



ecbi Working Paper

The Climate Change Negotiations: REDD-plus

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Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries ('REDD-plus')

1. Introduction

First, this paper provides background information about the international REDD-plus negotiations, before considering REDD-plus at the UN Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, including REDD-plus in the Copenhagen Accord. The paper then addresses Africa's position on REDD-plus, covering efforts to develop an African position on REDD-plus and Africa's position on this issue in Copenhagen. The paper concludes with a brief note on the status of negotiations at the time of writing.

2. Background

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries ('REDD-plus') began to develop as a key issue in the international climate change negotiations at the **Eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11) in Montreal, Canada, in 2005**.

A group of countries led by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica proposed a new agenda item on 'reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action'. Despite challenges, for example related to measurement and the risk of displacement of deforestation ('leakage'), many countries were very interested in the proposal. The UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) was asked to consider the issue and several in-depth workshops also took place over the next couple of years.¹

In 2007 the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 13) adopted Decision 1/CP.13, known as the **'Bali Action Plan'**, which provides the basis for the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), which includes negotiations on REDD-plus.²

Paragraph 1(b)(iii) of the Bali Action Plan addresses: 'Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable

¹ For more background information about REDD-plus see http://unfccc.int/methods_science/redd/items/4531.php.

² Decision 1/CP.13 is available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2007/cop13/eng/06a01.pdf#page=3>.

management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries’. This forms part of the AWG-LCA negotiations on ‘the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to reach an agreed outcome ...’ (Bali Action Plan, paragraph 1).

COP 13 in Bali also adopted **Decision 2/CP.13** on ‘reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action’, which encouraged capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer. It also encouraged Parties to explore actions, including demonstration activities; provided indicative guidance for demonstration activities; and invited Parties to mobilize resources. In addition, Decision 2/CP.13 requested SBSTA to undertake a programme of work on methodological issues.³

In December 2008 **SBSTA 29 in Poznan, Poland** recommended methodological guidance on REDD-plus, without prejudice to future decisions by the COP. The SBSTA report referred to ‘reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries’.⁴ The point to note is that the semi-colon between the words ‘...developing countries’ and ‘...and the role of conservation ...’ was changed to a comma. This was because some countries, for example India, wanted ‘conservation, sustainable management for forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks’ to have the same level of priority in the negotiations as deforestation and forest degradation. The semi-colon was interpreted by many as distinguishing between the two sets of activities, so that deforestation and forest degradation had higher priority. This changed in Poznan and what had been called ‘REDD’ started to be called ‘REDD-plus’.

It is not clear yet what exactly ‘conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks’ means and what type of actions would be eligible for financial incentives under a REDD-plus scheme under these headings.

In 2009 REDD-plus was a priority issue in the negotiations, with strong support from many countries. Many issues need to be resolved in the negotiations: for example, if a fund or market-based approach would be best; involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities; ‘MRV’ (‘measurable, reportable and verifiable’); questions related to reference levels and reference emissions levels; if sub-national REDD activities would be acceptable; and if REDD-plus actions should be considered to be Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs). However, there were expectations that it might be possible to reach an overall agreement on REDD-plus at the UN Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009. Many countries were interested in preparing for future REDD activities and fast-start REDD projects.⁵

³ Decision 2/CP.13 is available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2007/cop13/eng/06a01.pdf#page=8>.

⁴ See paragraph 38 of the report, available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2008/sbsta/eng/13.pdf>.

⁵ For example, for information about the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility see <http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/fcp/>.

One of the challenging aspects of REDD-plus relates to how countries with different levels of forest cover and countries with different historical rates of deforestation could be included. For example, the countries of the Congo Basin, which have low historical levels of deforestation, have pointed out that relying on historical levels would put them at a disadvantage.

Another challenge in the negotiations is that REDD-plus has links to several other issues, such as NAMAs and the negotiations on ‘cooperative sectoral approaches and sector-specific actions in agriculture’. The REDD-plus negotiations also have links to negotiations under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP), the other main negotiating body. For example, to what extent will Annex I Parties be able to rely on REDD-plus activities to meet their emissions reduction targets? Some Parties have also proposed that REDD-plus activities could be included the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

The REDD-plus negotiations progressed better than many other issues in the meetings held in Bonn, Bangkok and Barcelona in 2009. This was also the case in Copenhagen, where the Facilitator of the REDD-plus negotiations, Tony La Viña of the Philippines, was able to resolve several outstanding points. However, the failure of the Copenhagen Conference meant that no decision was reached on REDD-plus in the AWG-LCA (however, see below regarding decision 4/CP.15).

3. REDD-plus in Copenhagen

In Copenhagen REDD-plus was first considered as part of the **eighth session of the AWG-LCA** and the report of AWG-LCA 8 submitted to COP 15 contained text for a draft decision on REDD-plus.⁶ However, the Copenhagen Conference failed to reach agreement and instead extended the AWG-LCA’s mandate (but see below regarding COP decision 4/CP.15 on methodological guidance).

On the basis of the AWG-LCA 8 report the COP continued negotiations in Copenhagen, including on REDD-plus.⁷ The draft decision text contained in the **report on the COP’s work on the basis of the AWG-LCA 8 report**, ie the most advanced text on REDD-plus, still has many brackets (ie text that is not agreed). The draft decision sets out general principles, such as: REDD-plus activities are to contribute to the objective of the UNFCCC (contained in UNFCCC Article 2); be country-driven; promote broad country participation; and be results-based. The draft decision lists ‘safeguards’ that are to be promoted and supported when undertaking REDD-plus activities, for example: transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty; and full and effective participation of relevant

⁶ The report of AWG-LCA 8 in Copenhagen is available at http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/3594.php?rec=j&preref=600005566#beg.

⁷ The report of the COP’s work on the basis of the AWG-LCA report is available at http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/3594.php?rec=j&preref=600005688#beg.

stakeholders, including, in particular, indigenous peoples and local communities. It requests SBSTA to undertake a work programme to identify land use, land-use change and forestry activities in developing countries and to develop modalities for various REDD-plus related activities. The draft decision requests developing countries to develop a national strategy or action plan; a national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level; and a robust and transparent national forest monitoring system, possibly including monitoring of safeguards (this text has brackets). According to the draft decision, REDD-plus activities are to be undertaken in phases, the final phase being results-based activities.

Unresolved issues include: if REDD-plus should be included as a NAMA; how broad REDD-plus should be (should it include other land use?) if sub-national REDD-plus activities will be acceptable; financing (fund- or market-based financing?); MRV, including MRV of financing; definitions of terms; and targets to reduce deforestation.

Although the AWG-LCA negotiations in Copenhagen were not concluded, COP 15 did adopt **one decision on REDD-plus**. Decision 4/CP.15 provides methodological guidance for REDD-plus, based on work undertaken by SBSTA in follow-up of decision 2/CP.13 (which was adopted in Bali in 2007).⁸ In decision 4/CP.15 the COP requests developing countries to for example: identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; identify activities that result in reduced emissions and increased removals, and stabilization of forest carbon stocks; use the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidance as a basis for estimating emissions; and establish robust and transparent forest monitoring systems. In the decision the COP encourages, as appropriate, the development of guidance for effective engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities in monitoring and reporting; The COP also recognized that in establishing forest reference emissions levels and forest reference levels developing country Parties should do so transparently taking into account historic data, and adjusting for national circumstances.

3.1 The Copenhagen Accord

The Copenhagen Accord⁹ is a political agreement, concluded outside the UNFCCC framework. It contains several points relevant to REDD-plus:

- Non-Annex I Parties are to implement mitigation actions, including ones submitted to the secretariat in a format set out in an appendix to the Copenhagen Accord. Some non-Annex I Parties have provided information on REDD-plus related activities to the secretariat.
- Recognition of the crucial role of REDD and the need to enhance removals by forests and agreement on the need to provide positive incentives through the immediate establishment of a mechanism including REDD-plus.

⁸ Available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf#page=11>.

⁹ Information about the Copenhagen Accord is available at <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>.

- Mention of substantial finance for REDD-plus in connection with reference to a collective commitment by developed countries to provide new and additional resources, including forestry and investments through international institutions, approaching USD 30 billion for the period 2010-12 with balanced allocation between adaptation and mitigation. This paragraph (paragraph 8) also includes a reference to mobilizing USD 100 billion a year by 2020.
- Establishment of a Copenhagen Green Climate Fund as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention to support mitigation activities in developing countries, including REDD-plus.

4. Africa's position on REDD-plus

4.1 Efforts to formulate a joint African position on the REDD-plus

This section highlights some key events related to the development of an African position on REDD-plus.

The expert section of the special session on climate change of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2008, reaffirmed a comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes to be applied at all levels. The broad fields of work that were recognised included 'Reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD): Including the development of market-based mechanisms to reward or provide incentives for forest conservation or the avoidance of deforestation and sustainable forest management practices'.

In May 2009 African Ministers of the Environment adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the African Process for Combating Climate Change.¹⁰ The aim was towards a shared vision on climate change in Copenhagen, highlighting the urgent need to support African countries in their efforts to address the reduction of emissions and recognising the role of African forests in the survival of communities, economies and the stabilisation of the climate. In the Declaration Ministers declared their resolve *inter alia*:

- To agree that the African common position forms the basis for negotiations by the African group during the negotiations on a new climate change regime and should take into account the priorities for Africa on sustainable development, poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- To encourage the establishment of a fund to reward or provide incentives for reducing emissions through sustainable land-management practices, including forest conservation, sustainable forest management, the avoidance of deforestation, afforestation and sustainable agriculture;

¹⁰ Available at http://www.unep.org/roa/Amcen/Amcen_Events/3rd_ss/Docs/nairobi-Declaration-2009.pdf.

- To integrate climate change adaptation measures into national and regional development plans, policies and strategies and, where appropriate with a view to ensuring adequate adaptation to climate change;
- To agree that climate change mitigation efforts and actions aimed at alleviating the consequences of deforestation and forest degradation should be considered in future positive incentive mechanisms for emission reduction, taking into account the role that African forested areas, in particular those of the Congo basin, play in regulating the global climate system;
- To agree that other mitigation measures being identified, such as additional measures to complement the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries, including afforestation and sustainable agriculture and land-use management, should be vigorous, realistic and flexible to ensure the effective participation of African countries, especially smallholder land users;
- To urge the secretariats of the Rio conventions to ensure that synergies between climate change and efforts to combat land degradation, desertification and biodiversity loss are optimized to take advantage of gains made through these actions, particularly in Africa; and
- To mandate the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to present Africa's common negotiating position on a comprehensive international climate change regime beyond 2012 in addition to the conceptual framework of African climate change programmes to the Executive Council of the African Union.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) – Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) Ministers conference that was held in Kinshasa (DRC) during the period 14 -15 September 2009 also played a significant role in development of the COMIFAC countries position . The conference was preceded by a meeting of the expert advisory committee. Countries participating in the conference workshops included: Cameroon; Congo; Gabon; the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Sao Tome and Principe and Chad, in addition to some sub-regional institutions and international organisations. The main objective of the meetings was to harmonise positions on REDD-plus and a financing mechanism.

The outcome of the meetings was a joint ECCAS-COMIFAC countries' position in the negotiations of a post-Kyoto climate regime. The position was based on the Bali Action Plan. In contrast to the position of the experts, who believed that more precise rules on REDD-plus should be developed first, Ministers called for the introduction of a REDD (plus) mechanism in the agreement to be negotiated in Copenhagen.

Another opportunity that helped inform the African position on REDD-plus was a **'Workshop on REDD at the Copenhagen Climate Talks and Beyond: Bridging the Gap between Negotiation and Action'**, held from 16-18 November 2009 in Nairobi. The workshop was supported by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Alternatives to Slash and Burn for the Tropical Forest Margins, World Agroforestry Centre (ASB-ICRAF). The workshop aimed to increase the forestry sector's

negotiator and stakeholder understanding of the key issues in the negotiations for an international REDD mechanism, in the context of the negotiations for a new international agreement on climate change; and to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned in REDD implementation.

The key messages from the workshop included:

- A holistic approach is needed that includes both REDD-plus and agriculture; all approaches for agriculture should be considered in the negotiations (sectoral, nationally appropriate mitigation actions [NAMAs], Clean Development Mechanism [CDM]);
- Methodologies and guidance need to be improved. The applicability of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines for REDD-plus should be explored. It is recommended that the IPCC develop a report on the capacity of 2006 guidelines to meet the needs of REDD-plus;
- Improve forest law enforcement and governance;
- Poverty reduction is the most important co-benefit, and biodiversity and ecosystem services should also be considered. There needs to be consideration of how to capture co-benefits in a way that does not create barriers to REDD-plus;
- Ensuring benefits go to local communities (local ownership/decision making) and improving governance can help to address permanence;
- A hybrid approach to financing is needed that includes funds and market mechanisms;
- Financing and support (markets and grants) for REDD-plus can take place within and outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- Success in REDD-plus depends on stringent emission reduction targets in developed countries (and perhaps separate REDD-plus commitments) and their willingness to pay;
- REDD-plus design will need to consider involvement of and benefits to indigenous people and local communities and how to include traditional knowledge; and
- Demonstration projects on REDD-plus implementation at the sub-national level are needed.¹¹

Other decisions, declarations and initiatives to promote and encourage Africa to have a common position on REDD-plus include the Declaration on Climate Change and Development in Africa adopted by the African Union Summit (Addis Ababa 2007) and Algiers Declaration on climate change in Africa, adopted by the African Conference of Ministers in charge of environment on climate change, Algiers, 20 November 2008.

The **Assembly of the African Union (AU)**, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 1-4 February 2009, directed the African Union Commission to lead the preparations for the African common position on climate change particularly for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen,

¹¹ See also http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2010/redd_nairobi_copenhagen_beyond.pdf.

Denmark. The assembly approved that Africa needed to be represented by one delegation, empowered to negotiate on behalf of all States. The assembly also approved the Algiers Declaration on climate change adopted in the form of the common African position to serve as the platform in the negotiation process until 2012, the year of expiry of the Kyoto protocol targets.¹²

4.2 African Position on REDD-plus in Copenhagen

REDD-plus was discussed in a series of meetings throughout the negotiation period (2009) within the African group and a common consensus was reached on the following issues:

- The objective of REDD-plus is to provide positive incentives for the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the stabilization of forest carbon stocks consistently with the sustainable development goals of each developing country;
- The scope of REDD-plus should be broad enough to accommodate the diverse national circumstances of all African countries and must include the following activities:
 - Reduction of emissions from deforestation;
 - Reduction of emissions from forest degradation;
 - Stabilization of forest cover and thereby forest carbon stocks;
 - Conservation and maintenance of forest carbon stocks through Sustainable Management of Forests (SMF); and
 - Enhancement of forest carbon stocks through afforestation, reforestation and SMF.
- The key principles that a REDD-plus mechanism must be based on are the following:
 - Voluntary participation of developing countries;
 - Accommodate the diverse national circumstances of the developing countries;
 - Consider the national sovereignty and the right to use forests to support livelihoods and national development;
 - Consistency with national sustainable development goals; and
 - Be subject to accessible, equitable, adequate, predictable and sustainable financing and technology support including support for capacity-building that is new and additional to existing development assistance.

¹² <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Decisions/decisions.htm>.

In addition:

- A REDD-plus mechanism must operate under the COP and be guided by and fully accountable to it;
 - There should be flexibility in the setting of reference levels to incentivize countries with high forest cover but low historical rates of deforestation and forest degradation; and
 - There should be a phased approach for REDD-plus implementation.
- The African Group does not agree with:
 - Setting of any target (for reduction of deforestation rate) that is expressed in numerical form to be achieved within a stipulated time/period; or
 - Any provision that requires countries to account for emissions taking place outside their national boundaries.

5. REDD-plus in Bonn

AWG-LCA 9 met in April 2010 in Bonn and invited its Chair to prepare a text before AWG-LCA 10 to facilitate negotiations among Parties.¹³ The main REDD-plus text remained the same in the new paper produced by the Chair at AWG-LCA 10.¹⁴ The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), which also met in June in Bonn, considered the Chair's oral report on ways to facilitate coordination of activities relating to decision 2/CP.13 and on an informal expert meeting on enhancing coordination of capacity-building activities related to use of the most recent IPCC guidelines and guidance. SBSTA requested the secretariat, subject to availability of supplementary resources, to undertake training and other activities related to the use of IPCC guidelines and guidance.¹⁵ In August in Bonn at AWG-LCA the REDD+ text was reopened where significant changes were proposed by Saudi Arabia and Bolivia.

6. REDD-plus in Tianjin

In Tianjin the drafting group was convened to work on REDD-plus as part of the Chair's text (FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/14, Chapter 1(para 52-53) including option 1 and 2 and Chapter 6 that also consisted of option one and two. Most of the time negotiators focused on what might be possible to achieve in Cancun. The Chair invited parties to move forward, especially Bolivia and Saudi Arabia who made new textual proposals.

¹³ See http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/3594.php?rec=j&preref=600005797#beg

¹⁴ See http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/ad_hoc_working_groups/lca/application/pdf/awg-lca_advance_draft_of_a_revised_text.pdf

¹⁵ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/sbsta/eng/102.pdf>

Discussion on REDD-plus in Tianjin failed to make any progress as both Saudi Arabia and Bolivia held to their previous position from Bonn.

7. REDD+ in Cancun

7.1 Negotiation and outcomes

This situation continued in Cancun where Saudi Arabia and Bolivia stuck to their positions on the REDD+ text. Accordingly no drafting was done and the text (containing option 1 and 2) remained as it was.

To resolve this problem discussion continued in Cancun as suggested by the Facilitator on issues and subjects (rather than specifying which text will be considered). Issues and subjects discussed included:

- REDD & NAMAS
- MRV & safeguards
- Drivers of deforestation
- Reference level
- National and sub national level (for implementation or accounting)
- Finance
- Environmental benefits
- Indigenous people rights

This helped to create a Party-driven REDD+ proposal that was put forward as one of Cancun outcomes. However, Parties held differing views on national and sub-national implementation, REDD+ & NAMAS, national reference levels, MRV & safeguards and REDD+ finance. Consequently, the Chair of the AWG-LCA released a new text on REDD+, based on Option 2 of the Copenhagen text where, the majority of parties' positions were largely captured. The REDD+ text was finalized after discussed in the informal ministerial consultations meetings. Evidently, great effort and political will in Cancun resulted in an agreed set of decisions, including on REDD+, where Parties launched a set of actions to conserve forests and reduce emission from deforestation in developing countries. The agreement provides guidance for all actors involved in REDD+ actions to conserve, slow & reverse deforestation and reduce human pressure on forests resources. The Cancun REDD+ text identifies and recognizes the following REDD+ issues:

- Activities
- phased approach
- Safeguards
- Planning systems
- Monitoring system
- Finance in the fast-start period up to 2012.

Despite the good progress in REDD+ field, definitions of some activities have not yet been agreed upon, such as forest degradation, conservation and sustainable forest management. Guidance for developing reference emission levels was also missed. Moreover, there was no consensus on financing phase three (3) of REDD+, as many developing countries opposed a market based approach for REDD+. Other unsolved issues include clarification of links between REDD+ phases and NAMAS. The REDD+ agreement is expected to increase supporting funding for REDD+ readiness during the fast-start period.

In Cancun outcomes SBSTA was mandated to:

- ❖ Identify drivers of deforestation and degradation
- ❖ Develop modalities for MRV of emissions by sources and removals by sinks
- ❖ Methodologies to estimate emissions and removals from such activities

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) was also requested to explore financing options for the full implementation of the results-based REDD+ actions

7.2 G77 and China group in Cancun

In Cancun the G77 and China group conducted many coordination meetings to reach a consensus on REDD+. Time was spent giving Bolivia and Saudi Arabia the opportunity to explain their proposals but no common position was formulated.

7.3 African group position in Cancun

The African group common position on most of REDD+ issues remained as it was in Copenhagen with emphasis on:

- The group opposed classifying REDD+ as a NAMA or integrating it into a low GHG emission strategy
- The group favoured accounting for REDD+ at the national level during the full implementation phase but having the option for sub-national accounting during the demonstration phase
- The group believed that a finance decision in Cancun should clarify how REDD+ would be financed (there was a divergence of views regarding if it should be market based or not)
- The group confirmed its common position to oppose setting a global target or goal for REDD+, as that would violate the voluntary nature of REDD+.

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