

Submission of the United States of America  
**Reducing Emissions and Enhancing Removals from Forests and Land Use**  
29 May 2009

*The United States welcomes the opportunity to provide an additional, explanatory submission—alongside the U.S. submission of May 5, 2009—regarding our views on a future framework for “REDD-plus”.*

Addressing land use, including deforestation, is essential to a climate solution. For some countries, it may be the most critical part of their commitments to transition to a low-carbon future. The United States is committed to creating a system that provides incentives for effective mitigation—that is cost efficient, environmentally robust, and produces results that endure over time. For this reason, the U.S. supports inclusion of enhanced national and international action on reducing emissions by sources and enhancing removals by sinks in the land use sector in an agreed outcome in Copenhagen.

Actions taken in the forest and land use sectors (referred to as “REDD-plus”) will have many characteristics in common with other types of mitigation actions—and therefore should be integrated into the broader mitigation framework, including provisions on “nationally appropriate mitigation actions”, institutional arrangements, and the means of implementation. At the same time, we recognize there are elements unique to REDD-plus that could be explicit in an agreed outcome at Copenhagen, including: clarification of the scope and purpose of REDD-plus; the use of a phased approach; development of guidance for REDD-plus strategies; identification of the need to develop MRV systems for land use; principles for developing reference levels for REDD-plus; further consideration of the economic, environmental and social impacts of REDD-plus; and recognition of other types of actions that relieve pressure on forests and land that results in greenhouse gas emissions.

It is our view that the Long-term Cooperative Agreement in Copenhagen should lay the foundation and framework on REDD-plus so that future sessions can develop more detailed rules, procedures, and modalities, particularly for a market-based instrument. At the same time, a SBSTA decision at COP-15 could provide Parties further guidance on technical issues—such as elements for a REDD-plus strategy, or minimum standards for market-based eligibility—that would allow Parties who wish to take early actions to begin without delay.

### **Purpose and Scope of REDD+**

*“REDD-plus refers to actions that reduce emissions by sources or increase removals by sinks in the land use sector in developing countries. The purpose of REDD-plus is to assist developing countries in achieving sustainable development and contributing to the objective in Article 2 of the Convention. It shall have as its ultimate goal comprehensive accounting of all sources and sinks from land use, while providing the flexibility for Parties to implement a staged approach beginning with those categories appropriate to national circumstances and capacities, with incentives for including additional land use categories commensurate with increased capacity, technologies, and methodologies.”<sup>1</sup>*

The United States supports a principle that approaching REDD-plus from a holistic “sustainable landscapes” approach is the best way to ensure that reductions in emissions, or increases in removals, are enduring over time. Our goal is to help developing countries move towards a long-term vision of productive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable landscapes that maintain and enhance

---

<sup>1</sup> Italics throughout document reference language from May 5, 2009 U.S. submission.

forests, and result in (1) socioeconomic development, (2) increased climate resiliency, and (3) reduced emissions and increased removals of greenhouse gases.

Comprehensive land use inventories and monitoring frameworks help to provide information that can improve forest and land management practices; they also best reflect "what the atmosphere sees". Ultimately, a comprehensive approach offers the greatest long-term incentives to protect and increase existing carbon stocks and reduce GHG emissions. It also minimizes leakage and double counting, and better accounts for changes between land-use types.

We recognize, however, the challenges associated with full terrestrial GHG accounting. For this reason, we view comprehensive accounting of all sources and sinks as the ultimate objective of REDD-plus, but support a staged process that allows developing countries to begin with accounting for a limited set of key categories, appropriate to national circumstances<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, REDD-plus should include both flexibility and incentives for developing countries to include additional land use categories as national capacities increase, and as technologies and methodologies to measure and monitor land use emissions progress.

### **REDD-plus strategies, financing and a phased approach**

*The REDD-plus framework shall allow for the evolution of national REDD-plus strategies, including: (1) self-financed actions; (2) actions eligible for capacity building, technical assistance and financial support; and (3) actions that result in emissions reductions or removals with sufficient integrity to become eligible for market-based approaches;*

**REDD-plus strategies:** Participation in REDD-plus can be identified as part of a country's nationally appropriate mitigation commitment or actions. In this case, a country would prepare a national REDD-plus strategy, within the context of a low carbon strategy. REDD-plus strategies will vary based on national circumstances, should be created within the context of low-carbon development strategies, and should elaborate, inter alia:

- A broad land use and sustainable forest management strategy.
- Needs related to building the technical and institutional capacity to measure and monitor relevant emissions and removals from land use
- Actions to strengthen land and natural resource-related governance, laws and their enforcement, such that REDD-plus strategies can be effectively implemented
- Identification of, and actions to, address the drivers of land use emissions
- Mechanisms to deliver resources for local action; and address the needs, interests, and participation of local and indigenous communities
- Sub-national, or national, "demonstration activities" and methodologies that relate sub-national activities to a national reference level

**Financing:** In addition to global benefits, such as climate change mitigation, sustainable management of natural systems should be consistent with sustainable development goals and bring multiple national benefits. Putting in place an appropriate policy framework to harness those benefits will provide the signals necessary to mobilize domestic resources and ensure the effective use of private investment,

---

<sup>2</sup> Appropriate categories could be identified by implementing a Tier 1 GHG inventory and identifying "key categories" per the IPCC guidelines.

which we believe is the source of sustainable financing in the long-term. In the short and medium-term, however, the U.S. recognizes that countries participating in REDD-plus may require financial and technical assistance. In this regard, the U.S. supports the use of a broad range of delivery systems, including market and non-market sources of funds.

***Non-market finance:*** Some actions identified in the REDD-plus strategies—particularly those related to a “readiness” or capacity building phase—will be accomplished with domestic resources and others may require external resources. Preparation of the strategy, as well as implementation, should be eligible for technical assistance and financial support. Once a country is prepared to take on a commitment and has reached an agreed upon level of rigor, it will become eligible to engage in a market-based instrument.

***Market finance:*** Market instruments for REDD-plus will require rigorous standards and agreed upon modalities and procedures. It will be extremely important to build confidence in real reductions and to ensure environmental integrity. To this end, we believe that a REDD-plus market-based instrument must address, inter alia, how to ensure reductions are additional, and account for reversals. We assume that countries participating in market finance will take on commitments, related to performance measured against an agreed upon reference level (see below for discussion on setting reference levels).

The World Bank, UN-REDD, and other “demonstration activities” at the national level have only just begun, and we believe that the development of standards, modalities, and procedures for a market-based instrument should be informed by the lessons learned from these activities.

### **Measuring, Reporting and Verifying Actions**

***The REDD-plus framework shall be consistent with overall approaches to measurement, reporting, and verification under the Agreement, recognizing the need for higher levels of MRV for market-based eligibility; it shall also provide for reference levels (taking into account historic data and other relevant factors) that adjust over time and are guided by a long-term pathway that results in a sustainable level of standing carbon stock within a reasonable time period.***

Ensuring mitigation actions are measureable, reportable, and verifiable (MRV) is critical to a future framework. It is our view that MRV of REDD-plus actions, where practicable, should fit within the broader framework for MRV. For GHG-based incentives, reference levels will need to be established and validated, taking into account national circumstances and capacities, and be guided by a long-term pathway. Market instruments will require setting rigorous standards in order to maintain confidence and ensure results are real and permanent.

***Non-market MRV:*** The majority of REDD-plus actions—particularly those that fall within the “readiness” or capacity building phase—should not require a MRV system separate to that built for the broader agreement. In this regard:

- Countries should put forward descriptions of actions—that fit within an identified REDD+ strategy—that can be measured, reported, and verified with a necessary degree of confidence; they should include expected outcomes and their relationship to a longer-term mitigation scenario.
- Support for those actions—whether in the form of technology, financing or capacity building—should also be measured, reported, and verified.

**Market-based MRV:** Market instruments will require a high level of stringency in order to maintain confidence and ensure results are real, additional, verifiable, and account for reversals. In addition, there are some unique characteristics of REDD-plus that should be elaborated in the agreement, particularly as regards a market-based instrument. At a minimum, the US recommends countries who want to participate in a market-based system should:

- Present a detailed description of steps envisaged, including policies and measures, estimates for the expected effect of those actions on emissions and removals, and their relationship to a longer-term mitigation scenario. These actions would be measured, reported, and reviewed with a necessary degree of confidence
- Complete a Tier 1 land use inventory using the most recent IPCC guidelines, and identify key categories for their country.
- Identify which categories, and pools, it will include in its baseline and accounting framework
- Complete estimates for emissions and removals within an acceptable range of uncertainty
- Have spatially explicit data (using guidance on the consistent representation of land in the IPCC Good Practice Guidance for LULUCF)
- Ensure that reductions in emissions or increases in removals are new and additional, and account for reversals;
- Establish clear incentives for countries to continuously improve their national monitoring and reporting systems

**Reference levels:** For those REDD-plus actions that receive quantified GHG-based incentives—through any type of financing, including non-market, market-linked, or market-based instruments—a reference level will need to be determined. The setting of reference levels has profound implications for climate effectiveness. For example, deforestation is highly complex and drivers vary significantly by region and are subject to a range of unpredictable variables. It is extremely difficult to accurately predict long-term future deforestation rates. For this reason, we believe the best starting point for creating reference levels is the use of historic data. Additional information should also be considered, including but not limited to:

- Some countries have higher respective capacities, and taking actions—for example, unilateral actions to slow deforestation or restore degraded lands—may be part of their national commitment.
- We also believe reference levels should adjust over time, and be guided by a long-term goal that identifies an emissions/removals pathway and results in a sustainable level of standing carbon stock within a reasonable time period.

### **Economic, Environmental, and Social Impacts**

*The REDD-plus framework shall provide for further consideration of the economic, environmental, and social impacts of REDD-plus, including with respect to promoting biodiversity, the interests of relevant local and indigenous communities, and other benefits and risks of REDD-plus; and*

A unique element in managing terrestrial carbon is the close linkage to issues unrelated to GHG emissions and removals, but which are affected by land management decisions. These include, inter alia: biodiversity, other ecosystem services, and livelihoods including local communities and indigenous peoples. In this regard, we recognize that:

- Countries have existing commitments under other international agreements related to forests and/or other land uses and associated “co-benefits”; national implementation actions taken as part of REDD-plus should be consistent with those commitments.
- Effective implementation and enduring results will only be achieved with an open and transparent process, including broad stakeholder participation and taking into account the needs and interests of local communities, forest dwellers, and indigenous peoples.

We therefore suggest that future sessions elaborate modalities and procedures to promote the benefits of REDD-plus and provide adequate safeguards against risks.

### **Other Actions**

*The REDD-plus framework shall encourage all Parties to find appropriate ways to relieve the pressure on forests and land that result in greenhouse gas emissions.*

It is the United States’ view that to solve the problem of emissions from land use, in particular deforestation, we must not only create incentives for countries to slow, and eventually stop, net deforestation. We also need to consider the dynamic links between population growth, consumption patterns, demands for food, fiber, and fuel, and land use decisions. If we fail to address these complex interactions, pressures to expand the agricultural frontier and other demands on forests will continue to increase over time. For this reason, the United States believes that a broad set of policy actions by **all** parties should also comprise part of our collective efforts to reduce emissions from land use, including deforestation.

In this regard, we invite countries to collaborate in developing recommendations on other actions Parties can take as part of their Commitments, per Article 4.1(b) and (c) of the Framework Convention.