CAN-International submission on methodological guidance for activities relating to REDD+

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The Climate Action Network International (CAN-International) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations, with 700 member organisations in over 90 countries, working together to address the climate crisis.

The Climate Action Network (CAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the work of SBSTA by giving our views on the issues identified by SBSTA at its thirty-fourth session, recorded in document FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.14.

This submission is in three main parts, corresponding to the issues identified by SBSTA:

1. Guidance on a system for providing information on how safeguards referred to in appendix I to decision 1/CP.16 are addressed and respected;
2. Guidance on modalities relating to forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels;
3. Guidance on modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying as referred to in appendix II to decision 1/CP.16.

In addition, there is a short section on forest definitions which might be considered as part of either the first or third sections.

For REDD+ to be successful in the long-term five basic questions need to be answered in a positive manner.

- Is REDD+ demonstrably contributing to significant and permanent greenhouse gas emission reductions with national goals working toward a global objective?
- Is REDD+ maintaining and/or enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services?
- Is REDD+ contributing to livelihoods and to sustainable and equitable development by addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation?
- Is REDD+ recognizing and respecting and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and is it upon full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, including Free, Prior, & Informed Consent for actions affecting rights to lands, territories and resources?
- Is REDD+ mobilizing immediate, adequate and predictable resources for action in an equitable, transparent, participatory and coordinated manner?

While question 5 needs to be urgently addressed in the next session under the AWG-LCA and COP17 we encourage SBSTA to use the first 4 questions as a basis for the development of guidance for the COP.

For any further information regarding this submission, please contact one of the co-chairs of the CAN Working Group on REDD+:

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1. Guidance on a system for providing information on how safeguards referred to in appendix I to decision 1/CP.16 are addressed and respected

At its 34th session, the SBSTA considered views on methodological guidance for REDD+ activities, including views relating to the development by REDD+ countries of a system to provide information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected. The development of this methodological guidance is one priority during 2011. SBSTA aims to complete this work at its 35th session and report on progress made to COP17, meeting in Durban in November/December 2011, including any recommendations for draft decisions. The SBSTA should endeavour to meet this timeframe in order to achieve the maximum effectiveness of REDD+ and inform capacity building efforts as Parties look to develop their own information systems.

This safeguards information system will significantly improve the overall implementation and effectiveness of REDD+ by encouraging learning from experience. Information sharing between REDD+ countries provides an opportunity for countries to align and coordinate their existing systems and fill gaps where necessary. Information sharing, including sharing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected, will also build confidence amongst REDD+ countries that benefits and burdens are being shared equitably, as well as building confidence and trust with donors, thereby increasing the ability of REDD+ countries to leverage financial support.

This section of the submission sets out guidance for what such a system should look like, addressing each of the following elements:

(1) Characteristics of this system;

(2) Its design; and

(3) The provision of information;

This submission is based upon practical experiences and lessons learned on the ground, and drawn from many other (national and international) initiatives. This submission also recognises that the application of the guidance will differ from country to country depending upon national circumstances.

An information system is understood to be the set of institutions and processes through which information is collected, verified, assessed, published and fed back into relevant institutions. Guidance, therefore, must address how relevant information is collected, its quality assured, and then published. It would be helpful to frame discussions in terms of: *what* information to provide; *how* to provide that information; and *who* should be involved in providing and assessing that information.

As requested by the Chair of the SBSTA at its 34th session[1], this submission also addresses, where relevant, any potential barriers to providing information on addressing and respecting the safeguards and other relevant issues.

Key elements of the Cancun Agreement relevant to the Safeguards Information System

The decisions under the UNFCCC include four key elements that form the basis of the Safeguards Information System (SIS).

System: Paragraph 71(d) of the Cancun Agreement requests developing countries undertaking REDD+ actions to develop *a system* for providing information on the safeguards. The intent is to ensure information is not merely provided on an ad-hoc basis. The system has to build on a defined structure that will enable the regular provision of information. As in other UNFCCC reporting processes, the information should be provided in a common reporting format and according to common guidance on the indicators to be employed, although the particular indicators may vary from country to country.

[1] In the draft Conclusions proposed by the Chair (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.14).

Addressed and Respected: Paragraph 71(d) of the Cancun Agreement requires the information provided to demonstrate how the safeguards are being *addressed* and *respected* throughout the implementation of the REDD+ activities, while paragraph 69 affirms that REDD+ activities should be carried out *in accordance with* the safeguards. The intent of this agreed language is to ensure the safeguards will be implemented and will continue to be respected throughout. Thus the SIS should describe actions taken to address the safeguards as well as information on the outcome of these actions – i.e. the extent to which the safeguards are continuously being adhered to in practice.

Support: Paragraph 69 and paragraph 2 of Appendix I to the Cancun Agreement provide that the safeguards should be promoted and *supported*. Further, paragraph 71 provides that support should be adequate and predictable. The intent of these provisions is to ensure developed countries provide adequate and predictable support for REDD+ actions, including support for the implementation of the safeguards and the SIS. In this context, it should be noted that support provided through the Green Climate Fund will also be subject to specific environmental and social safeguards[2]. There should be consistency between these safeguards to ensure support for REDD+ activities provided through the Green Climate Fund also promote and support the REDD+ safeguards.

Participation: Paragraph 72 requests developing country parties to ensure *the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders* when addressing the safeguards. This includes participation in the SIS. Decision 4/CP.15 also recognises the need for full and effective engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities in monitoring and reporting of activities.

Guidance on the Safeguards Information System

1.1. Characteristics of the System

An initial step in the SBSTA process should be to consider broad, over-arching characteristics that can be further developed and made operational in the course of the process. Drawing on well established core objectives for non-Annex I National Communications[3] and IPCC Good Practice Guidance, ***safeguards information should be provided in a transparent, consistent, comparable, complete and accurate way.***

Further, in accordance with the Cancun Decision and Decision 4/CP.15, all aspects of the information system (i.e. provision, assessment and publication of the information) ***should be participatory in nature.***

The following elaborates what should be the core characteristics of the SIS:

Transparency: Information should be collected and provided in a transparent manner. To help identify gaps, assist with the on-going development of improved methodologies and enable multi-stakeholder participation, information should be made publicly available and easily accessible to local, national and international stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities. Information should be made available through a common international structure linked to existing or new structures being developed as part of the broader MRV framework under the UNFCCC.

Consistency: Information should be provided in a way that is consistent over time; to enable tracking of the on-going application of the safeguards.

Comparability: Information provided should be comparable. It should be provided regularly through *an agreed common framework*. Parties should adopt generic common guidance on the indicators to be used (although the precise indicators used in each country may depend upon national circumstances).

[2] Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix III, para. 1 (h).
[3] Decision 17/CP.8.

Completeness: The information provided should be complete and comprehensive covering actions taken to address all safeguards, the outcomes of these actions and how the safeguards are being respected to ensure consistency with the Cancun Agreement. The SIS should include information about each of the safeguards and how they are being addressed and respected at all levels of decision-making and how that information is being fed into an international reporting system.

Accuracy: In order to ensure the information is accurate and reliable and the system has integrity, the SIS should include independent verification and assessment of the information at national level, with stakeholder participation in the process. To improve the reliability of the information and quality of the reporting, information should be collected from a range of sources including indigenous peoples and local communities, academic institutions, independent experts, private sector, dispute resolution mechanisms and existing processes.

Participation: The system should be designed in a way that ensures full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, and considering gender equity, as well as non-governmental organisations and experts. This could potentially link to the establishment of conflict resolution mechanisms at various levels. All relevant stakeholders should input throughout the process, including when determining the type of information to be collected, relevant indicators, and the methodology for collecting it. The SIS should also include domestic multi-stakeholder review and analysis of how the safeguards are being respected. This review and analysis should be undertaken by all relevant stakeholders, including by indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as by experts and the scientific community, to ensure the completeness, accuracy and reliability of the information, and build confidence in the system.

1.2. The design of the Safeguards Information System

The design of the national information system may vary from country to country depending upon national capacities and circumstances. To ensure consistency between these systems, and to ensure that despite any differences in design the system still possesses the characteristics referred to above, it is necessary that they start with the same guidelines and principles, and guidance on a common set of criteria or indicators..

1. The information system should be harmonised with other related monitoring systems, so that the information provided meets the needs of all relevant stakeholders;
2. There should be full and effective participation of Stakeholders including indigenous peoples and local communities in the design of the national information system, determining the type of information to be collected and the relevant indicators to use;
3. The system should incorporate feedback of information into relevant institutions;
4. The system should be designed so that the quality of the data collected is constantly being improved; and
5. The system should include a process for independent verification and review of the information.

The information system should harmonise with other related monitoring systems to ensure it serves the needs of all relevant stakeholders

The information provided should serve the needs of a broad array of stakeholders, including national and international stakeholders. To ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the national information system should cater to all these information needs in an integrated and coordinated way and be harmonised with reporting at the international level. This can be achieved by building the information system on existing national and international monitoring systems, so that it complements or is consistent with the objectives of the Party's national forest programme and relevant international conventions and agreements.

Build on existing national monitoring systems

The UNFCCC is not the only mechanism by which information concerning REDD+ safeguards and finance is being published. Much of the same type information to be provided under Paragraph 71(d) of the Cancun Agreement is already being published in other contexts. With cost effectiveness and practicality in mind, the SIS should draw on and build on these existing data sets and processes to avoid duplicating efforts. The extensive national monitoring systems should then report, using a common reporting format and according to common guidance on criteria and indicators, to the UNFCCC system.

Experiences and lessons learned from those processes should be considered by SBSTA. Examples include several human rights instruments that already incorporate monitoring and reporting obligations. National forest inventories are also increasingly incorporating biodiversity and socio-economic aspects and monitoring systems are being developed under Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade ("FLEGT") agreements with the European Union. In addition, FLEGT incorporates means for verification to establish the credibility of the information provided. The methodology is not complicated. Building on the existing institutions responsible for administering these different monitoring systems, ensures consistency in the data collection process, increases transparency and the reliability of the data, as well as reducing costs.

Systems are also being developed under other REDD+ programmes, such as the Word Bank managed Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, which asks Parties to design an integrated monitoring system addressing governance and the social and environmental benefits. These monitoring systems should be integrated into the system developed under paragraph 71(d), which must be robust enough to handle the various data needs so that the various systems can draw information on the REDD+ safeguards from the one place.

Adapting or drawing on these existing methodologies and systems for collecting and publishing information on environmental, social and governance issues will ensure the system for providing information on the REDD+ safeguards is developed in an efficient and cost effective way, taking advantage of existing data and institutions.

Using a participatory approach to determine the type of information to be collected

A first step in designing the national information system should be to carry out an assessment to identify the issues on which information should be provided. To improve efficiency and keep costs down, the system should prioritise the information to be provided, tailored to the specific national REDD+ context. To ensure comparability among countries, however, information would need to be reported in a common reporting format and according to common guidance agreed by the UNFCCC.

According to Paragraph 72 of the Cancun Agreement, full and effective participation must be ensured both when planning and at the stage of implementation of REDD+ actions. Therefore, the assessment should be participatory, involving all relevant stakeholders, to identify and prioritise the areas on which information is most needed, and to ensure any indicators selected are aligned with the interests of the stakeholders.[4] Stakeholder participation ensures the information collected (including the selection of relevant indicators) is credible and useful in the context of the particular REDD+ country.

Capacity building of stakeholders

Capacity building will be needed to ensure all stakeholders are able to participate fully and effectively in planning processes as well as implementation. Without capacity to participate, the quality and reliability of the information provided by stakeholders will be severely compromised.

4 The SBSTA should take note of the UN-REDD Programme's Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+ which are inclusive, participatory and country-specific in developing relevant governance indicators.

The system should incorporate feedback of information into relevant institutions

The SIS should be designed to incorporate an element of feedback of information so as to facilitate continual improvement of REDD+ as it is implemented through each phase. This will ensure confidence is maintained over time.

The system should be designed to constantly improve the quality of the data collected

In addition to carrying out, at the earliest possible stage, an initial participatory assessment to identify the issues on which information should be provided, it will also be necessary to carry out further assessments on a regular basis to ensure the system is always up to date, and that the information being collected is relevant. This will ensure constant improvements in the information being collected and the quality of the data collection.

It should be noted that implementation of the safeguards (which should apply at all levels of the decision making process) is likely to generate a positive feedback loop, in which the implementation of one safeguard (e.g. stakeholder participation) is likely to have a positive impact on the implementation of others (e.g. building transparency and effective governance structures). Consequently what issues remain relevant, and their priority, will change over time, particularly as the country moves through the REDD+ phases. This means it is necessary to undertake participatory assessments on a regular basis to identify and reprioritise the issues on which information should be provided over time, while ensuring consistency.

Regular participatory assessments will also help improve the national information system by identifying information gaps and helping to develop tools to improve collection. Further, gathering information across different levels of government will assist with identification of inconsistencies, for example between national and local government.

Stakeholder participation in collecting information

The quality of the information collected will be improved if all stakeholders are able to provide input directly into it. Involving stakeholders, particularly indigenous peoples and local communities, in the collection of information is essential for building credibility. This could involve processes such as independent monitoring and ground truthing. Not only would this build confidence in the system but also has the potential to provide employment and alleviate poverty.

Collecting information from a variety of stakeholders, in different locations, independently verified and reviewed by a multi-stakeholder body will carry greater legitimacy in the process in the eyes of citizens of the REDD+ countries, as well as international donors.

Independent advocate to act as a buffer

Experience on the ground has revealed examples of reluctance among many local communities to report illegal practices for fear of reprisals. In this case, at least until trust has been established, it may be necessary to establish an independent body to act as a buffer between those providing the information and the government. This body can collect, review and verify information, both improving the robustness of the information and providing the "whistleblower" with anonymity. A similar mechanism is recommended to protect whistleblowers working within the government and private sector companies engaged in REDD+ implementation.

Clearly defining the roles of each actor

The roles, mandates and responsibilities of each of the actors providing information need to be clearly laid in the governing statutes establishing the national information system and in the government arrangements for multi-stakeholder participation. Clear roles and responsibilities help ensure effectiveness and transparency of the information system, as well as encouraging trust between stakeholders.

Ground truthing

Information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected should include not only information on what laws are in place but also how they are being implemented on the ground. Field-based collection of data is an important tool to test whether practice on the ground is consistent with policy as written down on paper. Field-based data can be collected from case studies and relevant sample plots. Ground-truthing in this way also improves the reliability of the information by allowing for the reconciliation of data collected from a range of sources and via a range of methods.

Systems based on the common guidance on indicators along with nationally appropriate indicators combined with field-based data collection, analysis and reporting are not necessarily costly. Ground-truthing can involve a number of different techniques depending upon the particular information being collected. For example, perception surveys conducted in local communities can be used in relation to collecting information on the level of local community participation. These do not need to be complex or expensive to implement. Similarly, other ground-truthing activities can be cost-effective, for example employing local communities in the field with simple training and use of low-cost technology such as GPS devices and mobile phones to provide information on biodiversity (e.g. sightings of particular key species), on forest management, illegal logging and other activities taking place in the forest.

Independent monitoring of REDD+

Another tool the Parties should consider, to improve the quality and credibility of the information provided on implementation of the REDD+ safeguards, is to use an independent monitor. The independent monitor could also act as the "buffer" between government and local communities as referred to above.

Independent monitoring is a formalised process in which an independent and credible third party, free from vested interests enters into a contractual relationship with the relevant government agency that gives the monitor an official mandate. The contractual terms should include giving the monitor unhindered access to all relevant official information and to relevant forest locations. The credibility of the process is improved further if the monitor's report is subject to peer review and validation by a multi-stakeholder body. The monitor should, however, retain the right to publish any information collected, although if the multistakeholder body has a different interpretation of the evidence, these views can be included too.

There is concern that Governments may not be able to monitor all aspects of their own performance in promoting and supporting the safeguards with sufficient objectivity. Furthermore, the majority of potential REDD+ countries have not yet established a system of internal checks and balances capable of delivering transparency, participation and accountability. Consequently, many other REDD+ multilateral initiatives, including the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the UN-REDD Programme and the Forest Investment Fund, all acknowledge the need for independent monitoring to constitute a core component of any REDD+ mechanism. Guidance is now needed from the SBSTA to design and implement national systems for independent monitoring to provide the system with the credibility it deserves.

Independent verification and review of the information

The quality of the information will also be enhanced if there is a process established through which the information is independently reviewed and verified. A multi-stakeholder review body established at national level can achieve this. This multi-stakeholder body should analyse the information to reconcile data received from various sources (including from other government agencies, the private sector and local people on the ground). This process should elucidate any inaccuracies in the data collected and include detailed follow-up and verification of discrepancies to enhance the reliability of the information. This process must, however, be mindful of the need to provide up to date information, and should not inhibit or delay publication.

To ensure independence, the multi-stakeholder review process should be provided with independent, reliable and sustained funding to avoid financial pressure being brought to bear on the process.

1.3. Guidance on the provision of information

Guidance relating to the Safeguards Information System should also address *what* information to provide and *how* to provide that information.

1. Information must be presented in a way that makes it useful;
2. Information must be presented regularly and be kept up to date;
3. The information provided must allow for tracking over time how the safeguards have been implemented; and
4. The information should be made publicly available through a common international structure.

What information should be published?

The SIS is required to include information on how the safeguards are being *addressed and respected* and should include the following:

(i) An initial assessment of how the safeguards are addressed and respected, that then allows for an ongoing assessment of progress over time;

(ii) For each of the safeguards, information on the action(s) undertaken to address that safeguard is being addressed and respected throughout all REDD related activities, along with data on the results of that action (i.e. the extent to which the safeguard is respected);

(iii) information to assess the reliability of that data, such as:

(a) the source of the information, such as whether it is data collected remotely or through field research/ground-truthing;

(b) the identity of the source, at least in general terms, such as whether the information has been provided by local communities, indigenous peoples, international NGOs, the private sector, etc.

(c) any steps taken to verify the information or ensure its accuracy, including any independent audit or analysis undertaken;

(iv) any response to the information, including steps taken by the REDD+ country to improve implementation;

(v) information that allows for an assessment of how the safeguards have been implemented over time; and

(vi) where the information prioritises certain aspects, or uses indicators, the process used to arrive at this priority list and/or choice of indicators.

The Cancun Agreement also urges developed country parties to support implementation of the safeguards.

Therefore, the level and purpose of finance provided specifically to support implementation of the safeguards should also be published. This also helps to ensure transparency in the financial flows provided to support implementation of the safeguards.

Information must be presented in way that makes it useful

The information published needs to be presented in a manner that allows stakeholders to properly analyse, synthesise and interpret the data. In particular, effective participation by stakeholders requires the information to be provided in a manner that is easy to access and use, including being made available in local languages.

Information must be up to date

The credibility of the information depends on it being kept up to date. The safeguards provide for the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders. Effective participation requires stakeholders have access to up-to-date information so that they can participate in an informed manner. The Amazon fund website, for example, publishes progress on project implementation at least every 6 months.

In addition to official updates provided by the government, mechanisms should be established to allow stakeholders, particularly local communities living in and around the forests, to update the information on a continuous basis.

The information provided should track progress over time

The Cancun Agreement requires the information provided not just be a "snap-shot" of how the safeguards are being implemented at any particular moment in time, but must show how the safeguards are being addressed and respected. This means the information provided should allow for tracking progress over time. For example, data could be provided on the number of civil society complaints lodged against a particular REDD+ activity. This data should include updating information on how those complaints have been dealt with and resolved over time. It should also be possible to assess whether the number of civil society complaints have risen or fallen over time.

The information provided through the SIS should consider implementation of the safeguards across all three phases of REDD+, incorporating milestones for determining progress, which would identify gaps and needs for further support and capacity building. This information can inform the provision of finance and enable progression from one phase to the next. This will help to ensure that measures for implementation of the safeguards are prioritised.

The information provided should allow for an assessment of a country's performance in implementing the safeguards

The Cancun Agreement provides that the safeguards are to be promoted and *supported.* That support may take many forms, but investors will need to assess the cost-effectiveness of their support, so as to guide future investment decisions.

To facilitate this, the information provided through the SIS should be presented in a manner that allows for an external assessment[5] of how effective that support has been in achieving the objective of ensuring REDD+ activities are carried out in accordance with the REDD+ safeguards. In particular, that assessment should be capable of identifying gaps and needs for the donor community to address with further support and technical assistance. It will also help to ensure REDD+ countries are able to implement the safeguards in the most cost effective and efficient manner, and provides a means to assess whether the REDD+ funds are being distributed between REDD+ countries in a manner that is both equitable and effective.

Publication of the information

The Cancun agreement does not specify who the information should be provided to, suggesting that the information should be publicly available through a common international structure, for example through publication on an internet based platform. The Amazon Fund provides a useful example, where records of financial audits are published annually on the Amazon Fund website.

Providing the information through national communications

In addition to providing the information on the implementation of the REDD+ safeguards through a website, or similar mechanism that provides continuously up-to-date information, REDD+ countries should also formally report

[5] This assessment should be done in an open and transparent manner under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties.

through National Communications and Biennial update reports. Similarly, Annex I countries should formally report on the support provided for REDD+ activities, including the support provided for the implementation of the REDD+ safeguards. These reports would include information the government has itself assessed and verified, and can provide a useful comparison between information reported by the government and the reports coming from stakeholders on the ground and would be of significant use to support public input into an international review process.

Interim reporting

During the fast start finance period, and pending the development of a country's system to provide information on how the safeguards are addressed and respected, provision should be made for interim reporting. In particular, information on the implementation of the safeguards should be included in the reports on fast start finance[6] together with information being provided through the REDD+ database. The information communicated could be expanded to include additional relevant information as soon as the guidance is adopted.

Interim reporting could begin immediately before guidance has been developed by the SBSTA or adopted by Conference of the Parties however it is important that any interim measures do not prejudge any outcome of the SBSTA.

1.4. Harmonising the SBSTA guidance with guidance developed in other multi-lateral processes

It is important that SBSTA recognises that consultative processes are already underway to provide guidance and assistance in the development of systems for monitoring safeguards (including UN-REDD, the Convention on Biological Diversity, Chatham House and FLEGT). Harmonisation between SBSTA and these other multi-lateral processes is important as these other forums are moving faster than the UNFCCC, have the benefit of involving experts in their fields, and are more practical in their application. The SBSTA would benefit from incorporating this knowledge and experience into the work programme.

In terms of finance, the REDD+ Partnership has established the REDD+ database, which is already identifying discrepancies on financial information. Ultimately this database needs to be harmonised with the system under the UNFCCC, in particular so that the information provided on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected can be linked to the finance system developed under the Green Climate Fund and its social and environmental safeguards and its provisions for fiduciary responsibility. The REDD+ Partnership has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of gaps and overlaps in finance which was presented at the REDD+ Partnership meeting in Bangkok in April 2011 with recommendations including the need for:

1. harmonisation between multilateral, regional and bilateral REDD+ initiatives and sources of financing including increased commonality in principles and criteria, procedures, financing mechanisms, monitoring and reporting;
2. support for on the ground preparatory work (land-use planning, tenure clarification, local level consultation) and recommending that such work should be scaled up; and
3. the development of partnerships among the public sector, private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs drawing on accumulating experience on demonstration projects.

The REDD+ Partnership database currently provides data in relation to finance. This data needs to be improved and broadened. Meanwhile, linking it to UNFCCC reporting requirements (i.e. National Communications) could assist in building a credible basis for MRV of finance.

[6] Paragraph 96, Decision 1/CP.16

2. Guidance on modalities relating to forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels: some guidelines and principles

The Cancun agreement on REDD+ requires SBSTA to develop modalities for setting reference emissions levels and reference levels. The same principles apply to both. Many papers have been published on different ways of setting reference levels[7] for REDD+, and a number of papers have assessed the relative effectiveness of different methodological approaches, including several by CAN member organisations. Many of these studies find there is often little difference between the outcomes of different approaches, as long as they start with the same guidelines and principles. In this paper CAN therefore sets out some guidelines and principles that should be followed in setting reference levels.

Most studies have focussed on how to set reference levels for reducing emissions from deforestation and on how to ensure the conservation of carbon stocks in countries with high forest cover and low deforestation (HFLD). Here, we therefore focus on these subject areas but similar basic principles would apply to degradation and to the enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

The Cancun Accord establishes COP 17 as the deadline for SBSTA recommendations on reference levels. This deadline should be met in order to achieve the maximum effectiveness of REDD+ and inform capacity building efforts which should aim to be coherent with future COP guidance on reference levels.

In the following discussion, the term "national historical baselines" refers to the observed average deforestation rate of a country over a set period of time. "Reference level" is defined as the benchmark for assessing a country's performance in reducing emissions. This can be used to determine allocation of international funds.

Contribute to the mitigation of climate change

REDD+ should permanently reduce emissions, increase removals and conserve carbon stocks (thereby avoiding emissions). Reference levels should be set within this framework, in accordance with the goal agreed in the Cancun Agreement.[8] Reference levels must be set such that confidence is maintained in the system, global REDD+ goals are achieved, and inclusion of REDD+ contributes to the overall level of ambition of emission reduction commitments.

Historical emissions as the foundation for national baselines

Basing reference levels on national historical emissions should be the basic starting point for establishing reference levels. Historical emissions, averaged over time, can be established in a consistent and transparent way for all countries. Furthermore, basing reference levels on historical emissions can help REDD+ achieve its goal of slowing and halting emissions from forests. It is also consistent with previous UNFCCC decisions, including, the indicative guidance for demonstration activities in Decision 2/CP.13 [9] and the REDD+ methodological guidance in 4/CP.15 [10].

Given significant interannual variability in deforestation in many countries, historical baselines should reflect recent averages and trends, rather than a single base year.

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[7] In order to avoid confusion, in this paper the term "reference levels" applies to both "reference emissions levels" and "reference levels" from paragraph 71b of the Cancun Agreement (1CP.15).

[8] *"... in the context of the provision of adequate and predictable support to developing country Parties, Parties should collectively aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss, according to national circumstances, consistent with the ultimate objective of the Convention, as stated in Article 2".*

[9] 6. Reductions in emissions or increases resulting from the demonstration activity should be based on historical emissions, taking into account national circumstances.

[10] *7. Recognizes* that developing country Parties in establishing forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels should do so transparently taking into account historic data, and adjust for national circumstances, in accordance with relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

Encourage maximum participation

Broad participation in REDD+ is required to maximise its mitigation potential and minimise international leakage. This is also consistent with the second paragraph of the Cancun agreement on REDD+.[11] Participation by countries with high carbon stocks and low deforestation rates is especially important in order to ensure that those stocks are not lost to the atmosphere.

Ensure consistency

Modalities for setting reference levels should be common for all countries.

Be fully transparent and independently reviewed

The UNFCCC must encourage consistency and require disclosure and transparency behind the reference levels approach for all participants. Values, calculations, and assumptions for developing reference levels should be should be freely and openly posted online, with sufficient time for comment, before reference levels and reference emissions levels are accepted by the COP. Furthermore, these methodologies, values, calculations and assumptions should be independently reviewed against these guidelines and for data quality before they are accepted by the COP.

[11] Also affirming the need to promote broad country participation in all phases described in paragraph 73 below, including through the provision of support that takes into account existing capacities. (1CP.15)

3. Guidance on modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying as referred to in appendix II to decision 1/CP.16

Modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic, forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, forest carbon stock and forest area changes arising from REDD+ activities should be consistent with MRV in other emission sectors covered by the UNFCCC. Consideration of MRV of support and other non-carbon aspects of REDD+ will therefore necessarily parallel progress in the mitigation and finance discussions under the AWG-LCA. However, progress can and should be made in areas that do not require further policy guidance.

Emerging national forest monitoring and MRV systems must provide transparency, consistency, and comparability of REDD+ results. Measuring and monitoring are important for ensuring that activities create real mitigation results, thus allowing REDD+ to fulfil its potential to contribute significantly to the objectives of the Convention. Reporting and verification are also critical to mobilizing financial resources and rewarding developing countries' REDD+ mitigation efforts while securing environmental integrity.

Guidance from SBSTA should establish standards for the information monitoring and MRV systems must provide. Guidance is needed from SBSTA in the near term to ensure that the rapid progression of REDD+ readiness currently taking place follows a path that will result in robust monitoring and MRV systems that will support effective national REDD+ mechanisms.

Additionally, there are a number of elements specific to REDD+ that will require methodological and technical guidance. Although existing IPCC Guidelines and Good Practice Guidance will comprise the foundation of forest monitoring and MRV in REDD+ countries, supplementary guidance is needed from SBSTA in order to fill REDD+-specific gaps. Several of these gaps are addressed below.

- SBSTA should determine the most effective methods for incorporating local and traditional knowledge and engaging indigenous peoples and local communities in both the formulation and implementation of forest measuring and monitoring systems.
- SBSTA, in coordination with the IPCC and other technical experts, should provide guidance on how to incorporate, as appropriate, forest monitoring, reporting, and verification at national scales with the assessment of drivers of deforestation and how social and/or environmental safeguards are addressed and respected.
- SBSTA, in coordination with the IPCC and other technical experts, should provide more explicit guidance on assessing overall uncertainty in emissions estimates. Overall uncertainty is a function of uncertainty within individual datasets (e.g. area change, biomass) and model parameters used in deriving emissions estimates. Existing guidance focuses on quantifying uncertainty associated with individual datasets. There is insufficient guidance available on assessing overall uncertainty.

4. Definitions

Decision 1/CP.16 from Cancun, rightly states that REDD+ actions should be consistent with the conservation of natural forests and should not be used for the conversion of natural forests but instead used to incentivise the protection and conservation of natural forests (Appendix I paragraph 2 (e)). However, it would help in the effective implementation of this safeguard if there were clear guidance for Parties as to what constitutes a natural forest.

In the past, the development of definitions of forests has proved problematic in the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. There is a longstanding, and so far unfulfilled request from SBSTA to the IPCC for a set of biome-based definitions, and the definition of a forest (for Kyoto Protocol purposes) in decision 16/CMP.1 is a least common denominator solution that is widely agreed to be woefully inadequate.

However, to distinguish between natural or primary forest and other forest types what may well be required is not so much a definition as a classification in terms of forest characteristics, such as that used by the FAO in compiling its Forest Resource Assessments. [12] This clearly distinguishes between primary or natural forests, other naturally regenerated forest (i.e. anthropogenically degraded forest), planted forest and planted forest of introduced species, see Table 1. below. Using these classifications has the advantage that all nations already use them in reporting to the FAO and are thus, hopefully, fully conversant with them. We note that the Convention on Biodiversity's Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change, which explicitly covered REDD, employed the classifications based on the FAO ones to draw distinctions between the carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations.

Table 1. FAO forest characteristics

TERM, definition and explanatory notes
PRIMARY FOREST Naturally regenerated forest of native species, where there are no clearly visible indications of human activities and the ecological processes are not significantly disturbed. Explanatory note 1. Some key characteristics of primary forests are: - they show natural forest dynamics, such as natural tree species composition, occurrence of dead wood, natural age structure and natural regeneration processes; - the area is large enough to maintain its natural characteristics; - there has been no known significant human intervention or the last significant human intervention was long enough ago to have allowed the natural species composition and processes to have become re-established.
OTHER NATURALLY REGENERATED FOREST Naturally regenerated forest where there are clearly visible indications of human activities. Explanatory notes 1. Includes selectively logged-over areas, areas regenerating following agricultural land use, areas recovering from human-induced fires, etc. 2. Includes forests where it is not possible to distinguish whether planted or naturally regenerated. 3. Includes forests with a mix of naturally regenerated trees and planted/seeded trees, and where the naturally regenerated trees are expected to constitute more than 50 percent of the growing stock at stand maturity.
OTHER NATURALLY REGENERATED FOREST OF INTRODUCED SPECIES *(sub-category of OTHER NATURALLY REGENERATED FOREST)* Other naturally regenerated forest where the trees are predominantly of introduces species.

[12] See, Global Forest Resource Assessment 2010, Terms and definitions, Forest Resources Assessment Programme Working paper 177/E, FAO, Rome 2010, http://www.fao.org/forestry/fra/67094/en/

Explanatory note 1. In this context, predominantly means that the trees of introduced species are expected to constitute more than 50 percent of the growing stock at maturity.
PLANTED FOREST Forest predominantly composed of trees established through planting and/or deliberate seeding. Explanatory notes 1. In this context, predominantly means that the planted/seeded trees are expected to constitute more than 50 percent of the growing stock at maturity. 2. Includes coppice from trees that were originally planted or seeded. 3. Excludes self-sown trees of introduced species.
PLANTED FOREST OF INTRODUCES SPECIES *(sub-category of PLANTED FOREST)* Planted forest, where the planted/seeded trees are predominantly of introduced species. Explanatory note 1. In this context, predominantly means that the planted/seeded trees of introduced species are expected to constitute more than 50 percent of the growing stock at maturity.
Explanation of terms used above
NATURALLY REGENERATED FOREST Forest predominantly composed of trees established through natural regeneration. Explanatory notes 1. In this context, predominantly means that the trees established through natural regeneration are expected to constitute more than 50% of the growing stock at maturity. 2. Includes coppice from trees established through natural regeneration. 3. Includes naturally regenerated trees of introduced species.
INTRODUCED SPECIES A species, subspecies or lower taxon, occurring outside its natural range (past or present) and dispersal potential (i.e. outside the range it occupies naturally or could occupy without direct or indirect introduction or care by humans).

IPCC Guidelines and Guidance

CAN agrees with decision 4/CP.15 that for measuring and reporting the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and guidelines should be used as the basis for estimating anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes, i.e. in particular, the 2006 Guidelines as may be revised and updated.