CHEATSHEET

Removals & Offsets At COP29

Offsets

Offsets - or pollution credits - enable business as usual fossil fuel production and do not necessarily reduce emissions, but just trade emissions credits around the world.

Many offset credits have proven to not actually represent real reductions or removals of emissions meaning emissions are actually increasing because the activities that are supposedly "offset" aren't.
Moreover emissions are not fungible:

1 tonne of CO2 emitted from fossil fuels (which would) otherwise be stored for many tens of thousands of years)

≠

1 tonne of CO2 removed and stored in land or vegetation (which may only store it for tens or hundreds of years).

Removals

Removals describe the act of removing CO2 from the atmosphere. There are proposals to include both:

- **land-based removals** (such as reforestation or changes in agricultural systems) and
- **purported technological-based removals** (such as direct air capture with carbon capture and storage, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), or marine geoengineering).

Land-based removals are a vital part of climate action. However, they cannot and should not be part of a carbon market or used for offsetting. Land-based removals often aren't permanent as emissions can easily be released, for example due to forest fires or disease. This eliminates the benefits of the removals. Even if the offsets are accurately counted, if the credits are generated from activities where the removals are not permanent, then there is a risk that emissions increase overall.

Technological-based removals are technofixes that bring uncertainties and hide serious risks for people and the planet.
The science has left no doubt that overshooting 1.5C will lead to irreversible impacts, that there are huge physical uncertainties of attempting large scale carbon dioxide removal (CDR), that reliance on future CDR delays deep emission cuts now, and that CDR technologies come with immense risks of harm for ecosystems and communities.
Many of the removal technologies proposed under Article 6.4 rely on carbon capture and storage, which has a long track-record of failure.

All forms of removals also pose risks to human rights and ecosystem integrity.

If approved at COP29, the proposed standards will create a new regulatory framework and financial incentives for carbon capture technologies by enabling them to generate tradable carbon credits for markets or offsetting.

Standards on removals should be rejected at COP29 given the serious human rights and environmental concerns and the history of failure of these activities to actually reduce emissions overall.