



SEAN-CC NEGOTIATION BRIEFING PAPER

REDD-Plus

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REDD-Plus

Introduction

An estimated 17-29% of global greenhouse gas emissions arise from land use change, including deforestation and forest degradation. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has therefore attempted to coordinate work on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and supporting forests and carbon sinks. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, also known as REDD, was initially developed within the UNFCCC but has taken on a life of its own outside of the negotiations in a variety of pilot projects that are targeting the voluntary market. While some developing countries, such as Brazil and Indonesia, have eagerly joined REDD arrangements bilaterally, many¹ have raised serious concerns about managing forests as carbon stocks rather than the diverse systems that they are, and the ecological and human rights implications that can arise from such accounting for changes in carbon flows and stocks only.

Prior to COP 19

At the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Cancún in December 2010, parties agreed that developing countries would enhance mitigation efforts in the forest sector by undertaking appropriate actions. These actions included:

- (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- (d) Sustainable management of forests; and
- (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Developing country Parties were further requested to develop the national strategies or action plans, national forest reference levels, national forest monitoring and reporting systems, and a system for providing information on how the safeguards (see annex I of decision 1/CP.16) are being addressed and respected throughout REDD implementation.

Points (a) and (b) of these activities referred to REDD, while (c), (d), and (e) referred to the “plus” element of REDD-plus. This was the first major outcome on REDD since the item was first put on the UNFCCC agenda by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica at COP 11 in Montreal in 2005 and situated under the work of the Bali Action Plan at COP 13 in Bali in 2007. The agreement also decided that activities undertaken under REDD-plus should be implemented using a phased approach, “beginning with the development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building, followed by the implementation of national policies and measures and national strategies or action plans that could involve further capacity-building, technology development and transfer

¹ <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2013/11/19/basic-countries-are-opposed-to-redd-offsets/>

and results-based demonstration activities, and evolving into results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified.”²

In Doha at COP 18, the COP decided to undertake a work programme on results-based finance in 2013, while the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) began a joint work programme on the coordination of support for implementation of decision 1/CP.16.³

Meanwhile, a small number of voluntary REDD readiness initiatives and agreements were established through national, bilateral, and other multilateral fora, such as the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the UN-REDD Programme, and a number of initiatives led by the Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative, Germany’s International Climate Initiative, and the US, UK, Australian and Japanese governments.

Summary of achievements at COP 19

In Warsaw, Parties agreed on what COP president Marcin Korolec dubbed “the Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus Action”. These were a series of seven decisions:

1. Results-based finance;
2. Coordination of support;
3. National forest monitoring systems;
4. Safeguards;
5. Forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels;
6. Measuring, reporting and verification of forest-related emissions; and
7. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

Results-based finance

The outcome of the COP work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of REDD-plus activities (decision 9/CP.19) reaffirmed that “in the context of the provision of adequate and predictable support to developing country Parties, Parties should collectively aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss, in accordance with national circumstances, consistent with the ultimate objective of the Convention.” It was also recognized that finance could come from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral. Parties agreed that developing countries must provide recent information that the safeguards from appendix I of the REDD agreement have been addressed and respected before results-based payments can be made.⁴ Parties also established an information hub on the REDD web platform on the UNFCCC website⁵ in order “to promote transparency on results-based actions, the corresponding payments, as well as information related to (the national strategy or action plan, the national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level, the national forest monitoring systems, and

² Decision 1/CP.16, Paragraph 73: FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1

³ Decision 1/CP.18, Paragraphs 25-40: FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.1

⁴ Decision 9/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/Add.1

⁵ <<http://unfccc.int/redd>>

the safeguards information systems) without creating additional requirements for developing country Parties. The information hub will include:

- (a) The results for each relevant period expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year and a link to the technical report referred to in decision 14/CP.19, paragraph 14;
- (b) The assessed forest reference emission level(s) and/or forest reference level(s) expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year and a link to the final report of the technical assessment team referred to in decision 13/CP.19, paragraph 18;
- (c) The summary of information on how all of the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected, as referred to in decisions 12/CP.19 and 12/CP.17, chapter I;
- (d) A link to the national strategy or action plan as referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(a), as appropriate; and
- (e) Information on the national forest monitoring system, as provided in the technical annex referred to in decision 14/CP.19⁶.

The information hub will express the information on these results in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year and which entity paid for said results. The secretariat was requested to organise an expert meeting and prepare a report on the matters related to the information hub prior to the SBI's 41st meeting in December 2014.

Coordination of support

Decision 10/CP.19, the outcome of the joint SBI/SBSTA work programme on “coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements” recognised seven key needs and functions identified in the work programme.

- (a) Strengthen, consolidate and enhance the sharing of relevant information, knowledge, experiences and good practices, at the international level, taking into account national experiences and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge and practices;
- (b) Identify and consider possible needs and gaps in coordination of support, taking into consideration relevant information communicated under the Convention and other multilateral and bilateral arrangements;
- (c) Consider and provide opportunities to exchange information between the relevant bodies established under the Convention and other multilateral and bilateral entities financing and funding the activities and elements referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 70, 71 and 73, related to actions and support provided and received for these activities;
- (d) Provide information and any recommendations, as appropriate, considering the elements contained in paragraph 3(a–c) above, to improve the effectiveness of finance, including results-based finance, technology and capacity-building for developing country Parties when implementing the activities and elements referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 70, 71 and 73, to the Conference of the Parties;

⁶ Decision 9/CP.19, Paragraph 11 in FCCC/CP/2013/Add.1

- (e) Provide information and recommendations, as appropriate, on improving the effectiveness of finance to entities including bilateral, multilateral and private sector entities that finance and implement the activities and elements referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 70, 71 and 73, and on how these activities, including results-based actions, can be more effectively supported;
- (f) Encourage other entities providing support for the activities and elements referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 70, 71 and 73, to enhance efficiency and coordination and to seek consistency with the operating entities of the financial mechanism of the Convention, as appropriate; and
- (g) Exchange information on the development of different approaches, including joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests;⁷

National entities or focal points, Parties and relevant entities financing the REDD-plus activities were encouraged to meet on a voluntary basis in conjunction with the first sessional period meetings of the subsidiary bodies in order to discuss the seven needs and functions and to continue to meet annually thereafter, beginning at COP 20 in Lima, Peru.⁸

National forest monitoring systems

Decision 11/CP.19 elaborated modalities for national forest monitoring systems. Parties agreed that previous guidance given in decision 4/CP.15 and the most recent IPCC guidelines should guide the work of national and subnational (as an interim measure) forest monitoring. Parties also gave the following guidance for countries with national forest monitoring systems. On the condition that this guidance only be applied where appropriate, those systems should:

- (a) Build upon existing systems, as appropriate;
- (b) Enable the assessment of different types of forest in the country, including natural forest, as defined by the Party;
- (c) Be flexible and allow for improvement; and
- (d) Reflect, as appropriate, the phased approach referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 73 and 74.⁹

Safeguards

Decision 12/CP.19 addressed the timing and frequency of providing a summary of information on the safeguards from appendix I. Parties agreed that developing countries undertaking REDD-plus activities should provide a summary of information on how the appendix I safeguards are being addressed and respected periodically and in their national communications, or other communication channels agreed by the COP - such as the web platform on the UNFCCC website. Parties agreed that developing countries should begin providing this information after the start of implementation of any of the five REDD-plus activities. Subsequent presentations should be consistent with the frequency of their national communications, and are on a voluntary basis.¹⁰

⁷ Decision 10/CP.19, Paragraph 3 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

⁸ Decision 10/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

⁹ Decision 11/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

¹⁰ Decision 12/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

Forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels

Decision 13/CP.19 elaborated “guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels.” Parties adopted guidelines and procedures for technically assessing submissions of proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels from parties, which are submitted on a voluntary basis in order to access results-based finance and support. The guidelines and procedures set out the objectives and scope of the technical assessments, and laid out the procedures for technical assessment in general terms as well as in terms of composition of the assessment team and timing of submissions.

Parties also requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report on the technical assessment process for consideration of the SBSTA after the first year of technical assessments and invited parties and Inter Governmental Organisations to nominate technical experts with the relevant qualifications to the UNFCCC roster of experts.¹¹

Measuring, reporting and verification of forest-related emissions

Decision 14/CP.19 outlined modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying forest-related emissions. Parties decided that “the data and information used by Parties in the estimation of anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes, as appropriate to the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, undertaken by Parties, should be transparent, and consistent over time and with the established forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels in accordance with decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(b) and (c) and chapter II of decision 12/CP.17”¹² through biennial update reports by Parties, with additional flexibility to be considered for LDCs and SIDS.

Technical teams of experts will analyse the extent to which:

- (a) There is consistency in methodologies, definitions, comprehensiveness and the information provided between the assessed reference level and the results of the implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70;
- (b) The data and information provided in the technical annex is transparent, consistent, complete² and accurate;
- (c) The data and information provided in the technical annex is consistent with the guidelines referred to in paragraph 9 above;
- (d) The results are accurate, to the extent possible;¹³

Guidelines for elements to be included in the technical annex can be found as an annex to decision 14/CP.19.

Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

Decision 15/CP.19 noted the complexity of deforestation and forest degradation, “different national circumstances and the multiple drivers of deforestation and forest degradation” as well as “that livelihoods may be dependent on activities related to drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

¹¹ Decision 13/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

¹² Decision 14/CP.19, Paragraph 3 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

¹³ Decision 14/CP.19, Paragraph 11 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

and that addressing these drivers may have an economic cost and implications for domestic resources.”¹⁴

The decision encouraged “Parties, organizations and the private sector to take action to reduce the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation,” as well as encouraging “all Parties, relevant organizations, and the private sector and other stakeholders, to continue their work to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and to share the results of their work on this matter, including via the web platform on the UNFCCC website,” and further encouraging “developing country Parties to take note of the information from ongoing and existing work on addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation by developing country Parties and relevant organizations and stakeholders.”¹⁵

Implications for implementation at national level

Because REDD-plus is entirely voluntary, little will necessarily change for those countries who are not taking part in any REDD schemes outside of the UNFCCC. For those taking part in the UN-REDD Programme however, the World Bank’s FCPF, or a bilateral REDD-plus agreement, most have clauses that ensure the application of UNFCCC decisions. This will mean that all Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus decisions will apply to other multilateral and bilateral REDD-plus arrangements and developing countries will be expected to implement these decisions.

The decisions will primarily have implications for access to finance for REDD-plus activities and for emissions reporting. Countries taking part in REDD-plus schemes must consider how to include REDD-plus activity reporting in the context of broader emissions and finance reporting to the UNFCCC, the Global Environment Facility, where REDD-plus initiatives are already funded, and the Green Climate Fund, where REDD-plus may be covered as it develops. Parties taking part in other multilateral and bilateral REDD-plus arrangements must closely consider the further guidance on timing of safeguards reporting as well as guidance for accounting of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels.

Outstanding issues

Although the Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus successfully concluded most outstanding issues for negotiation, some future decisions remain to be made and other issues remain on-going. Further guidance to Parties on all issues related to REDD-plus activities could be raised as experience with REDD-plus activities grows. The issue of incentivising non-carbon benefits, such as social and environmental security, that REDD-plus activities may provide also remains unaddressed.

Accounting of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels remains focused on counting emissions reductions of carbon dioxide, for which there is a large margin of error for developed countries with robust forest management and monitoring systems in place. This means that accounting will be even more difficult for developing countries with less robust forest accounting in place. Taking a broader approach that focuses on supporting developing country efforts to round out their own forest systems and knowledge—by first understanding the drivers of deforestation before attempting to curb it based on carbon stocks—would support the needs of developing countries more efficiently.

¹⁴ Decision 15/CP.19 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

¹⁵ Decision 15/CP.19, Paragraphs 3-5 in FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1

In the negotiations on REDD-plus finance, there was substantial debate over whether to establish a REDD body, board or committee. Developing countries wanted a body, board or committee to operationalise with oversight from the COP, whereas developed countries preferred that REDD-plus remain uncoordinated by a committee in order to consider it as part of a broader mitigation agenda. If the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform's 2015 outcome results in legal commitments for developing countries, this may have serious implications for REDD-plus activities, possibly making them no longer voluntary activities.

The secretariat will organise an expert meeting on results-based finance before SBI 41 in December 2014, as well as a focal point forum meeting at SB 41 to address coordination of support. Methodological guidance for REDD-plus activities will be discussed at the upcoming SBSTA meeting from June 4 to 15, 2014.

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