JAPAN's submission on how to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and on robust and transparent national forest monitoring systems

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In order to make an effective framework on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD-plus), it is necessary to identify and to effectively address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, taking into account of national circumstances.   In addition, with assuming on-going and future measures and actions on REDD-plus implementation, it is essential to develop robust and practical methodologies including forest monitoring system, and MRV systems, and to develop and strengthen practical domestic structure in which social and environment safeguards are incorporated.   In this regard, it is important that the SBSTA steadily move forward with its scientific and technological work, especially the work identified in paragraph 75 of Decision 1/CP.16.   Therefore, Japan welcomes this opportunity to submit views on methodological issues, especially on how to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and on robust and transparent national forest monitoring systems, in line with conclusion of SBSTA 35, paragraph 5 in FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.25.

1. How to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

As there are various drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, either direct or indirect, such as illegal logging, forest fire, and expansion of agricultural land etc., it is important to establish cross-sectoral system which includes identifying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, dialogue and coordination between sectors, and to implement the system in transparent manner. Such initiatives may include establishment of land use management system, strengthening structure for land use management by local government, administrative coordination between non-forest sector and forest sector in forest exploitation issue, and cooperation with international initiative on forest conservation and poverty alleviation.   These contribute to strengthen forest governance if appropriately designed in collaboration with forest related policies and programmes.

In accordance with paragraph 72 to Decision 1/CP.16, it is necessary to identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and to incorporate measures to address them in a national strategy or action plan and to implement these measures.   In phases of readiness and demonstration, capacity for measures to address drivers should be developed.   In demonstration and full implementation phases, the performance of measures to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation should be monitored and evaluated by the government in collaboration with intergovernmental organizations.   In full implementation phase, full accessibility to information related to drivers should be secured to promote results-based actions.

Basic information related with drivers is important when examining measures to drivers.   In addition to estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from forests in a developing country and the change over time, national forest monitoring system is expected to provide basic information for considering measures to drivers, including safeguards referred to in paragraph 2 in Annex I to Decision 1/CP.16 and forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels, and information on measures to drivers, structure of these implementation and monitoring results on the progress of measures.

Identification of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation significantly contributes to develop concrete and effective REDD-plus actions, such as measures to illegal logging and forest fire management.   In addition, it leads to promote effective implementation of national forest programme and consideration of indigenous people and local communities.   Consideration of indigenous people and local communities enhances forest management that suits that region, and thus is effective to avoid reversals and displacement referred to in paragraph 2(f) and (g) in Annex I to Decision 1/CP.16.

Developing and enhancing capacity in each country is expected through sharing up-to-date knowledge and good practices on identification of deforestation and forest degradation, safeguard consideration and forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels.

2. Robust and transparent national forest monitoring systems

Modality of national forest monitoring system (hereafter NFMS: National Forest Monitoring System) referred to in paragraph 71(c) to Decision 1/CP.16 should include purpose, characteristics and design, reporting and review and others as scientific and technical elements, as follows:

(a) Purpose and importance of NFMS

NFMS provides basic information to comprehensively assess various effects by performance of REDD-plus activities.   In addition to emission reduction, it is inevitably important to promote sustainable forest management, such as deploying multiple functions of forests.   From this point of view, NFMS should contain information on drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, afforestation and reforestation, and safeguards referred to in paragraph 2 in Annex I to Decision 1/CP.16, in addition to estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from forests in a developing country and their changes over time.   This contributes to strengthen forest governance including law enforcement and to further consider counter measures to deforestation and forest degradation, and to promote effective implementation of REDD-plus, further on, sustainable forest management including deploying multiple functions of forests.

(b) Characteristics and design of NFMS

NFMS is the system to monitor results-based actions as referred to in footnote 8 to paragraph 77 to Decision 1/CP.16, in consistent subnational with national system, and it provides estimation of anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes, along with the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines.   It should provide scientifically reliable estimation that is transparent, complete, consistent over time, comparable and reviewable and allows assessment of uncertainty and quality assurance and control. In addition, from the view point that NFMS supports MRV system, NFMS needs to be consistent with MRV system.

As referred to in paragraph 70(c), it is required to use a combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches for estimation.   Continuous and repeated on-the-ground survey supported by the rational survey design and reliable structure of the implementation should placed as an important element to monitor dynamics of forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest

carbon stocks.   According to national circumstance, some parts of forest monitoring may be implementable with participation by local people if it is practical and is able to maintain scientific reliability.   It is expected to disseminate positive influences to REDD-plus activities as this participatory approach may contribute to deepen understanding on forest conservation and sustainable forest management by local communities and to build corporative relationship between government and local communities.

As mentioned above, information related with safeguards including forest governance should be included in NFMS.   The information may include the status of forest laws and policies, coordination mechanisms with other land sector such as agriculture and with indigenous peoples and local communities, and system on land tenure and ownership.

Application of remote sensing technology for forest monitoring should be further considered by the IPCC as existing IPCC guidance and guidelines do not cover updated and adequate information on the technology.

It is also important to effectively use existing information including use of forest inventory system, and to take into account of operation of NFMS.

(c) Reporting and review

Developing countries should internationally report information on national forest monitoring system (e.g. forest inventory, framework of forest monitoring system, operation structure, resources, progress of development, capacity building efforts and safeguards) through national communications, biennial update report and supplemental report on REDD-plus.   In addition, the report should be internationally reviewed by experts.

(d) Others

NFMS should be developed, taking into account of national circumstances and capacities, and be continuously improved to make more reliable system by integrating updated knowledge.   Especially, development and enhancement of capacity in each country are expected through sharing up-to-date knowledge and good practices on forest monitoring methodologies.   In addition, future technical development and accumulation of knowledge on remote sensing technology would make monitoring more useful and reliable.

For effective implementation of activities referred to in paragraph 71 to Decision 1/CP.16, NFMS should be developed with consideration and development of forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels and systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected.   In addition, it should be implemented in line with frequency of update of forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels and timing of submitting biennial update report.

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