nils Hermann Ranum of Rainforest Foundation Norway.

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(1) Including the Africa Group, the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), Belarus, Tuvalu, Micronesia and the Coalition of Rainforest Nations

(2) LULUCF = Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry

(3) Developed countries are attempting to measure emissions from their forest sector relative to a baseline that is set in the future, rather than relative to historic levels, which will allow them to hide logging activities planned for the future. This “forward-looking” baseline would sidestep the need for rich countries to make significant reductions in the forestry sector.

The Ecosystems Climate Alliance (www.ecosystemsclimate.org) is an alliance of NGOs committed to keeping natural terrestrial ecosystems intact and their carbon out of the atmosphere. We work to ensure this is done in a way which is equitable, transparent, consistent with the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and which takes place alongside deep and urgent cuts in fossil fuel emissions. ECA comprises Australian Orangutan Project, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Global Witness, Humane Society International, Nepenthes, Rainforest Action Network, Rainforest Foundation Norway, The Rainforest Foundation U.K., Wetlands International, and The Wilderness Society.