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Forests and Climate Change after Lima: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific region



Summary Report of Regional Experts Consultation

Bangkok, Thailand, 24 to 25 February 2015

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Foreword

Science has yet to unearth everything about climate change, about why it is happening, and what its real impacts are going to be. But one thing however is clear – climate change is happening, and it's already affecting our lives. Many of the changes are unprecedented, and range from warming of the atmosphere and oceans, diminishing snow and ice in the polar regions and high mountains, and rising sea levels. The rural communities of the Asia-Pacific region, with a very high dependence on natural resources for their livelihood, are extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of climate change.

But climate change, a global threat, has also unified mankind: in fact almost every nation is now a signatory to the Convention on Climate Change. The momentum is growing to address climate change by reducing atmospheric GHG emissions. Towards this aim, the first Conference of Parties (COP) was held in Berlin in 1995 and Parties continued to negotiate on their commitments which led to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Two decades since, we have come a long way, but we have yet to reach the ultimate objective of stabilizing GHG concentrations at a level that would end human-induced influence on the climate.

While these COP negotiations are landmark events for humankind, most of us who are not directly involved with them cannot claim to comprehend what is being discussed. This is a serious issue, considering many of us who work in the field, who are directly responsible for translating the negotiated deals to practical actions, are not fully aware of the COP negotiations. With this in view FAO, with other agencies, has been conducting Post-COP consultations with experts since 2009, to explore what the COPs mean in practical terms. The consultations have resulted in publications which tried to simplify the discussions at COP into simpler terms that are readily understood, and meaningful to our work. This series of Post-COP consultations has proven to be a successful formula, and we have continued to bring COPs negotiations closer to all the forest stakeholders, in terms of what was in the negotiations, and what will be the key issues for developing climate change policies and strategies.

The COP20 took place in Lima, and the rhetorical question has been "What after Lima?" The Expert Consultation Meeting on Post-COP20 has much to say in this context. They point out that COP20 has been the stepping stone for the more critical COP21 which will take place in Paris in December of this year, when the new global agreement on climate change will be formulated. Meanwhile countries have already started to make public commitments on the emission cuts they will take. This alone augurs well for the Paris agreement. But Lima has also initiated another important change – adaptation and agriculture-related issues may be given additional consideration in the new agreement, one that resonates well with the concerns of the developing countries. This Expert Consultation highlights that Lima has been more about deciding what issues would be up for discussion at the Paris negotiations, and has laid the building blocks for the agreement at COP21 in Paris. This portends to an agreement that may meet many of our expectations.

This summary of the proceedings of the Expert Consultation on Post-COP20 provides valuable insights into what Lima truly represents for climate change negotiations, and how these initial proposals will set the path for the climate change agreement Post-Kyoto Protocol. It also provides valuable directions for FAO in organizing its activities to support climate change work in the region. With these brief words, allow me to thank the numerous individuals, far too many to be captured here, for their outstanding work in organizing the consultation, and capturing the findings in this report.



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Executive Summary

The “Regional Expert Consultation – Forests and Climate Change after Lima: An Asia-Pacific Perspective” was held on 24-25 February 2015, in Bangkok, Thailand, with the aim to discuss key issues that arose during COP20 negotiations in Lima that are of interest to forest and climate change stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific region. The Expert Consultation was attended by 43 participants from 20 countries in the region. The Expert Consultation resulted in the following recommendations.

A. General Recommendations

Recognizing that the challenge of climate change is entirely new with no past experiences to fall back upon, each country government should:

- i. Undertake intensive capacity building of its legislative, judicial and executive arms in relevant aspects of the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- ii. Reorient and retrain the implementing departments and research organizations to equip them to meet the new challenges;
- iii. Enhance coordination of action among all relevant stakeholders including communities, government agencies and civil society; and
- iv. Encourage collaboration among research and implementing organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and address administrative, financial and legal bottlenecks that hinder it.

At the regional level multilateral and bilateral public and private institutions in Asia-Pacific having cross-country responsibilities should work to:

- i. Encourage intra-regional cooperation by creating appropriate forums and financing travel for the purpose;
- ii. Encourage the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt among the countries of the region; and
- iii. Coordinate joint effort to access funds.

B. Specific Recommendations

i) Role of forests in Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)

The INDCs are likely to form the central pillars of the Paris climate summit later this year but many critical stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region, including policy makers, have inadequate understanding of the INDCs and how best these contributions could be designed. As such, the following steps may be urgently needed:

- Country governments should urgently identify domestic institutions and experts who can help build capacity related to the role of forests in INDCs and also reach out to competent global and regional organizations for financial and technological assistance and human expertise for the purpose;
- A good amount of relevant information is already available in the existing reporting requirements and guidance including national communication and biennial update reports and the country governments may make use of these for making the initial assessment of the possible role of forests in their INDCs; and
- Multilateral global organizations and external aid programs of developed countries should reach out to the under-developed countries and help them in making assessments of their INDCs and help them align their NAMAs and NAPAs under implementation in pre-2020 phase with INDCs.

ii) Climate financing

Access to adequate funds for REDD+ activities remain severely limited. The Expert group recommends that:

- Regional Multilateral organizations should help build smaller recipient countries' capacity to access the available REDD+ and related funds by enhancing their capacities to build quality proposals as also by helping match the national needs with the priorities of funding agencies;
- Since donor countries tend to extend their assistance to smaller countries at regional level, the smaller country governments may encourage collaborative initiatives for REDD+ finance with other countries in the sub-region;
- Global and regional organizations should also help develop recipient countries' capacity to properly utilize funds by upgrading national institutional infrastructure, and setting national regulatory authorities, to bring fiduciary, social and environmental safeguards to acceptable levels;
- During negotiations the country governments should seek greater clarity on the quantum of funding for REDD+ and other forest initiatives under the GCF mitigation and adaptation allocations the lack of which constrains long term planning for climate change related investments in forestry sector;
- Country governments should also seek clear definitions and mechanisms for results-based payments and performance-based payments for REDD+ during negotiations in the climate conferences scheduled before the Paris Summit; and
- International financial institutions represented on the Standing Committee on Finance may discuss ways and means to transfer payment for results-based payments to the eligible Governments and communities.

iii) National Forest Inventory (NFI) and National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS)

There is a need to ensure that every country is able to access satellite imageries of their forests and other land based assets by 2020 for which technical support to key stakeholders and their capacity building may be necessary. Regional organizations like the Asian Development Bank may take initiative in this direction and encourage collaboration between countries of the region for providing technical support to those who are deficient in it.

Integration of soils in NFI would be useful everywhere, but more particularly among countries with large peat substrata; they may give specific attention to the soil carbon pool in their NFI and encourage adoption of best practices on soil in terms of soil carbon accounting procedures through research, technical support, and training.

Countries of the region may seek the assistance of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) which provides guidance to countries on utilizing observations, and developing accepted methods and protocols for setting up and strengthening their NFI and NFMS.

The country governments, regional and global institutions may ensure that complicated MRV requirements are avoided but the form of measurements needs to be credible.

iv) Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL)/Forest Reference Level (FRL)

The focus on FREL/FRL should be country specific, and for historic forest cover changes the data need to be sourced from geospatial images utilizing consistent data. National Forest Inventory (NFI) could provide growth rates of carbon stocks in various pools.

Regional forestry institutions may organize exchange of information including sharing of allometric equations, activity data, growth rates and carbon stocks among the countries of the region.

v) Safeguards

Country governments need to address the challenges and constraints in areas of cross-sectoral coordination, and institutional capacity in developing Safeguards Information System (SIS).

The Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) should take into account different regulatory systems in the countries, or otherwise political institutions can impede the FPIC processes.

Regional institutions should provide effective platforms to exchange experience on safeguards and support countries to develop SIS and strengthen their national methodology on safeguards.

vi) Non-Carbon Benefits (NCBs)

The NCBs should be nationally defined because of different national circumstances and yet the definition of NCB needs to be harmonized to fit into a common broad international framework with an internationally acceptable measure of recognition. The NCBs should be incentivized, as appropriate, at the national or international level.

vii) Tenure of forest land and non-land assets

Each country has regulatory system on tenure which is often unsuited for the present times and generates wide discontent among the poor communities. Country government may use the first Principle of Responsible Agriculture Investment and follow its voluntary guidelines to promote forest tenure. They may draw upon experiences from other countries for recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and develop their capacity for forest asset management.

Quite often powerful local interests hinder the political will of country governments to address the tenure issues in favour of poor communities. There is thus a great need for strengthening forestry tenure issues in countries of the region through tactful support by global and regional institutions.

viii) Land Use in the ADP

In the three ADP negotiations scheduled before the Paris Summit the negotiators of country governments should work on establishing the role of land use in the Paris agreement in such a way that the forest communities benefit significantly and result in increased ecological richness and carbon dynamics of the forest assets.

The principles of Land-Use accounting should recognize the mitigation and adaptation synergies in forestry sector as unique and design accounting systems appropriately.

Introduction

The 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2014 was held in Lima, Peru, from 1-12 December 2014. Lima was expected to be an important stepping stone to a 2015 agreement at the COP21 in Paris. Draft text for the 2015 agreement was hoped for as well as clarity on the definition and role within the agreement of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). Discussions were to continue on the development of systems for providing information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected and whether further guidance is needed related to the information on safeguards. Also the first meeting on the coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries took place in Lima as agreed in Warsaw. An overarching question to be addressed in Lima was how to include REDD+ in the 2015 agreement. Other key areas in which advances were expected related to financing, and in particular further implementation of the Green Climate Fund. Finally, continued development and implementation of the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability, also have implications for the forestry sector. Given the push to ensure progress towards an agreement in Paris, it is essential that understanding and engagement in climate change negotiations go beyond limited numbers of negotiators and experts. Accordingly there is a need to make the international-level negotiations understandable and relevant to a wider group of decision makers and communities, transforming results into comprehensive and practical guidance, and allowing for meaningful inputs into discussions leading up to Paris.

Building on the experience gained in reviewing previous COP Conferences, this meeting of experts will bring together experienced negotiators and leading thinkers from the region to discuss the issues, analyze what the outcomes of COP20 mean for forests/natural resources and climate change in the Asia-Pacific region and more importantly map out issues and entry-points for contributing to the anticipated Paris agreement. Based on the discussions, the organizers will produce a synthesis of COP proceedings and conclusions of particular relevance to Asia-Pacific. FAO and RECOFTC are well placed to convene an experts' consultation to discuss and reflect upon key regional issues raised during COP20 and contribute to charting proposed directions forward in light of COP21 in Paris.

Objectives of the Expert Consultation

The objectives of the meeting are to:

1. Discuss and reflect upon key issues raised during COP20 in Lima of interest to forest and climate change stakeholders;
2. Discuss and debate some of the key issues anticipated in the context of COP21 in Paris, and begin strategizing how stakeholders from the region can have priorities, views and concerns reflected in the anticipated 2015 agreement; and

3. Disseminate timely information on implications of COP20 for all levels of stakeholders within Asia-Pacific region and the forestry sector in the region.

Participants

- Representatives from 20-25 Asia-Pacific countries familiar with climate change, including the negotiation processes.
- Additional 7-8 invited experts familiar with the outcomes of the COP20 negotiations and the implications for the 2015 agreement in Paris.

Anticipated Outputs

The expected results of the meeting are:

- Discuss and reflect upon key issues raised during COP20 in Lima of interest to forest and climate change stakeholders;
- Potential implications of COP20 to forestry and climate change sectors in the region identified;
- Technical recommendations to member countries and other stakeholders to build on the outcomes of COP20 formulated;
- A concise and accessible publication will clearly summarize responses to key questions raised and answered during the meeting; and
- Discuss and debate some of the key issues anticipated in the context of COP21 in Paris, and begin strategizing how stakeholders from the region can have priorities, views and concerns reflected in the anticipated 2015 agreement.

Summary of the Experts Consultation

1. Opening

The Experts' Consultation (Annexes 1&2), attended by 43 participants from 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Annex 3), was held from 24-25 February 2015, in Bangkok, Thailand. The focus of the Consultation was the outcome of the 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that was held in Lima, Peru, 1-12 December 2014. The outcome of the Conference is anticipated to have significant bearing on developments in the field of forests and climate change over the coming year. However, these discussions and negotiations are rarely accessible to the professionals who are not directly involved in the negotiations. This can develop into a serious handicap if those working in the field of natural resources management remain unaware of the discussions at the global level. The focus of the expert consultation is to identify the implications of the COP discussions to forest policy makers and practitioners. For this purpose, 43 participants from Asia-Pacific countries, representing experts familiar with COP negotiations, and senior government officials dealing with forestry and climate change issues at national levels, came together to discuss the outcomes of COP20 and their implications to the forestry sector.

The Expert Consultation commenced with welcome and opening remarks from Mr Hiroyuki Konuma (ADG, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific), Dr L.T. Tint (Executive Director, The Center for People and Forests) and Dr N. Masripatin (ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change). They highlighted the impact of climate change on the Asia-Pacific region, how detrimental it would be on the livelihoods of rural communities dependent on natural resources, and why action is urgently needed to both mitigate climate change impacts and come up with adaptation measures for the rural communities. This consultation will focus on reviewing the outcomes of COP20, and discussing the implications for forestry activities in the region. Considering the need to ensure progress towards an agreement in Paris, it is essential that understanding and engagement in climate change negotiations go beyond the limited number of negotiators and experts. By making these international-level negotiations understandable and relevant to the wider group of stakeholders, it will help in transforming the elements of the negotiations into more practical and meaningful actions on the ground. But beyond that the consultation will also explore how the findings can be brought about to influence the negotiations to take place in Paris at the end of the year.

2. Organization of the Meeting

The structure and objectives of the meeting were presented, followed by a brief presentation on the outcomes from COP20 and the issues that are likely to be treated in COP21 in Paris. Based on the deliberations at COP20, the organizing committee came up with 11 questions

which require further elaboration, in terms of: a) their implications to future work in the region; b) how the elements of the negotiation can be simplified for a broader dissemination to the stakeholders; and c) what issues require further attention that are likely to be part of the agreement to be negotiated in Paris. These questions were provided to the expert team (or panellists) prior to the meeting. These 11 questions were split into groups of 3-4 and posed to the panellists. All in, three panel discussions were held. Following the presentations by the panellists, the discussions were taken up by the rest of the participants. With the completion of the panel discussion, three working groups were formed to discuss further the strategies, approaches and recommendations. The questions and a summary of the views expressed in each panel discussion are presented below. The full report of the responses, published separately, is also reproduced in Annex 4.

3. Panel discussions

3.1 Panel discussion: *Moving towards a Post 2020 Agreement*

Discussions covered progress made in Lima, development of INDCs and lessons learned from prior mitigation initiatives.

i) With regards to the forest sector, what happened in Lima (COP20) and what didn't?

The responses from the panellists and the discussions that followed are summarised here. As far as forestry goes, the meeting was of the view that previous COPs had already made sufficient progress, particularly at COP19 with the development of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, which was sufficient for further negotiations at COP21. In that respect, the expectations at COP20 were not high. There were some minor issues that were raised at COP20, which included the need for additional guidance on Safeguards for which no consensus was reached. Neither was there much progress at COP20 on finance – developing countries sought substantial flow of funds from Annex 1 countries to fund activities under the REDD+ readiness phase. The finance has been considered as too small, too slow, public-sector-dependent, and not sufficiently performance-based. However, it was encouraging to learn about the pledges from Annex 1 countries to the Green Climate Fund of over US\$10 billion, some of which can support adaptation and mitigation activities in the forest sector. The issue with market mechanisms for financing REDD+ activities did creep in, with many countries favouring the non-market-based approaches, which have benefits from both mitigation and adaptation aspects. Another strategic move at COP20 was development of the broader landscape based approach, wherewith agriculture with its focus on adaptation would have greater linkages to REDD+. Some technical clarifications would be required before these issues on adaptation-mitigation and landscape based approaches can be included in the text of the agreement in Paris.

ii) Was Lima successful?

While the 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) in Lima was not considered a qualified success, it met its role as a stepping stone for the more critical COP21 which will take place in Paris in December 2015, when the new global agreement on climate change will be formulated. Meanwhile, in order to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere, the central objective of UNFCCC, countries have started to make public commitments on the actions they will take, which are called the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). On top of that, COP20 was also able to raise the status of climate change adaptation

to the same level of urgency as mitigation. This is a positive step for developing countries which need assistance in adapting to the detrimental impacts of climate change. COP20 also produced the “Lima Call for Climate Action”. It calls for countries to commit to making emission cuts so as to keep the global temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius. For the first time, all countries, rising economies as well as rich countries would pledge action on climate change, with the wealthy ones helping the former to fight climate change. Overall, Lima has been more about deciding what issues would be for negotiation at the Paris negotiations; it was meant to be the building blocks for the agreement at COP21 in Paris.

iii) What are INDCs, what implications will they have for the forest sector and REDD+, and what has been the process for National INDC development?

The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) are actions countries intend to take to address climate change in their own countries. The INDC represents the vehicle for governments to communicate internationally how they will cut emissions for the post-2020 period. The INDCs will form a key part of the agreement to be developed at COP21 in Paris. All countries are requested to submit their INDCs to the UNFCCC Secretariat by October 2015. The synthesis report will provide the picture on the aggregate emissions impact ahead of COP21, which will provide a picture on the scale of the global ambition to address climate change. The discussions pointed out on what good INDCs are – they should be ambitious leading to transformation of the carbon-intensive sectors and industries; transparent so the global community can track the progress and ensure the countries meet the declared goals; and equitable so each country’s contribution is based on national circumstances, including national priorities such as sustainable development and poverty reduction. The meeting also highlighted that despite all the declarations, the value of INDCs would ultimately depend on the support that non-Annex 1 parties can receive for achieving their voluntary contributions. Some concerns still exist among developing countries with regards to financial support. In general the forest sector stakeholders are in favour of including forest-related activities within the framework of national INDCs, which is a stark contrast to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, wherein forestry did not receive much attention. The role of forests in sequestering CO₂ has gained more recognition during the last few COPs. This would certainly pave the way for the forest sector to be an important component of the future climate change agreement.

iv) What should REDD+ look like, how should REDD+ be treated under the new global agreement, and how does it figure in the context of the broader land-use sector?

REDD+ is expected to be an important component of the new global agreement. However, the meeting stressed the views of some countries, that REDD+ should be seen as a multi-sectoral, landscape-level set of diversified actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. While in the past, the emphasis with REDD+ was with its mitigation potential, the concept is slowly evolving, and it should be seen as a landscape-based approach conjoined to agriculture and other land uses. This would be essential considering many of the drivers of deforestation are beyond the forest sector, and such cross-sectoral issues have to be under a broader land-based REDD+ mechanism. Landscape approaches have been addressed elsewhere, including under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which can be a source of lessons learnt. It must also be recognized that different sectors have different objectives, and this can be a source of incompatibility when dealing all of them under the landscape approach. The existing political and administrative structures can only add further to the complexity under the landscape approach.

3.2 Panel discussion: *Progress on the Warsaw Framework for REDD+*

Discussions covered adaptation, non-carbon benefits and landscape approaches

v) One of the main challenges to the implementation of REDD+ has been the question of predictable financing. What are the financing related developments and remaining challenges, especially as they relate to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)?

A short summary of the responses from the panellists and the discussions that followed are captured below. The financing issues appear under almost all themes of COP discussions. During the meeting, the discussions were focused on the dispersal of funds under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the debates of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF). The GCF is relying on public funding, which is considered inadequate, and there is a need to source funding from the private sector as well. The SCF, set up to coordinate climate finance for COP, informs the countries of the various sources for funding their activities. Currently the pledges stand at US\$8.67 billion for REDD+ and forests. The amount pledged is not likely to meet the amount needed to finance REDD+ readiness, but it is a vast improvement in terms of predictability from previous years. Now with the submission of first Forest Reference Emission Levels and Forest Reference Levels (FRELs/FRLs), competition for the funds will rise, and the impression is that it may not be enough to meet all the requests. The concern is pressure from countries without inequity and weak transparency, which may result in further reporting burdens on the countries.

vi) The First Forest Reference Emission Levels (FRELs) were submitted to the UNFCCC within December 2014. What progress has been made on FRELs in the region over the coming year?

The Forest Reference Emission Levels refer to the amount of gross emissions from an area estimated within a reference time period. The Forest Reference Level is the amount of net/gross emissions and removal from an estimated area within a reference time period. The first FRELs/FRLs are already being submitted. From the Asia-Pacific region, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia have submitted either sub-national or national level FRELs/FRLs. These would be used as the baselines to determine results-based payments that countries may receive under REDD+. There was a strong motion that the countries would need to build their local capacity to undertake such work. It was also recognized that several different approaches to developing baselines are in progress – some countries may be able to address their emission reductions through one REDD+ activity such as reducing deforestation, whereas others may use two or more REDD+ activities, which would be more technically challenging. Many workshops are being planned in the region which will provide an opportunity to advance country knowledge on FRELs/FRLs.

vii) How can regional and international knowledge exchange help in the development of National Forest Monitoring Systems for REDD+?

The Asia-Pacific region is well endowed with good forestry institutions and highly skilled personnel to facilitate the rapid development, at low cost to set up the National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS). The region also enjoys several formal sub-regional bodies such as ASEAN, SAARC and SPC that cooperate in forestry and environment issues. FAO has been providing technical support to them in forestry. Overall, the prospects are good for regional and international knowledge exchange in the region for the development of NFMS for REDD+.

viii) *No new guidance on safeguards emerged from COP20. Do developing countries need additional guidance? What kinds of information are the financiers of REDD+ expecting and what can developing countries provide?*

Many of the Annex 1 countries have been clamouring for additional guidance on safeguards for REDD+ implementation that were originally formulated in 2010 as part of the Cancun Agreement. However, most of the Asia-Pacific parties from the non-Annex 1 countries hold the view that the environmental and social safeguards in place are adequate. With this polarization of views in Lima, the "Rule 16" of the Convention was applied, and all discussions on safeguards at the COP20 were deleted from the records. Instead the discussions have been relegated for discussion at the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) in June 2015. The view of the meeting is that there is a greater need to strengthen the capacity of national implementing agencies in understanding safeguards – why they are needed, and how they can be addressed and respected. More of course can be done with issues relating to gender and indigenous peoples, and as well the inclusion of local communities in the design and operation of safeguards.

3.3 Panel discussion: *The forestry context beyond mitigation & Concluding discussion on prospects and implications of an agreement in Paris*

ix) *While there has been limited progress on Non-Carbon Benefits (NCBs) over the past year, should there be an ongoing discussion so that countries can come back to it in the future, or is it sufficient to ensure that the importance of incentivizing these benefits are secured? How could this be done?*

From the climate change perspective, carbon is just an indicator for global GHG emission reductions and does not form a benefit. As such, the non-carbon benefits (NCBs) are the results or co-benefits that can accrue from REDD+ activities. As far as the forest sector goes, the NCBs can come in the form of economic, social and environmental benefits, as well those related to adaptation to climate change. For purposes of incentivization, the NCBs would have to be first defined at the national level. Indicators such as biodiversity saved or water availability can be used as proxies for assessing NCBs. Another point to bear is that NCBs are not limited to safeguards such as protection against negative impacts of climate change, but the result of active generation of additional benefits. Next is the issue of how to pay for NCBs. UNFCCC has already stipulated that it should be consistent with the results-based payments (RBPs), meaning the results are directly relevant to the Convention's objective of reducing the levels of GHGs in the atmosphere. Considering NCBs are not meeting such an objective, they are not eligible for payment by a UNFCCC mechanism such as REDD+. However, no agreement has yet been reached to incentivize NCBs. In order to ensure discussions on NCBs will not disrupt progress on the REDD+ mechanism as a whole, alternative approaches are needed for incentivizing NCBs.

x) *There was considerable discussion on the Joint Mechanism for Adaptation (JMA) and the interface between adaptation and mitigation. How much potential do you see here for developing joint adaptation-mitigation programs in the forest sector especially in the lead-up to Paris, and what challenges?*

The Asia-Pacific region is already experiencing the impacts of climate change, and so adaptation measures to the detrimental impacts are urgently needed by rural communities reliant on agriculture and forestry for their livelihoods. The international community too is beginning to realize the need for supporting adaptation, and how the rural communities can play a role in this initiative. There was some effort in Lima to elevate adaptation to the same status as

mitigation through most notably the Joint Mitigation and Adaptation mechanism (JMA). However, the preference has been for REDD+ (with safeguards) and for including the forest sector in National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs). It must nevertheless be realized that forest-related initiatives can provide excellent models for linking adaptation and mitigation, especially through work involving mangroves, agroforestry and community forestry. It is possible to design specific adaptation elements within REDD+ and other forest mitigation initiatives that could contribute to NCBs and ensure that social and environmental safeguards are met. The link between adaptation and mitigation is beginning to bear out in the draft negotiating text for COP21, which was drawn out in Geneva in February 2015.

xi) Can we expect a credible agreement to come out of Paris? If not, what will this mean for the progress to date on REDD+?

The COP20 in Lima appears to have promoted gradual progress, and this is evident in the initial drafting of text in Geneva, which hints to a growing consensus in the international community that effective action on climate change is not only imperative but is also possible. For a start, the concept of INDCs was accepted by all countries as a means to demonstrate their ambition towards reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions and removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Some parties (e.g. Japan, European Union) have already initiated ambitious climate actions, and are keen to support developing countries with financial and technological assistance. Admittedly, there has been a distinct increase in financial support for developing countries, helping to enhance trust and reduce opposition to mitigation actions in developing countries. This has been further strengthened with Annex 1 countries becoming more agreeable to see adaptation – a core concern of many developing countries – being incorporated within decisions made during COP negotiations. Nevertheless, some problems remain, including timely access to adequate financing. It is clear that for further progress on the new global climate agreement in Paris in December, progress would be needed in financing methods within the GCF and in transfer of technology. Overall, with basic guidance on safeguards, results-based payments, reference emission levels, and measurement, reporting and verification well covered, the situation augurs well for REDD+ and all forest-based interventions under a new agreement on climate change. Unlike with Kyoto, there is almost worldwide acceptance for forest-based initiatives to address climate change. This accord is likely to continue to Paris and a forward looking agreement, but not without first clearing the trade-offs between mitigation and adaptation, and ensuring local communities' needs and concerns are safeguarded.

4. Recommendations of focused group discussions

Three break-out groups were asked to look into the strategies and approaches the countries in the Asia-Pacific region could leverage as part of the negotiation process to support equitable and inclusive green growth in the forestry sector in the context of climate change. Each group was asked to look at this from the point of individual elements of the COP negotiations, as following:

- Group I – Climate financing; Safeguards; Non-Carbon Benefits; Tenure of Forest Land and Non-Land Assets
- Group II – National Forest Inventory and National Forest Monitoring System; Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest Reference Level
- Group III – Role of forests in Intended Nationally Determined Contributions; Land Use in the ADP

The Groups made the following recommendations that could be usefully followed by country governments of the Asia-Pacific, and regional and international bodies charged with sustainable economic development and environmental protection of the countries of the region.

A. General Recommendations

Recognizing that the challenge of climate change is entirely new with no past experiences to fall back upon, each country government should:

- v. Undertake intensive capacity building of its legislative, judicial and executive arms in relevant aspects of the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- vi. Reorient and retrain the implementing departments and research organizations to equip them to meet the new challenges;
- vii. Enhance coordination of action among all relevant stakeholders including communities, government agencies and civil society; and
- viii. Encourage collaboration among research and implementing organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and address administrative, financial and legal bottlenecks that hinder it.

At the regional level multilateral and bilateral public and private institutions in Asia-Pacific having cross-country responsibilities should work to:

- iv. Encourage intra-regional cooperation by creating appropriate forums and financing travel for the purpose;
- v. Encourage the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt among the countries of the region; and
- vi. Coordinate joint effort to access funds.

B. Specific Recommendations

i) Role of forests in Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)

The INDCs are likely to form the central pillars of the Paris climate summit later this year but many critical stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region, including policy makers, have inadequate understanding of the INDCs and how best these contributions could be designed. As such, the following steps may be urgently needed:

- Country governments should urgently identify domestic institutions and experts who can help build capacity related to the role of forests in INDCs and also reach out to competent global and regional organizations for financial and technological assistance and human expertise for the purpose;
- A good amount of relevant information is already available in the existing reporting requirements and guidance including national communication and biennial update reports and the country governments may make use of these for making the initial assessment of the possible role of forests in their INDCs; and
- Multilateral global organizations and external aid programs of developed countries should reach out to the under-developed countries and help them in making assessments of their INDCs and help them align their NAMAs and NAPAs under implementation in pre-2020 phase with INDCs.

ii) Climate financing

Recognizing that even more than five years after the promise of adequate funds for REDD+ at the Copenhagen Climate Summit both the access to funds to the REDD+ host country governments, and their channelization to the communities and other stakeholders at the operational level remain severely limited. The Expert group recommends that:

- Regional Multilateral organizations should help build smaller recipient countries' capacity to access the available REDD+ and related funds by enhancing their capacities to build quality proposals as also by helping match the national needs with the priorities of funding agencies;
- Since donor countries tend to extend their assistance to smaller countries at regional level, the smaller country governments may encourage collaborative initiatives for REDD+ finance with other countries in the sub-region;
- Global and regional organizations should also help develop recipient countries' capacity to properly utilize funds by upgrading national institutional infrastructure, and setting up national regulatory authorities, to bring fiduciary, social and environmental safeguards to acceptable levels;
- During negotiations the country governments should seek greater clarity on the quantum of funding for REDD+ and other forest initiatives under the GCF mitigation and adaptation allocations the lack of which constrains long term planning for climate change related investments in forestry sector;
- Country governments should also seek clear definitions and mechanisms for results-based payments and performance-based payments for REDD+ during negotiations in the climate conferences scheduled before the Paris Summit; and
- International financial institutions represented on the Standing Committee on Finance may discuss ways and means to transfer payments for results-based payments to the eligible Governments and communities.

iii) National Forest Inventory (NFI) and National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS)

There is a need to ensure that every country is able to access satellite imageries of their forests and other land based assets by 2020 for which technical support to key stakeholders and their capacity building may be necessary. Regional organizations like the Asian Development Bank may take initiative in this direction and encourage collaboration between countries of the region for providing technical support to those who are deficient in it.

Integration of soils in NFI would be useful everywhere, but more particularly among countries with large peat substrata; they may give specific attention to the soil carbon pool in their NFI and encourage adoption of best practices on soil in terms of soil carbon accounting procedures through research, technical support, and training.

Countries of the region may seek the assistance of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) which provides guidance to countries on utilizing observations, and developing accepted methods and protocols for setting up and strengthening their NFI and NFMS.

The country governments and regional and global institutions may ensure that complicated MRV requirements are avoided but the form of measurements needs to be credible.

iv) Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL)/Forest Reference Level (FRL)

The focus on FREL/FRL should be country specific, and for historic forest cover changes the data need to be sourced from geospatial images utilizing consistent data. National Forest Inventory (NFI) could provide growth rates of carbon stocks in various pools.

Regional forestry institutions may organize exchange of information including sharing of allometric equations, activity data, growth rates and carbon stocks among their countries.

v) Safeguards

Country governments need to address the challenges and constraints in areas of cross-sectoral coordination, and institutional capacity in developing Safeguards Information System (SIS).

The Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) should take into account different regulatory systems in the countries, or otherwise political institutions can impede the FPIC processes.

Regional institutions should provide effective platforms to exchange experience on safeguards and support countries to develop SIS and strengthen their national methodology on safeguards.

vi) Non-Carbon Benefits (NCBs)

The NCBs should be nationally defined because of different national circumstances and yet the definition of NCB needs to be harmonized to fit into a common broad international framework with an internationally acceptable measure of recognition. The NCBs should be incentivized, as appropriate, at the national or international level.

vii) Tenure of forest land and non-land assets

Each country has regulatory system on tenure which is often unsuited for the present times and generates wide discontent among the poor communities. Country government may use the first Principle of Responsible Agriculture Investment and follow its voluntary guidelines to promote forest tenure. They may draw upon experiences from other countries for recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and develop their capacity for forest asset management.

Quite often powerful local interests hinder the political will of country governments to address the tenure issues in favour of poor communities. There is thus a great need for strengthening forestry tenure issues in countries of the region through tactful support by global and regional institutions.

viii) Land Use in the ADP

In the three ADP negotiations scheduled before the Paris Summit the negotiators of country governments should work on establishing the role of land use in the Paris agreement in such a way that the forest communities benefit significantly and result in increased ecological richness and carbon dynamics of the forest assets.

The principles of Land-Use accounting should recognize the mitigation and adaptation synergies in forestry sector as unique and design accounting systems appropriately.

Concept note

Background

The 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2014 was held in Lima, Peru, from 1-12 December 2014. Lima was expected to be an important stepping stone to a 2015 agreement at the COP21 in Paris. Draft text for the 2015 agreement was hoped for as well as clarity on the definition and role within the agreement of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). Discussions were to continue on the development of systems for providing information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected and whether further guidance is needed related to the information on safeguards. Also the first meeting on the coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries took place in Lima as agreed in Warsaw. An overarching question to be addressed in Lima was how to include REDD+ in the 2015 agreement. Other key areas in which advances were expected related to financing, and in particular further implementation of the Green Climate Fund. Finally, continued development and implementation of the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability also have implications for the forestry sector. Given the push to ensure progress towards an agreement in Paris, it is essential that understanding and engagement in climate change negotiations go beyond limited numbers of negotiators and experts. Accordingly, there is a need to make the international-level negotiations understandable and relevant to a wider group of decision makers and communities, transforming results into comprehensive and practical guidance, and allowing for meaningful inputs into discussions leading up to Paris.

Building on the experience of a series of preceding and highly appreciated meetings initiated with COP15 in 2009 and held in all subsequent years, the meeting of experts will bring together experienced negotiators and leading thinkers from the region to discuss the issues, analyze what the outcomes of COP20 mean for forests and climate change in the Asia-Pacific region and importantly map out issues and entry-points for contributing to the anticipated Paris agreement. Similar to previous years, the organizers will produce and disseminate a publication designed as a synthesis of COP proceedings and conclusions of particular relevance to Asia-Pacific. FAO, RECOFTC and the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network – Forests and Climate Change (ARKN-FCC) are well placed to convene experts' consultation to discuss and reflect upon key regional issues raised during COP20 and contribute to charting proposed directions forward in light of COP21 in Paris.

Objectives of the workshop

The objectives of the meeting are to:

1. Discuss and reflect upon key issues raised during COP20 in Lima of interest to forest and climate change stakeholders;
2. Discuss and debate some of the key issues anticipated in the context of COP21 in Paris, and begin strategizing how stakeholders from the region can have priorities, views and concerns reflected in the anticipated 2015 agreement; and

3. Disseminate timely information on implications of COP20 for all levels of stakeholders within Asia-Pacific region and the forestry sector in the region.

Participants

- 8-10 experienced forest and climate change negotiators from ARKN-FCC.
- Additional 5 invited experts familiar with the outcomes of the COP20 negotiations and the implications for the 2015 agreement in Paris.

Anticipated Outputs

The expected results of the meeting are:

1. Discuss and reflect upon key issues raised during COP20 in Lima of interest to forest and climate change stakeholders;
2. Potential implications of COP20 to forestry and climate change sectors in the region identified;
3. Technical recommendations to member countries and other stakeholders to build on the outcomes of COP20 formulated;
4. A concise and accessible publication that will clearly summarize responses to key questions raised and answered during the meeting.
5. Discuss and debate some of the key issues anticipated in the context of COP21 in Paris, and begin strategizing how stakeholders from the region can have priorities, views and concerns reflected in the anticipated 2015 agreement.

Tentative program

Day 1:

- Overview presentation on COP20 negotiations and key outcomes.
- Several facilitated sessions organized by topic to discuss pre-formulated questions posted to the experts.

Day 2:

- A full-day feedback session to discuss and finalize draft summary of first day's discussions, and produce full outputs as described above.

Agenda

**Regional Experts Consultation –
Forests and Climate Change after Lima: An Asia-Pacific Perspective
Bangkok, Thailand, 24-25 February 2014
Organized by FAO, RECOFTC and ARKN-FCC**

Day 1	
08.30–09.45	<p>Opening addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Tint Lwin Thaug, Executive Director, The Center for People and Forests • Dr Nur Masripatin, Coordinator, ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change • Dr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization <p>Introduction to the Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting objectives and structure • Overview of outcomes from Lima and moving towards Paris
09.45–10.15	Refreshments
10.15–12.30	<p>Agenda item 2: Panel discussion: <i>Moving towards a Post-2020 Agreement</i> Discussions will cover progress made in Lima, development of INDCs and lessons learned from prior mitigation initiatives.</p>
12.30–13.30	Lunch
13.30–16.00	<p>Agenda item 3: Panel discussion: <i>Progress on the Warsaw Framework for REDD+</i> Discussions will cover REDD+ financing, safeguards and MRV.</p>
16.00–16.30	Close of Day 1
18.00–19.30	Cocktail reception
Day 2	
08.30–09.30	<p>Agenda item 4: Panel discussion: <i>The forestry context beyond mitigation</i> Discussions will cover adaptation, non-carbon benefits and landscape approaches.</p>
09.30–10.30	<p>Agenda item 5: Panel discussion: <i>Concluding discussion on prospects and implications of an agreement in Paris</i></p>
10.30–11.00	Refreshments
11.00–12.30	<p>Agenda item 6: Focused group discussions to generate recommendations</p>
12.30–13.30	Lunch
14.30–17.30	<p>Agenda item 6 (cont.): Focused group discussions to generate recommendations</p>
14.30–17.30	<p>Agenda item 7: Group presentations (plenary) – Strategies, approaches and recommendations</p>
17.30–18.00	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Closing remarks from the organizers</i>

List of participants

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Ms Kim Soojin	FAO	Regional
Ms Wirya Khim	FAO	Regional
Mr Ben Vickers	FAO	Regional
Mr Kenichi Shono	FAO	Regional
Mr Matthew Leete	FAO	Regional

Full Report on the responses of the Meeting to the key questions on outcomes of COP20

(Reproduced from the original publication by FAO, RECOFTC & ARKN-FCC)

Forests and climate change after Lima

An Asia-Pacific perspective

Implications of the UNFCCC COP20 on forest policy and practice

May 2015

Introduction

The 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Lima, Peru, 1-12 December 2014. The outcomes of COP20 are expected to have a significant impact on developments in the field of forests and climate change over the coming year. In view of this, forest sector stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific require succinct and accurate information on the implications of the COP20 discussions and their significance to forest policy decisions and practice

Since 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests have collaborated in organizing an annual expert consultation on forests and climate change, to assess the outcomes of the UNFCCC COPs and their potential implications for Asia and the Pacific. This publication is the outcome of the sixth of these consultations, organized in Bangkok, Thailand, 24-25 February 2015, in partnership with the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change (ARKN-FCC). Twenty-two negotiators and experts from 19 countries of the Asia-Pacific region attended the meeting. This booklet summarizes the discussions held during the consultation, which were in response to a set of 11 key questions, designed to inform stakeholders on the implications of the Lima COP20.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of FAO, RECOFTC, ARKN-FCC or other participating institutions, and should be considered the personal perspectives of the participating experts.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADP	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
ARKN-FCC	ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CTCN	Climate Technology Centre and Network
COP	Conference of Parties
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FREL	Forest reference emission level
FRL	Forest reference level
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
INDCs	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JMA	Joint Mitigation and Adaptation mechanism
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NAPA	National Adaptation Plan of Action
NCB	Non-carbon benefits
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
RBF	Results-based finance
RBP	Results-based payments
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries, including conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SCF	Standing Committee on Finance
SIS	Safeguards Information Systems
SMF	Sustainable management of forests
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

Eleven key questions

- Q1** Was COP20 a success?
- Q2** What happened at COP20 that was relevant to the forest sector?
- Q3** What implications will the INDCs have for the forest sector and REDD+?
- Q4** How will REDD+ figure in the considerations of broader land-use issues?
- Q5** What challenges remain in financing forest-based climate change mechanisms?
- Q6** What progress can be expected regarding the development of forest reference emission levels (FRELs) and forest reference levels (FRLs) in Asia and the Pacific in 2015?
- Q7** How can regional and international knowledge exchange help in the development of National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) for REDD+?
- Q8** Do developing countries need additional guidance on safeguards?
- Q9** Are non-carbon benefits (NCBs) still relevant in the UNFCCC discussions on REDD+?
- Q10** Is there potential for joint mitigation and adaptation programmes in the forest sector to be included in a post-2020 international climate agreement?
- Q11** Can COP21 in Paris be expected to produce a credible international climate agreement? If not, what will this mean for the progress to date on REDD+?

The experts

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Was COP20 a success?

Although there were no dramatic breakthroughs at the 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) in Lima, the Conference can be considered a qualified success as it was intended to serve as a stepping stone to the more important COP21, which will take place in Paris in December 2015. Countries around the world have agreed to form a new global agreement on climate change at COP21 in Paris later this year, and thus, the discussions at the Lima Conference were focused on elaborating the elements necessary for the expected agreement.

In preparation for COP21, countries have agreed to publicly commit to taking specific actions to achieve the central objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), namely stabilizing greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. These pledges are known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), and countries are expected to submit them well in advance of COP21. The INDCs will form the foundation for climate action post-2020, when the expected agreement will likely come into effect. The deadline for all countries to submit their INDCs is 1 October 2015, after which the UNFCCC will be able to assess the combined ambitions of the Parties, informing the extent of the possible credibility of the global agreement to come out of the December COP21.

In addition to advancing work on INDCs, COP20 also led to significant progress in elevating the need for climate change adaptation to the same status of urgency as mitigation. As Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, the COP President, said: "Lima has given new urgency towards fast tracking adaptation and building resilience across the developing world – not least by strengthening the link to finance and the development of national adaptation plans." For the developing countries in urgent need of assistance in adapting to the already detrimental impacts of climate change, the acknowledgement of the need for raising the importance of urgent adaptation at COP20 provided a positive step forward.

Moreover, COP20 produced the "Lima Call for Climate Action," which reinforced the principle of "common but differentiated" responsibilities and respective capabilities, underlined the need for an ambitious Paris agreement specifically in terms of both mitigation and adaptation, and emphasized the urgency for providing enhanced financial support to developing countries. In terms of financial support to developing countries, the Call also urged developed countries and operational entities of the Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC to provide support for the preparation of INDCs to countries that need it.

"Every developing country is waiting to see how ambitious developed countries are with their INDCs."

Suchitra Changtragoon



What happened at COP20 that was relevant to the forest sector?

With respect to forests, expectations in advance of COP20 were not very high in comparison with previous COPs. For many negotiators, the progress made at COP 19, specifically the development of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (WFR), was considered sufficient until COP21, with the exceptions of safeguards and financing in the implementation of REDD+.

Opinions on safeguards in Lima were split, with many developed (Annex 1 of the UNFCCC) countries and civil society organizations in favour of additional guidance and most developing (non-Annex 1) countries in favour of no further guidance at this stage. According to the developing countries, the progress made at previous COPs is sufficient for countries to move forward with REDD+ implementation followed by the sharing of experiences and learning before discussing whether additional guidance is necessary. No consensus was reached on this point during the Lima COP and it will be discussed further at the June 2015 meeting in Germany of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

Regarding the matter of financing, the central issue for countries in Asia and the Pacific remains access to funds for activities under the REDD+ readiness phase. Asia-Pacific countries require substantial and predictable flows of finance from Annex 1 countries that are sustained over several years. Although very limited progress was made on this front at COP20, there was a positive sign in terms of pledges from Annex 1 countries to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) having exceeded the target of US\$10 billion by the beginning of the Conference. Some of these GCF funds are expected to flow towards REDD+ and other mitigation and adaptation activities in the forest sector. Moreover, the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) plans to meet with REDD+ experts later in 2015 to discuss how financing for REDD+, forests and adaptation, and addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, can be better coordinated.

As in previous COPs, a number of countries, mainly from Latin America, advocated non-market-based approaches for REDD+, including joint mitigation and adaptation mechanisms. The emphasis on synergies between mitigation and adaptation has been reflected more recently in a first draft text of the expected Paris agreement, which emerged from a meeting in Geneva

"Those who weren't in Lima didn't miss much."
Suchitra Changtragoon

"Side events played an important role in the launch of the Lima Call for Climate Action."
Mayumi Quintos
Natividad

in February 2015. However, several other Parties, including some from Asia and the Pacific, argued that the objectives of proposals for non-market-based approaches are already adequately covered by ongoing activities under the readiness phases of REDD+, and may therefore not be necessary. Nevertheless, the results-based payments (RBPs) phase of REDD+, while not far off for some countries, is still several years away for others; until then, all countries will in any case employ non-market-based approaches to finance actions in the forest sector, many of which have benefits from both mitigation and adaptation perspectives.

Under the broader landscape umbrella, the agriculture roadmap is mostly adaptation-focused, though deeper links to REDD+ may emerge. Within Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) discussions, silviculture and silvopasture were identified as potential forestry activities under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), in addition to afforestation and reforestation (A/R). Further technical clarifications from the CDM Executive Board are required before these activities can be formally included in the text of an agreement in Paris.



What implications will the INDCs have for the forest sector and REDD+?

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) will be a key part of the new legal instrument that will underpin any agreement made at the COP21 in Paris. The pledges will also be used by the UNFCCC to calculate the potential impact of the combined actions of all Parties under a new agreement, thus indicating the scale of global ambition to address climate change.

However, the term “INDC” is loosely defined, and may thus be interpreted in various ways by different Parties. “Nationally Determined” allows for national circumstances to determine each country’s “contributions” towards reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere. For instance, countries that are not big emitters might contribute by way of finance and technology transfer that help others to reduce emissions and enable adaptation. The INDCs, moreover, are expected to include mitigation actions in all sectors and may also include an adaptation component. “Intended,” however, implies a degree of flexibility, meaning actions proposed under INDCs are not technically commitments, and are thus essentially voluntary and non-binding. This flexibility in interpretation of the terminology and principles is of particular importance for natural ecosystems like forests, where higher uncertainties make flexibility a critical requirement.

Although the drafting of the Paris agreement text has begun, the process is still at an early stage. Several meetings have already been scheduled for advancing the text prior to COP21 in December. The current draft produced at the meeting in Geneva indicates that the finance provided for results-based payments (RBPs) for REDD+ could also be used for implementing actions under INDCs and joint mitigation and adaptation approaches post-2020.

The ultimate test for the credibility of INDCs will be in the meeting of financial pledges by Annex 1 Parties to support non-Annex 1 Parties in achieving their voluntary contributions. To date, disbursement has been very slow, and, it is essential for developing countries to gain clarity on the implications of their INDCs in terms of the financial support they may receive through other channels. That is, if a national REDD+ strategy is included in a country’s INDC, developing countries are concerned that the REDD+ strategy may be interpreted as the “contribution” making them ineligible for results-based

“The communities need to be made aware of INDCs, because in the end, they will be the ones bearing the costs.”

Alaya de Leon

finance to implement the INDC. The potential for such unintended consequences is very much real, and developing countries must therefore receive very clear guidance during the INDC development process.

Forest sector stakeholders, including national governments, forest-dependent communities, the forest industry, consumers of forest products and forestry professionals, are generally in favour of including forest-related actions within national INDCs. This is in contrast to the lead up to the first and flawed global climate change agreement, the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, when few forestry professionals were involved in the negotiations. The high profile of forests in negotiations over the last few COPs, particularly after the emergence of REDD+, has led to widespread recognition of the importance of the forest sector in reducing concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, and increased involvement of actors who understand the multiple benefits that may result from inclusion of the forest sector at the heart of a future climate change agreement.



How will REDD+ figure in the considerations of broader land-use issues?

Negotiators met in Geneva in February 2015 to start drafting the text for the potential new global climate agreement as one of the first steps between Lima and Paris, and though most of this text is not yet agreed upon, one of the suggestions, specifically for “diversified enhanced-mitigation actions,” could potentially have significant implications for REDD+. Although the WFR already indicates that the new global agreement will include a dedicated REDD+ component, some Parties are keen to see REDD+ as a multi-sector, landscape-level set of diversified actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“There is often a big gap between the negotiators and the implementers.”

Sangay Wangchuk

According to the Cancun Agreements negotiated at COP16 in Cancun in 2010, REDD+ requires a phased approach. Most countries are still in Readiness Phases 1 and 2, and very few are ready to enter Phase 3, when they become eligible for results-based finance. There is thus still time for REDD+ to evolve. REDD+ has been viewed as a mitigation tool from its conceptual beginning at COP11 in Montreal; however, it is essentially a landscape-based approach linked inseparably with agriculture and other land uses as the key drivers of deforestation are outside of the forest sector. Many if not most drivers of deforestation and forest degradation need to be addressed through interventions and behavioural changes in non-forest sectors. Some Parties thus wish to explicitly recognize this cross-sectoral issue in the negotiations, and make REDD+ one part of a broader land-use mechanism which would need to integrate all land-based sectors: forestry, agriculture, fisheries, livestock and mining.

The forest sector on its own is very different from one country to another. As attractive as a broad land-use mechanism may be to some negotiators, the complexity of binding such diverse countries to globally standardized methodologies may discourage many technicians and policymakers from implementing such a scheme. Any global-level guidance on such a mechanism would thus need to be at a very general level because national implementation would be tailored to specific national circumstances.

The landscape approach concept was first introduced into discussions under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its sister convention, the UNFCCC, sought to learn lessons from these discussions. However, different

land-use sectors have very different mandates and objectives; for example, the agriculture sector has food security as its primary goal, while forests are expected to meet multiple needs including wood, biomass energy, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and a range of ecological services. These goals sometimes prove to be incompatible and a landscape approach must thus be able to deal with these tensions and trade-offs effectively. The existing political and administrative structures within countries also tend to heighten these tensions and this complexity is only likely to increase as the approach is expanded to the global scale.

"It is important that any agreement must allow us to define REDD+ in the context of our national circumstances."

Nur Masripatin

"Learning by doing is often the only way forward. We should not assume that problems alone would emerge; solutions can also emerge."

Shahzad Jehangir



What challenges remain in financing forest-based climate change mechanisms?

Issues relating to finance are now mainly centered on the dispersal of funds under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF).

The GCF gets its mandate from the UNFCCC and must function within the bounds set by the COP decisions. Funding pledges from Parties to the GCF are from public finance. But solely relying on public funding is considered inadequate and thus the GCF is expected to be supplemented by private finance in the future. It is the task of the GCF to create enabling conditions to optimize such inflows through its resource mobilization process and its private sector facility.

The SCF was set up to assist the COP to improve the coordination of climate finance. It produces biennial assessments to inform countries and other actors on the various sources of money for climate finance. Its most recent assessment reported total pledges of US\$8.67 billion for REDD+ and forests in 2014, of which bilateral financing from 21 donor countries accounted for a little over US\$4 billion; financing through six multilateral mechanisms, including the GCF, totalled US\$3.14 billion; and another US\$0.9 billion came from private investments. Although these figures do not add up to the scale of finance that REDD+ readiness efforts require, they do suggest increased predictability of financing for forests and REDD+, particularly compared with past years.

The money the GCF and the SCF have reported is in the form of pledges, however, and it is not yet clear how much of this money will actually land in the coffers of the GCF or other funding mechanisms. In the past, translating pledges into real, additional finance has not been straightforward. It is also not clear what proportion of GCF funds will be allocated for REDD+. Now that some countries have submitted their first forest reference emission levels and reference levels (FRELs/FRLs), a sense of competition is emerging among them, as it seems increasingly unlikely that there will be sufficient finance available through the GCF to meet all potential demands for results-based payments. While new guidance to the GCF on results-based payments for REDD+ is not expected in the immediate future, there will be calls from applicant countries for the Fund to grow through creative resource mobilization and the linkages

between REDD+ and adaptation as recognized by the fund. There will also be strong pressure from recipient countries for the GCF to coordinate financial distribution without inequity or a lack of transparency. However, the demands from some stakeholders for a reporting mechanism on access to finance were viewed with caution by potential recipient countries, particularly as REDD+ countries will already have substantial reporting burdens even without such additional measures.

“Demands for an additional reporting mechanism for GCF financing are being made without concern for the costs involved.”

Elizabeth Philip



What progress can be expected regarding the development of forest reference emission levels (FRELs) and forest reference levels (FRLs) in Asia and the Pacific in 2015?

The first forest reference (emission) levels (FRELs/FRLs) were submitted to the UNFCCC in December 2014, and substantial progress has been made in some cases already. Brazil's FREL for instance, has already been assessed and approved by the UNFCCC technical expert committee. Brazil took a simple approach, limiting its submission to avoided deforestation only. In Asia and the Pacific, Nepal has gained some valuable experience in setting sub-national FRELs/FRLs as part of its proposal to the Carbon Fund under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Indonesia has also drafted a sub-national FREL for the Carbon Fund, as well as a national FREL that is ready for submission to the UNFCCC, and several additional sub-national FREL/FRLs through other initiatives. Malaysia has become the first country in the region to submit its FREL/FRL to the UNFCCC and is the first in the world to base their submission on sustainable management of forests (SMF). The feedback these countries receive from the experts' committee will be of great interest to other countries in Asia and the Pacific, a region where emission reductions from SMF and reduced degradation, which are harder to measure than those from avoided deforestation, are likely to figure prominently in many other FRELs/FRLs. The need for transparency in setting up a FREL cannot be overemphasized. Proactive steps are needed to make quick progress in establishing FRELs, for which developing national capacity is essential.

Overall, after several years of uncertainty on the topic of FRELs/FRLs, there is a flurry of activity, which will certainly intensify as COP21 approaches. Several more countries in the region, including Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam, are likely to make submissions before the end of the year. During 2015, these countries will require intensive capacity development in order to meet their objectives. It will not be appropriate for these countries to entirely outsource the drafting of FRELs/FRLs since these baselines will determine the scale of results-based payments that the countries may receive under REDD+, and thus require national understanding and ownership. Several different

"Transparency in the development of FRELs should never be compromised."

Delux Chhun

"The only way one can learn how to make a FREL is to do it. Just jump in and learn to swim!"

Nur Masripatin

approaches to developing the baselines are being piloted, all of which may have useful lessons for the wider region. For some countries, it may be possible to address the vast majority of emission reductions through a FREL/FRL concentrating on just one REDD+ activity, such as reduced deforestation. However, for many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the situation is more complex, and two or more of the five REDD+ activities may potentially be included in a FREL/FRL.¹ Yet the inclusion of multiple such activities raises challenges, mainly because it is technically challenging to measure some of the “plus” activities. In such cases, countries can begin with activities that are currently easier to measure, and then expand the FREL/FRL to include other activities at a later date as skills develop with both training and practice. Malaysia is adopting such a “stepwise” approach. Its FREL is national in scale and is based on historical emissions using data from existing time series. Malaysia expects to move on from its SMF-only FREL to encompass other activities in the future. Indonesia has developed its national and sub-national FRELS using historical time series data and some secondary data with Norwegian and German support. Myanmar has also started with a pilot FREL at sub-national level for the teak forests of the Bago Yoma region. Several of these experiences will be shared at a UN-REDD regional workshop in Cambodia in May, which the host will use as an opportunity to advance its own FREL. There are several other such South-South learning events planned for this year on FRELS/FRLs.

¹ According to the Cancun Agreements, the five REDD+ activities are: 1) avoided deforestation; 2) reduced forest degradation; 3) conservation of forest carbon stocks; 4) sustainable management of forests; and 5) enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



How can regional and international knowledge exchange help in the development of National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) for REDD+?

Asia and the Pacific is home to several prestigious institutions that are leaders in the field of forest inventory and monitoring. Several countries, moreover, contain a pool of highly-skilled forest technicians. This high level of human and institutional resources can facilitate quick and relatively low-cost capacity development across the region to help set up and strengthen Asia-Pacific countries' NFMS. Dozens of formal bilateral agreements on cooperation in the fields of environment and forestry already exist. For example, among the ASEAN member states there is formal cooperation on forest investment programmes through the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network (ARKN). India has also signed agreements on cooperation in the fields of forestry and environment with Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal among other countries. However, most of these agreements are underutilized, and there is significant potential for external agencies or multinational bodies to build on the agreements to enhance cooperation within the region.

The Forest and Climate Change branch of the ARKN (ARKN-FCC) performs such a role in Southeast Asia, for example. ARKN-FCC specializes in coordination and mobilization of intellectual resources in the fields of forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Forestry Centre, with its Secretariat in Bhutan, has a similar function in that sub-region. FAO, through the UN-REDD programme, is helping to develop the capacity of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to facilitate regional approaches to forest monitoring with Pacific Island countries. At the global level, the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and Climate Technology Centre Network (CTCN) of the UNFCCC provide technical support in all sectors, including the forest sector, and many developing countries have already begun taking advantage of these processes.

"We must not reinvent the wheel, particularly for complicated issues like NFMS."

Sangay Wangchuk

"Use the existing bilateral agreements between Asia Pacific countries to deepen intra-regional cooperation."

Promode Kant

For the many small island states in the Pacific, the effort required in developing a national REDD+ strategy may be hard to justify considering the limited forest areas of these island states. However, among other factors for consideration, their forests often include high proportions of mangroves, offering opportunities for significantly enhancing resilience while achieving mitigation and other adaptation measures. Moreover, there are few forest and environment professionals in these countries, and they are therefore often dependent on foreign consultants for technical expertise, which increases the risk of national interests being superseded by global concerns through the potential excessive reliance on international experts. This raises the need for more systematic and intense national capacity development of a local and regional expert pool on REDD+ monitoring activities. In these island states, most land is formally owned by local people, which could also help lead to a source of lessons regarding the inclusion of local communities in forest monitoring activities. However, although such participatory approaches may reduce costs for the state, and may potentially increase transparency of information, they may not necessarily be of use in generating data for the national-level reporting required by NFMS for REDD+ under the UNFCCC.

“Small Pacific island countries’ negotiators are sceptical of developed countries’ motives for interested in the non-carbon benefits that regional REDD+ programmes can offer them.”

Christine Fung



Do developing countries need additional guidance on safeguards?

No new guidance on safeguards emerged from COP20.² Ahead of the conference in Lima, many civil society organizations and Annex 1 countries had prioritized the need for further progress on safeguards guidance. However, in the opinion of most non-Annex 1 Parties in Asia and the Pacific, the environmental and social safeguards formulated in 2010 as part of the Cancun Agreement developed at COP16 are adequate for REDD+ implementation to begin. The discussions in Lima similarly reflected this difference in priorities between Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 countries. Although there is probably room for a middle road to be taken, through additional detailed text on the interpretation of the safeguards as well as a clarification of the voluntary nature of any safeguards reporting mechanism, the issue of safeguards guidance tended to be a polarizing one in Lima and led to a stalemate in discussions. In an unprecedented move, "Rule 16" of the Convention was applied, which meant that all discussions on the topic of safeguards at this COP were deleted from the records. The discussions will start again from the pre-Lima position at the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) in June.

The safeguards requirements of multilateral and most bilateral funding agencies are also essentially based on the Cancun Agreement text, although the World Bank (WB) obliges FCPF countries to follow additional WB-specific conditions on safeguards. Some bilateral funding agencies also emphasize particular concerns relating to gender and indigenous peoples. It is possible that some social and environmental risks could be further emphasized as the pilot implementation (Phase 2) of REDD+ proceeds. This phase includes development of monitoring protocols to provide the necessary feedback that could form the basis for revising safeguard guidance.

Equally important to the need to strengthen safeguards is the need for the capacity development of national implementing agencies to enable them to understand the various dimensions of safeguards, why safeguards are needed, and how safeguards can be addressed and respected. The design of safeguards information systems should be nationally driven with a view to continuous improvement. However, it is important to recognize the limited capacities of forestry professionals in some countries in the Asia-Pacific region

"The discussions were intense and heated. Rule 16 was applied in REDD+ negotiations for the first time, and the entire session was erased from the records."

Nur Masripatin

"Practices of development partners are sufficient guidance for safeguards during the readiness phase."

Shahzad Jehangir

"Additional guidance on safeguards is not needed, but we do need support to ensure an efficient process and effective outcomes."

Suchitra Changtragoon

² "Safeguards" in the REDD+ context were introduced into UNFCCC negotiations to safeguard against any potential negative impacts from the implementation of REDD+. The seven types of safeguards are defined in the Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16, Annex 1).

with regard to safeguards, and it is in this area that regional exchange and capacity development programmes can be of great help. Meaningful participation of local communities in the design and operation of safeguards information systems is also very important, and can itself be considered a requirement under the Cancun Agreement. Deciding whether such participation is 'meaningful' is context-specific, however, and thus for this aspect of the safeguards (as well as for several other aspects), only nationally-defined indicators would be appropriate. In countries with high internet penetration, it may be useful to set up an online platform to exchange information on safeguards.



Are non-carbon benefits (NCBs) still relevant in the UNFCCC discussions on REDD+?

If REDD+ is understood primarily as a tool for climate change mitigation, then non-carbon benefits (NCBs) can be viewed as co-benefits of REDD+ covering all benefits other than those related to carbon. Carbon is fundamentally an abstract concept, and is best understood as an indicator for global GHG emission reductions, rather than as an actual benefit itself. NCBs are therefore the set of multiple benefits that forest sector stakeholders, and the global community at large, could enjoy as a result of REDD+ implementation. This might involve a range of economic, social or environmental benefits, including those related to climate change adaptation.

NCBs should therefore be defined in the national context before identifying whether and how they can be incentivized through REDD+ or other climate change-related initiatives. Indonesia, for instance, has developed national standards and methodologies for assessing NCBs with a focus on biodiversity conservation. It is suggested that certain biodiversity values assessed through these methodologies can also be used as a proxy to determine a broader set of NCBs generated as a result of REDD+ initiatives. In the context of climate change adaptation in drought prone forests, indicators related to water availability and use could similarly be used as proxies.

NCBs may be understood as a logical extension to the concept of REDD+ safeguards. By definition, a safeguard is a measure to “do no harm” or to minimize the possibility of negative impacts, whereas the ‘benefits’ inherent in NCBs go beyond just protecting against negative impacts and through the active generation of additional benefits. However, the practical implications of seeking to link NCBs explicitly with the development of safeguards systems may quickly become overly complex. Regardless of whether NCBs are linked with safeguards, the recognition and description of the range of potential benefits of REDD+ initiatives may make engagement in REDD+ more compelling for forest-based communities.

Another issue for NCBs is regarding how they would be paid for. In the context of results-based payments (RBPs) stipulated under the UNFCCC, “results” must be directly relevant to the Convention’s ultimate objective of reducing the levels of GHGs in the atmosphere. As NCBs do not contribute to this objective, they should not, therefore, be paid for by a UNFCCC mechanism such as REDD+, but from other sources. There may be ways, other than RBPs, that REDD+ initiatives can incentivize NCBs for forest-dependent people, but no agreement on this was reached at COP20.

“Water issues assume special significance as NCBs in drought prone areas.”

Anura Sathurusinghe

“On a narrow interpretation, results-based payments are only for carbon; however, some consider that on a broader definition they may include non-carbon benefits.”

Stephen Leonard

Discussions will continue on how NCBs could be integrated and incentivized under REDD+, but it is important that this conversation does not derail progress on the REDD+ mechanism as a whole: agreement on general guidelines and methodologies for NCBs may yet emerge. Association with REDD+ Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) – particularly with reporting requirements – should be avoided, however. One possibility for proceeding without including in NCBs within REDD+ MRV is the recognition of voluntary integration of NCBs into a package of incentives for REDD+ interventions, and the development of some standard guidance and methodologies for this purpose. Bhutan, for instance, is exploring the possibility of channelling resources generated through REDD+ to incentivize NCBs. Other countries in the region may learn from such experiences, or may explore the possibilities of NCB-linked finance through other Conventions such as CBD and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD).

“Climate change adaptation may sometimes be the most important NCB.”

Stephen Leonard



Is there potential for joint mitigation and adaptation programmes in the forest sector to be included in a post-2020 international climate agreement?

As the planet warms and the climate destabilizes, adaptation for countries in Asia and the Pacific to these detrimental changes is becoming of paramount importance, particularly for local communities highly dependent on forests and other ecosystems for their livelihoods. There is also a growing recognition by the international community of the need to support the adaptation of these ecosystems themselves, and the role that local communities might play in such work.

Some effort was made in Lima to raise the profile and importance of climate change adaptation in the negotiations, at least to the same level of priority as mitigation. Parties explored potential synergies and trade-offs between the two tracks, most notably through the proposed Joint Mitigation and Adaptation mechanism (JMA). There was support for a JMA from some non-Annex 1 countries because the mechanism is not perceived as linked to markets, and a proposal from Bolivia for some form of a JMA as an alternative to REDD+ attracted particular attention. However, the support for a JMA, or lack thereof, appears to be somewhat region-specific to Asia and the Pacific. Negotiators from the region did not express enthusiasm for the concept, preferring to continue building upon progress already made under REDD+.

Separate provisions for REDD+ (with safeguards) and for the inclusion of the forest sector in National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) may be a more practical strategy than a JMA for many Parties and observers of the negotiations. There are significant opportunities for forest-related initiatives specifically to serve as models for linking adaptation and mitigation, for example, through initiatives involving mangroves, agroforestry and community forestry. Incorporation of specific adaptation elements within REDD+ and other forest mitigation initiatives could be designed to contribute to NCBs and to ensure that social and environmental safeguards are met. The draft negotiating text for COP21, drawn up in Geneva in February 2015,

"JMAs focus on sustainable management of forests resulting from long-term mitigation and adaptation."
Ruth Turia

contains significant and frequent references to the linking of adaptation and mitigation. For instance, paragraph 22 of the text states: "Parties may take into account joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for integral and sustainable management of forests as an alternative to results-based finance." However, although this statement builds upon decisions made in the two preceding COPs, the breadth of support from Parties will only become clear in Paris in December 2015.



Can COP21 in Paris be expected to produce a credible international climate agreement? If not, what will this mean for the progress to date on REDD+?

While the COP20 in Lima was relatively uneventful, it promoted the gradual progress that led that the initial drafting of text in Geneva, which suggests an evolving consensus in the international community that effective action on climate change is now likely and essential. This was evident even at COP19 in Warsaw when the concept of INDCs was accepted by all countries including non-Annex 1 countries as a means to demonstrate each Party's ambition towards reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions and enhancing the removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Some Parties, particularly the European Union (EU) and Japan, have shown leadership by initiating ambitious climate change actions within their territories and through their willingness to extend financial and technological support to developing countries. Other Parties, like the United States, have begun to play a relatively more constructive role than in the past.

Increased financial flows from the developed countries to the developing world have also helped improve trust in the feasibility of a future climate agreement. This development has been reflected in the reduced opposition to climate change mitigation actions in developing countries, which has given more political and economic manoeuvring room to their leadership in negotiations. Simultaneously, the Annex 1 countries are becoming more willing to see adaptation – a core concern of many developing countries – embedded within decisions, including those relevant for the forest sector. However, the issue of timely access to adequate finance continues to be problematic. Advances in the discussions within the SCF, on financing methods within the GCF, and in transfer of technology are all critical if Parties are to make progress towards a new global climate agreement in Paris this December.

There is already enough basic guidance available regarding methodologies for safeguards, results-based payments, reference emission levels, and

measurement, reporting and verification. Overall, the current situation bodes well for REDD+ and for all forest-based interventions under a new climate agreement. In contrast to Kyoto, there is near-universal acceptance of the importance and feasibility of using forest-based initiatives to address climate change. As long as local communities' needs and concerns are effectively met and safeguarded, and the trade-offs between mitigation and adaptation successfully navigated, this consensus is likely to last until Paris and moving forward.



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