

Submission on the system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected

Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

19 September 2011

This submission is made on behalf of the Ecosystems Climate Alliance and the following organisations:

Les Amis de la Nature et des Jardins (ANJ), DRC

CARE International

Centre d'Accompagnement des Autochtones Pygmées et Minoritaires Vulnérables (CAMV), DRC

Centro de Planificación y Estudios Sociales (CEPLAES), Ecuador

ClientEarth, UK

Council for Environmental Defense by Legality and Traceability (CODELT)

Ecoforestry Forum Inc, PNG

Environmental Defense Fund

Environmental Investigation Agency

Environnement, Ressources Naturelles et Développement (ERND Institute), DRC

Federation of Community Forestry Users (FECOFUN), Nepal

Forest Peoples Programme

Forum pour la Gouvernance et les Droits de l'Homme (FGDH), Republic of Congo

Friends of the Earth, Switzerland - Pro Natura

Global Witness

Greenpeace International

Groupe de Travail Climat REDD (GTCR), DRC

Humane Society International

Perkumpulan HuMa. Indonesia

Rainforest Foundation Norway

Rainforest Foundation UK

Réseau des communicateurs de l'environnement (RCEN), DRC

Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education)

Union Pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtones (UEFA), DRC

Wetlands International

This submission is also made on behalf of the following non-admitted observer organisations:

Australian Climate Justice Programme (accreditation pending)

David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation

Society for New Initiatives and Activities (SONIA)

Overall summary of the submission

This submission sets out guidance on the system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected, addressing each of the following elements:

- (1) Characteristics of the system;
- (2) Its design; and
- (3) The provision of information;

Guidance on a system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected should address: (i) how the information is collected; and (ii) the provision of that information.

This submission provides guidance on the design of a national system to ensure the information collected on REDD+ safeguards is complete, accurate and reliable, and on the provision of this information at national and international levels. A system should be nationally appropriate, but be based on common standards, criteria and international guidance on indicators to ensure consistency and comparability between national systems.

Information collected should be provided at both the national level and feed into a single information system at the international level. At the national level, information should be made available in local languages and in a timely fashion so it is easy to access and use by stakeholders and members of the public. At the international level, the information from each national system should be provided through a common international structure, linked to and part of the broader system under the UNFCCC and the GCF.

It is also important that SBSTA recognise other relevant consultative processes to provide guidance and assistance in the development of a system for monitoring safeguards (including under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and UN-REDD / Chatham House) as well as other relevant tools such as the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards, the WRI Governance of Forests Initiative and the FAO/World Bank Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance. SBSTA would benefit from incorporating this knowledge and experience into the information system.

(1) Characteristics of the system

The characteristics of any system for providing information should ensure that the information is collected and provided in a way that ensures transparency, consistency, comparability, completeness, accuracy, accessibility, accountability and full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders and rights-holders.

(2) The system's design

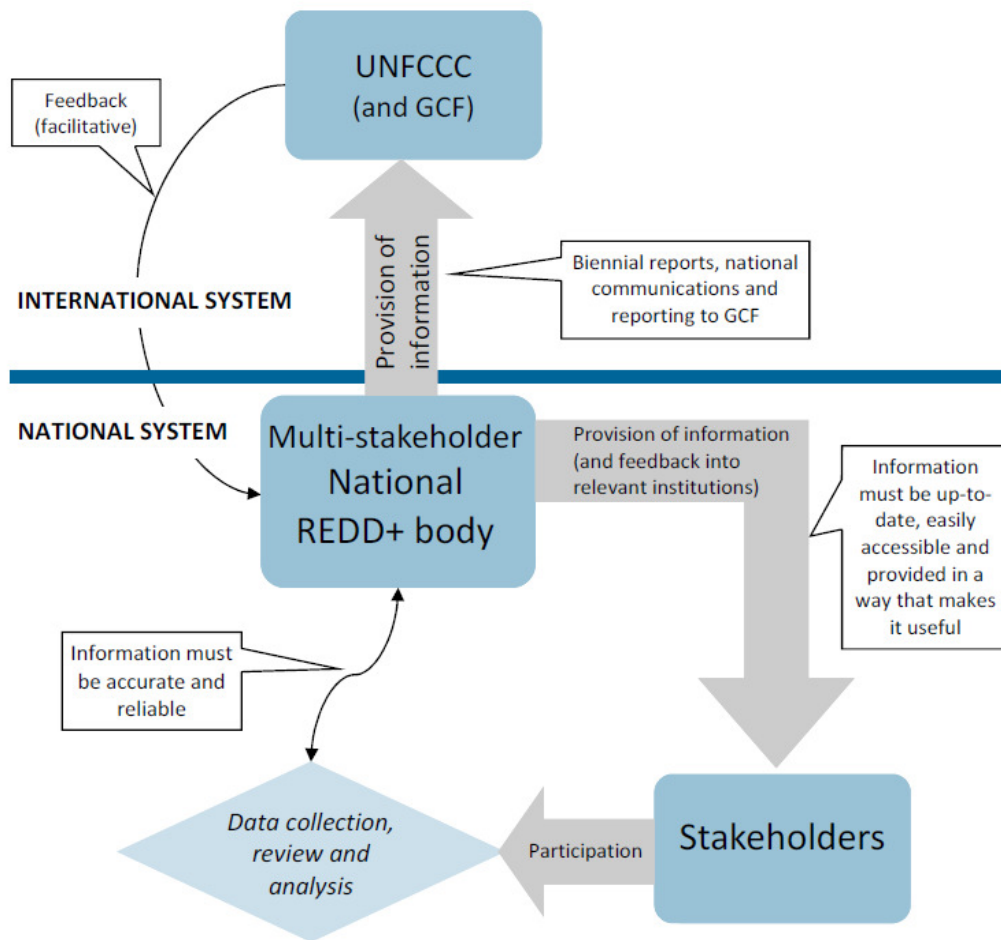
1. The safeguards information system should be linked with and part of the broader system under the UNFCCC, i.e. with monitoring and evaluation under the Green Climate Fund and with MRV (measurement, reporting and verification) so the system works as a coherent whole. Furthermore, it should be harmonised with other related REDD+ information systems (e.g. the FCPF, FIP and UN-REDD) to enable efficiencies, synergies, and thus cost effectiveness, and to ensure that data is collected and provided in a manner that meets the needs of all relevant stakeholders at national and international level.

2. Consideration should also be given to harmonisation, as appropriate, with other monitoring / information systems for international and regional agreements that already collect and provide

information relevant to the REDD+ safeguards and finance. With cost effectiveness and practicality in mind, countries should avoid duplicating efforts by drawing on and building on existing data sets and processes.

3. There should be full and effective participation of stakeholders and rights-holders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, in the design of the information system and in determining the type of information to be collected and the relevant indicators to use.
4. The system should incorporate feedback of information into relevant institutions to induce a response and change.
5. The system should be designed so that the quality of the data collected is constantly being improved.
6. The system should include a process for independent verification and review of the information.
7. The system should include an accountability mechanism that is independent, transparent, effective, accessible to affected people, and available to respond to/address claims related to the information provided. This mechanism should ensure the compliance with the safeguards and address situations where non-compliance has been identified.

Overview of the system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected



(3) Guidance on the provision of information**What information should be provided?**

- (i) An initial assessment of how the safeguards are addressed and respected;
- (ii) An ongoing assessment of how the safeguards are addressed and respected over time;
- (iii) Identification and evaluation of the institutions responsible for ensuring the safeguards are being addressed and respected;
- (iv) An analysis of how domestic laws, policies and procedures support the safeguards being addressed and respected;
- (v) An ongoing account of the international agreements or instruments the country has ratified that are also relevant to the implementation of the safeguards, including agreements or instruments that provide reporting mechanisms, which can support the SIS;
- (vi) Ongoing evaluations of the extent to which all REDD+ activities are carried out in accordance with the safeguards, including how those activities impact or affect the implementation of the safeguards;
- (vii) For each of the safeguards, information should be provided on the specific action(s) taken to ensure that the safeguard is being addressed and respected throughout all REDD+ related activities.
- (viii) For each safeguard information should be provided that allows for tracking of the extent to which the safeguard is continuously adhered to in practice. This would include identifying obstacles and drivers that are preventing adherence with the safeguards and how they are overcome or addressed to ensure the safeguards can be addressed and respected over time.
- (ix) Information to assess the reliability of the data, such as:
 - (a) the source of the information, such as whether it is data collected remotely or through field research / ground truthing,
 - (b) supporting data to verify the collection methods utilized and the information collected,
 - (c) the identity of the source, at least in general terms, such as whether the information has been provided by a particular branch of government, local communities, indigenous peoples, NGOs, the private sector, etc.,
 - (d) the availability of supporting data necessary to evaluate the primary data collected; and
 - (e) any steps taken to verify and/or review the information or ensure its accuracy, including any independent monitoring, audit or analysis and/or multi-stakeholder review undertaken.
- (x) Any response to the information, including steps taken by the REDD+ country to respond to the information and better implement the safeguards.
- (xi) Information collected with consistent frequency that allows for an assessment of how the safeguards have been implemented over time.

(xii) Where the information prioritises certain aspects, or uses indicators, the process used to arrive at this priority list and/or choice of indicators and the analysis to demonstrate that the prioritisation or indicators are representative.

How should information be provided?

1. Information must be presented in a way that makes it useful and in a way that is easily understandable and accessible to all relevant stakeholders in-country.
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.
4. The information provided should allow for an assessment of a country's performance in implementing the safeguards.
5. At the national level, the information should be made publicly available with particular attention paid to making the information available to affected communities, while at the international level the information from each national system should be provided through a common international structure, linked with and part of the broader system under the UNFCCC and the GCF.

Submission on the system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected

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Submission on the system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected

Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

1. Introduction

1.1 The REDD+ mechanism

The Cancun Agreement (Decision 1/CP.16) establishes a specific mechanism designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). The Agreement also provides a framework for developing the more detailed aspects of REDD+ that will now be needed if it is to be implemented effectively. This is a significant development in global efforts to tackle emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation. The Cancun Agreement also includes a provision that implementation of REDD+ activities is to be carried out in accordance with certain safeguards¹ that are to be promoted and supported (see box below).

1.2 The REDD+ safeguards as set out in the Cancun Agreement

When undertaking the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision [REDD+ activities], the following safeguards should be promoted and supported::

- (a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- (b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
- (c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the UN General Assembly has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- (d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular, indigenous peoples and local communities, in actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision;
- (e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivise the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;
- (f) Actions to address the risks of reversals; and
- (g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

With these safeguards, Parties to the UNFCCC have described the key aspects of REDD+ activities and the process by which they are to be developed and implemented to ensure REDD+ actions are successful in addressing climate change. The elements of these safeguards are an acknowledgement by the Parties that forests are more than just a carbon store. The capacity of forests to store carbon over the long term and

¹ The safeguards are set out in Appendix 1 to Decision 1/CP.16.

their resilience to fires, insect infestations and other outside events depends upon the robustness of their ecological function and that those living in and around the forests have an interest in their protection. The REDD+ safeguards are designed to ensure that these multiple benefits are recognised and enhanced, while building transparent and effective governance structures. Proper implementation of the safeguards is necessary to maintain the environmental integrity of the REDD+ mechanism, by ensuring it reduces emissions effectively and with lasting benefits, while protecting and enhancing existing forest resources.

Among other things, the safeguards require Parties to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in accordance with relevant international obligations and national law, noting the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the UN General Assembly. Respect for the safeguards and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities as mandated by the Cancun Agreement will empower those who are effectively the custodians of the forest, and avoid social conflict. This in turn will ensure a sense of ownership, which is important to build confidence that REDD+ will – under specific conditions and circumstances – ultimately deliver multiple benefits while respecting rights and ensuring environmental integrity.

1.3 A system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected

At its 34th session, 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. 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 system.

Comprehensive guidance should address both the development of a national system to collect and generate information, and how that national system is to be coordinated and harmonised to ensure the information is made publicly available through a common international structure. The safeguards information system, when implemented effectively at national and international levels, will significantly improve the overall design, implementation and effectiveness of REDD+ policies, projects and actions, by encouraging learning from experience. Information sharing between REDD+ countries will provide an opportunity for countries to align and coordinate their systems and fill gaps where necessary. Information sharing, including sharing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected, will also build confidence between REDD+ countries that the benefits and burdens are being shared equitably, as well as building the confidence and trust of public and private donors, thereby increasing the ability of REDD+ countries to leverage and attract financial support.

Access to information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected will also assist the international donor community to identify the technical assistance, capacity building, enabling activities and financial resources needed by REDD+ countries to support the proper implementation of the REDD+ safeguards.

This submission sets out guidance for what a sufficiently robust safeguards information system should look like, addressing each of the following elements:

- (1) Characteristics of the system;
- (2) The system's 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 might 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 and local communities.² Guidance, therefore, must address how relevant information is collected and its quality assured, and then how that information is provided and fed back to enable a response and constructive change. 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, accessing and assessing that information.

As requested by the Chair of SBSTA at its 34th session,³ this submission also addresses, where relevant, potential barriers to providing information on addressing and respecting the safeguards and other relevant issues.

1.4 Key elements of the Cancun Agreement relevant to the safeguards information system

The UNFCCC's Cancun Agreement includes 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 that 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.

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 and respect the safeguards as well as information tracking 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 financial and technical support for REDD+ actions, including support for the implementation of the safeguards and the SIS, particularly for Least Developing Countries. In this context,

² See Chatham House and UN-REDD Programme, *Draft Guidance for the provision of information on REDD+ Governance* (May 2011).

³ In the draft Conclusions proposed by the Chair (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.14).

it should be noted that a proportion of this support is expected to be provided through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which also incorporates governance, environmental and social safeguards, as well as monitoring and evaluation.⁴ There should be consistency between the GCF and REDD+ safeguards. Thus it is expected that a REDD+ funding window under the GCF would apply the REDD+ safeguards and that the SIS would therefore provide the information needed for monitoring and evaluation of those safeguards under the GCF. Furthermore, the GCF would be expected to ensure that support provided for REDD+ activities incorporates support for implementation of the REDD+ safeguards and the SIS.

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 the monitoring and reporting of activities. The full and effective participation of stakeholders and rights-holders provides a valuable source of information on the implementation of the safeguards. It also builds confidence in REDD+ by ensuring that those affected by REDD+ can interact with it and participate in its continual improvement on the ground.

2. Guidance on the safeguards information system

2.1 Characteristics of the system

An initial step in the SBSTA process should be to consider broad, overarching 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 Communications⁵ 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 phases of the information system (i.e. development of the system, provision, assessment and publication of the information) ***should be developed and implemented in a truly participatory manner.***

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 ongoing development of improved methodologies and enable multi-stakeholder participation, information should be made publicly available, in a timely and culturally appropriate way, ensuring that it is 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 with and part of the broader reporting framework under the UNFCCC, i.e. with monitoring and evaluation under the Green Climate Fund and with MRV (measurement, reporting and verification) so the system works as a coherent whole.

Consistency: Information should be systematically provided in a way that is consistent over time to enable tracking of the ongoing application of the safeguards.

Comparability: Information provided at the international level should be comparable. It should be provided regularly through *an agreed common international framework using a common template and timeframes*. Parties should adopt generic common guidance on the type of information to provide,

⁴ Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix III, para. 1 (h).

⁵ Decision 17/CP.8.

including common standards, criteria and guidance on indicators to use (although the precise indicators used in each country may vary depending upon national circumstances and will be developed through an open and participatory process at the national level involving all relevant stakeholders). The information should be provided with all supporting data to provide assurance that it is accurate and properly collected.

Completeness: The information provided should be complete and comprehensive, covering actions taken to address all safeguards and how the safeguards are being respected to ensure consistency with the Cancun Agreement. Parties should provide information on *all* the safeguards and how each is being addressed and respected at all levels, from design to planning, decision-making, implementation and how that information is being fed into an international reporting system. In doing so, countries should build on existing data sets and systems to enable efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Accessible: The information should be provided in a manner that is easily accessible to local, national and international stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities. This is necessary to ensure the full and effective participation of all rights-holders and relevant stakeholders.

Accuracy: In order to ensure the information is accurate and reliable and the system has integrity, Parties should indicate how the information provided through the SIS has been independently verified and assessed 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, government entities and existing processes.

Participation: The system should be designed in a way that ensures the full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders and rights-holders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, considering gender equity, and engaging non-governmental organisations and experts. 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. Effective participation of rights-holders and relevant stakeholders will also help ensure the SIS possesses the other core characteristics described above. In particular, the SIS should include domestic multi-stakeholder review and analysis of how the safeguards are being addressed and respected, to ensure the completeness, accuracy and reliability of the information and build confidence in the system. This review and analysis should be undertaken in a way that enables meaningful input from all relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities as well as experts and the scientific community.

Accountability: The system should include an accountability mechanism that is independent, transparent, effective, accessible to affected people, and available to respond to/address claims related to the information provided. This could potentially be linked to the establishment of conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms at various levels, as well as to the adoption of procedures to ensure indigenous peoples' right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

2.2 Guidance for the design of the national safeguards information system

The design of national information systems will vary from country to country depending upon national capacities and circumstances. To ensure consistency between the national systems, however, and to ensure that despite any differences in design the systems still possess the characteristics outlined above, it is necessary that each system be developed using the same principles and basic elements.

1. National safeguards information systems should be part of an integrated REDD+ system for providing information on safeguards and MRV at national and international levels, and should be harmonised with other related systems so that synergies and efficiencies can be realised, the system will be cost effective, and data collection and provision will meet the needs of all relevant stakeholders and respect their rights.
2. Consideration should also be given to harmonisation, as appropriate, with other monitoring / information systems for international and regional agreements that already collect and provide information relevant to the REDD+ safeguards and finance. With cost effectiveness and practicality in mind, countries should avoid duplicating efforts by drawing on and building on existing data sets and processes.
3. There should be full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders and rights-holders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, in the design of information systems (and in the design of the SBSTA guidance), in determining its institutional structure and in determining the type of information to be collected and any relevant indicators to use.
4. The systems should incorporate feedback of information into relevant institutions to induce a response and constructive change.
5. The systems should be designed so that the quality of the data collected is constantly being improved.
6. The systems should include a process for independent verification and review of the information.
7. The system should include an accountability mechanism that is independent, transparent, effective, accessible to affected people, and available to respond to/address claims related to the information provided. This mechanism should ensure the compliance with the safeguards and address situations where non-compliance has been identified.

2.2.1 An integrated and harmonised information system

The national SIS and the system for MRV of emissions / removals and forest carbon stocks / area changes should be part of one integrated system for providing information on safeguards and carbon at national and international levels. It should serve the needs of the broad array of relevant stakeholders, including local, regional, national and international stakeholders. To ensure efficiency and cost effectiveness the SIS should be coordinated with other related systems for data collection and provision and harmonised, as appropriate, with other reporting requirements at the international level. This can be achieved by building the national SIS on existing national and international monitoring systems, and by drawing from experience with other relevant international systems to inform the overall SIS. This will help to ensure the systems are complementary and 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 through which information concerning REDD+ safeguards and finance is being provided and made publicly available. Much of the same type of information to be provided under paragraph 71(d) of the Cancun Agreement is already being provided in other contexts to serve other needs. With cost effectiveness and practicality in mind, the SIS should draw upon and build on these existing data sets and processes. This avoids duplicating efforts.

Experience and lessons learned from existing processes should be considered by SBSTA. Examples include several human rights instruments that incorporate monitoring and reporting obligations and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). 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 will ensure consistency in the data collection process and increase transparency and the reliability of the data, as well as reducing costs.

Countries have already begun to design national systems under UN-REDD and the World Bank-managed Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, which require countries to design an integrated monitoring system addressing governance, social and environmental benefits. These monitoring systems should serve the needs of the guidance under paragraph 71(d) as well as those of UN-REDD, the FCPF and other REDD+ funding mechanisms / programmes, so that there is one system at national level robust enough to meet the various data needs enabling information on the REDD+ safeguards to be drawn from one place.

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

2.2.2 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 a country-specific assessment to identify the issues about which information should be collected and provided. To improve efficiency and keep costs down, the system should prioritise the information to be provided, tailored to the specific national REDD+ context. Once those issues are identified, appropriate indicators can then be developed to address them. Since indicators are always context specific, the precise indicators used for determining whether the safeguards are being addressed and respected may vary in different countries, depending upon national circumstances. Those indicators should be developed through an open and participatory process at the national level involving all relevant stakeholders and rights-holders. International guidance on indicators is also needed to assist countries to identify priorities, to ensure the provision of standardised information that can demonstrate the safeguards are being addressed and respected, and to improve comparability between countries.

The Parties should take note of work already being done to inform the development of appropriate, targeted and intelligent indicators, including the UN-REDD/Chatham House draft *Guidance for the provision of information on REDD+ governance* (May 2011), the PROFOR and FAO *Framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance* (FAO, Rome, 2011), the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards developed by the Climate Community & Biodiversity Alliance, which provide a list of principles and criteria applying to national REDD+ systems of safeguards, and the WRI Governance of Forests Initiative.

According to paragraph 72 of the Cancun Agreement, full and effective participation must be ensured both when planning and implementing REDD+ actions. Therefore the assessment should be participatory and involve all relevant stakeholders, in order to identify and prioritise the areas on which information is most needed and to ensure any indicators selected and further developed are aligned with the interests

of the stakeholders, are representative of the information sought, and ensure the full compliance with relevant international obligations.⁶ Stakeholder participation must be implemented in a manner that ensures the information collected (including the selection of relevant indicators) is credible and useful in the context of the particular REDD+ country.

Access to information and capacity building of stakeholders

In order to ensure full and effective participation, stakeholder must have culturally appropriate and timely access to all relevant information. Capacity building will also be needed in many instances to ensure that all stakeholders are able to participate fully and effectively in the planning and implementation of the safeguards information system. Without providing capacity building to ensure robust stakeholder participation, the quality and reliability of information provided by stakeholders will be severely limited, which will compromise the entire system.

2.2.3 Systems should incorporate feedback of information into relevant institutions

The SIS should be designed to ensure information is fed back into the relevant institutions responsible for implementing REDD+, so as to facilitate the continual improvement of REDD+ as it is implemented through each phase. This will ensure confidence is maintained over time.

2.2.4 Systems 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 information is being collected in all relevant areas. This will ensure constant improvements in the information being collected and the quality of data collection.

It should be noted that proper implementation of certain safeguards (such as the safeguard requiring stakeholder participation at all levels of decision-making) is likely to have a positive impact on the implementation of other safeguards (e.g. building transparent and effective governance structures). What issues remain relevant, and their priority, will therefore 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 re-prioritise the issues on which information should be provided over time, while ensuring consistency to be able to detect change.

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

⁶ 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.

2.2.5 Stakeholder participation in collecting and reviewing information

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

Information that is collected from a variety of stakeholders in different locations and is independently verified and reviewed by a multi-stakeholder body will have more credibility in the process in the eyes of citizens of REDD+ countries, as well as international donors, and will afford the process greater legitimacy.

Independent advocate to act as a buffer

Experience on the ground has shown that many local communities are reluctant 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 out in the governing statutes establishing the national information system and in government arrangements for multi-stakeholder participation. Clear roles and responsibilities will help to ensure the 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 policies, laws and regulations 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 sample plots identified for national forest inventories (NFIs). Ground truthing in this way will also improve the reliability of information collected by allowing for the reconciliation of data collected from a range of sources and via a range of methods. NFIs already include biodiversity, governance and socio-economic information and can be adapted to provide information more relevant to REDD+ safeguards.

A system based on nationally appropriate indicators together with field-based data collection, analysis and reporting is 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, and could be incorporated into NFIs. 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), forest management, illegal logging, encroachment on forests by other drivers of deforestation/forest degradation, and other activities taking place in the forest.

Decision 4/CP.15 recognises the potential contribution that indigenous peoples' and local communities' knowledge can make to monitoring and reporting activities relating to REDD+. Modalities developed by indigenous peoples and local communities to retrieve and collect information at community and project level, based on traditional knowledge, values and practices, such as the Tebtebba initiative to develop community monitoring tools on REDD+ safeguards for indigenous peoples,⁷ would provide information that would contribute significantly to the quality of the data fed into the SIS.

Independent monitoring of REDD+

Another tool that Parties should consider to improve the quality and credibility of information provided on implementation of the REDD+ safeguards is to use an officially designated 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, giving the monitor an official mandate. The contractual terms should include allowing the monitor unhindered access to all relevant official information and to all 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 multi-stakeholder 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 Programme, all acknowledge the need for independent monitoring to constitute a core component of any REDD+ mechanism. Guidance is needed from SBSTA that will enable the design and implementation of national systems for independent monitoring to provide the SIS with the credibility it deserves.

2.2.6 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 (including representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities) 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.

⁷ Workshop II of Indigenous Peoples and Supports NGOs on the Development of Indigenous- Sensitive and Gender- Sensitive Monitoring / Reporting / Information Systems on REDD+ Safeguards, CJD Bonn, Germany 11-12 June 2011; http://www.indigenousclimate.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=100&Itemid=&lang=en

2.3 Guidance on the provision of information

Guidance relating to the safeguards information system should address *what* information to provide and *how* to provide that information.

2.3.1 What information should be provided?

The SIS is required to include information on how the safeguards are being *addressed and respected* and should include information on 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) The institutions responsible for ensuring the safeguards are being addressed and respected;
- (iii) How domestic laws, policies and procedures support the safeguards being addressed and respected;
- (iv) International agreements or instruments the country has ratified that are also relevant to the implementation of the safeguards, including agreements or instruments that provide reporting mechanisms which can support the SIS;
- (v) The extent to which all REDD+ activities are carried out in accordance with the safeguards, including how those activities impact or affect the implementation of the safeguards;
- (vi) For each safeguard, information on the specific action(s) taken to ensure that the safeguard is being addressed and respected throughout all REDD+ related activities;
- (vii) For each safeguard, information that allows for tracking the extent to which the safeguard is continuously adhered to in practice. This would include identifying obstacles to be overcome and uncontrolled drivers of deforestation/forest degradation that need to be addressed, to ensure the safeguards can be addressed and respected over time;
- (viii) 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) supporting data necessary to verify the collection methods utilized and the information collected;
 - (c) the identity of the source, at least in general terms, such as whether the information has been provided by local communities, indigenous peoples, NGOs, the private sector, etc.;
 - (d) the availability of generally accepted supporting data necessary to evaluate the primary data collected; and
 - (e) any steps taken to verify and/or review the information or ensure its accuracy, including any independent monitoring, audit or analysis and/or multi-stakeholder review undertaken;

- (ix) Any response to the information, including steps taken by the REDD+ country to respond to the information and improve implementation;
- (x) Information collected with consistent frequency to allow for an assessment of how the safeguards have been implemented over time; and
- (xi) Where the information prioritises certain aspects, or uses indicators, the process used to arrive at this priority list and/or choice of indicators and the analysis to demonstrate that the prioritization or indicators are representative.

The Cancun Agreement also urges developed country Parties to support implementation of the safeguards. Therefore, information on the level and purpose of finance provided specifically to support implementation of the safeguards should also be provided. This will also help to ensure transparency in the financial flows provided to support implementation of the safeguards.

2.3.2 How should information be provided?

1. Information must be presented in a way that makes it useful and that is easily understandable and accessible to stakeholders in-country;
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;
4. The information provided should allow for an assessment of a country's performance in implementing the safeguards; and
5. At the national level, the information should be made publicly available, with particular attention to making it accessible and available to affected communities, while at the international level the information from each national system should be provided through a common international structure, linked to and part of the broader system under the UNFCCC including the GCF.

Information must be presented in way that makes it useful

The information provided 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 and in a timely fashion.

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, for example, publishes progress on project implementation on its website at least every six 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 that the information provided should not merely 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 throughout the design and implementation of REDD+ mitigation activities. This means that the information provided should allow for tracking progress over time. This requires systematic and consistent collection of data on all key indicators. The data should also track stakeholder assessments of the SIS. For example, data could be provided on the number of complaints lodged against a particular REDD+ activity by civil society, indigenous groups and local communities. 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 cover 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 is likely to consist in large part of direct financial support to implement the safeguards. In this case 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 accessible to donors and investors and presented in a manner that allows for an external assessment⁸ of how effective that support has been in achieving the objective of ensuring REDD+ activities are carried out in accordance with the safeguards. In particular, that assessment should be capable of identifying gaps in implementation of the safeguards and areas where further support and/or technical assistance is needed from the donor community. It will also help to ensure REDD+ countries are able to implement the safeguards in the most cost effective and efficient manner, and provide a means to assess whether REDD+ funds are being distributed between REDD+ countries, and within REDD+ countries, in a manner that is both equitable and effective.

⁸ This assessment should be done in an open and transparent manner under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties.

Information should be made publicly available at both national and international level

The Cancun Agreement does not specify who the information collected should be provided to, suggesting that the information should be publicly available. At the national level, the information should be provided in a way that makes it easy to access and use by members of the public, including being made available in local languages and in a timely fashion, for example through publication on an internet based platform. The Amazon Fund provides a useful example whereby records of financial audits are published annually on the Fund's website. Further, at the international level the information should be provided through a common international structure, linked with and part of the broader system under the UNFCCC, including the GCF.

Providing the information through national communications

In addition to providing information on the implementation of the REDD+ safeguards through a website or similar mechanism to provide continuously up to date information which is made available in affected communities, REDD+ countries should also formally report through National Communications and Biennial update reports. These reports would include information that has been received from both stakeholders and government, and assessed and verified. This can provide a useful comparison between information reported by the government and from stakeholders on the ground and would be of significant use to support public input into an international review process. Information should also be provided through the reporting mechanism agreed for monitoring and evaluation under the GCF.

Annex I countries should also formally report on the support provided for REDD+ activities through National Communications and Biennial update reports, including the support provided for implementation of the REDD+ safeguards.

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 reports on fast start finance⁹ and together with information being provided through the Voluntary REDD+ Database established under the REDD+ Partnership. 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 SBSTA or adopted by Conference of the Parties. However it is important that any interim measures do not prejudice any outcome of SBSTA.

⁹ Paragraph 96, Decision 1/CP.16

3. Harmonising the SBSTA guidance with guidance developed in other multilateral and expert processes

SBSTA should harmonise its the guidance with other multilateral, regional and bilateral REDD+ initiatives to ensure commonality in principles and criteria, procedures, financing mechanisms, monitoring and reporting.

It is important that SBSTA recognise other relevant consultative processes to provide guidance and assistance in the development of a system for monitoring safeguards (including under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN-REDD / Chatham House guidance), as well as other relevant tools such as the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards, the WRI Governance of Forests Initiative and the FAO/World Bank Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance. Harmonisation between SBSTA and these other multilateral / expert consultative 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. SBSTA would benefit from incorporating this knowledge and experience into its work programme.

In terms of finance, the REDD+ Partnership has established the Voluntary REDD+ Database, which is already identifying discrepancies in financial information provided by donors and REDD+ countries. Ultimately this database needs to be harmonised with the system established under the UNFCCC and GCF, in particular so that information provided on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected can be linked to the finance provided for REDD+. As noted above, it is expected that a REDD+ funding window under the GCF would apply the REDD+ safeguards and the SIS would therefore provide the information needed for monitoring and evaluation of those safeguards under the GCF. It would also be beneficial to harmonise the Voluntary REDD+ Database with databases created by other multilateral and bilateral REDD+ funding mechanisms.

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