



Submission of the SADC Secretariat on methodological guidance for activities relating to 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

September 2011

The Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) welcomes the opportunity to share its views on methodological guidance for activities relating to REDD+.

SADC Secretariat is supporting its Member States to tap into benefits from reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). To this end, SADC has agreed on a comprehensive programme to support Member States in their efforts to combat climate change and achieve their development goals through reduced emissions in the forestry sector.

The 15th Conference of Parties of UNFCCC adopted a decision on “Methodological guidance for activities relating to 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”. At COP16 in Cancun, Parties agreed to continue their consideration of the draft text for a decision on REDD-plus and the necessary provisions for the implementation of activities relating to REDD-plus.

Definition of the scale of REDD-plus project activities to allow REDD-plus project to be implemented along natural ecosystems:

The SADC believes that the Reference Emission Levels (RELs) and Reference Levels (RLs) are cost effectively implemented when the scale of such projects is allowed to traverse national boundaries to accommodate the fact ecosystems do not respect national boundaries. In this way the REDD-plus activities will also be sensitive to conservation of both flora and fauna species that reside within the transboundary project area.

SADC also believes that allowing the scale to traverse many countries would minimize transaction costs, as resources including institutional capacities, would be shared between countries. In addition, implementation of REDD-plus at the ecosystem level will ensure that the ecosystem is considered as a whole and as a result the risk associated with leakage will be minimized. Further this would also assist in including small forest areas in countries which themselves would not be able to set up an individual REDD mechanism.

Key principles for RELs and RLs

The COP decisions call on Parties to establish RELs and RLs. In implementing REDD-plus at an ecosystem scale and therefore beyond national boundaries, SADC proposes that the development of methodological guidelines for the definition and the assessment of the RELs and RLs should be at ecosystem/project level and not just at national and sub-national levels. SADC believes that key principles for implementing REDD-plus on *Environmental integrity; Accuracy; Comprehensiveness; Transparency; Comparability; Consistency* and *Feasibility* will be enhanced by implementing REDD-plus using an ecosystem approach and thus allowing REDD-plus projects, where countries wish to.

SADC also believes that in order to participate in and/or implement any future REDD-plus activities, many developing countries will require capacity building, technical assistance and financial support for a number of enabling activities. We recognise and wish to apply the existing framework within and across the regional economic groups to contribute to a successful implementation of REDD-plus. These include, for example, putting in place, at a regional or multi-country level, the necessary institutions and strengthening of national monitoring systems to improve their data collection systems, and their estimation and reporting of emissions. In this way the REDD-plus project activities would also acknowledge the importance of protecting forests and their sustainable use for biodiversity conservation, mitigation of climate change and combating desertification and land degradation.

Monitoring, Reporting and Verification of the effectiveness of REDD-plus project activities:

This approach recognizes the need for REDD countries to share the costs of their own emission reductions/removals in a manner that is consistent with their respective capabilities and with the national benefits associated with those reductions/removals.

The Marrakech Accords' definition offers flexibility for countries that are designing a monitoring plan because the use of remote sensing data allows the application of different thresholds for minimum tree crown cover and area.

SADC notes that Parties who wish to participate in REDD must establish a system of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of Greenhouse Gas (GHGs) emissions, including GHGs from deforestation, sustainable forest management and forest degradation. To facilitate this, SADC will work through its Member States to establish a comprehensive regional standard for monitoring; measuring; reporting and verification.

Implementation of the REDD-plus project activities at ecosystem level will enhance a regional and global programme for monitoring deforestation and forest degradation; enhancement of conservation through sustainable management of forests and improvement of forest carbon stocks. Further, it will complement, facilitate and enhance the implementation of existing regional policies and protocols on Forestry, Wildlife Management and Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) for management of biological diversity.

To enable Member States to benefit from REDD+ potential, the SADC Secretariat supports the idea of a common regional framework on how to implement REDD+ on similar forest ecosystems, including those whose distributions straddle political boundaries. This will contribute to strengthening capacities in the Member States to design REDD+ policies and programmes while at the same time providing a framework for strategic cooperation among SADC Member States on issues of regional interest.

SADC believes that a regional REDD+ programme based on a common framework will enable Member States to address issues of illegal trade in forest products and the major issue of 'leakage' where forest protection or sustainable forest management in one country, may in response lead to illegal activity or unsustainable practices exported elsewhere. A regional REDD+ approach also provides an opportunity for countries to work together on Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation of forest stocks.

SADC calls for the inclusion of a regional or multi-country dimension in issues related to REDD+, in particular with respect to modalities related to forest reference levels, forest reference emission levels and MRV, and suggests that the issue of REDD+ on a regional level be part of the meeting of technical experts as stated in the L14 document (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L14) to be held before SBSTA 35.