

JAPAN

Submission on “Methodological guidance for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries”

In order to make a framework on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD-plus) an effective measure to reduce emissions in the forest sector, it is essential to develop robust and practical methodologies and MRV systems and to develop and strengthen domestic systems to implement REDD-plus activities. In this regard, it is important that the SBSTA steadily progresses its scientific and technological work, especially the work identified in paragraph 75 of Decision 1/CP.16. In addition, the progress of the SBSTA's work is important to move forward policy consideration under the AWG-LCA. Therefore, Japan welcomes this opportunity to submit its views on methodological matters on REDD-plus, in line with paragraph 4 in FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.14 and its Annex.

In order to progress our work efficiently, it is important to prioritize the work to the issues identified in Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16. The issue identified paragraph (a) in Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16, however, will be reported to the COP 18 while the issues identified paragraphs (b) and (c) in Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16 will be considered at COP 17. Therefore, some flexibility is required so that findings and outcomes related to paragraph (a) in Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16 will be reflected to modalities referred to in paragraphs (b) and (c) in the Appendix.

While it is important to initiate REDD-plus activities, including demonstration activities, to promote actions to avoid deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, it should be noted that establishment of framework on REDD-plus is learning-by-doing process with some flexibility. Currently many activities, including activities supported bilaterally and multilaterally, are being implemented, and useful experiences and knowledge will be gained from them. These should be appropriately reflected when the framework is established and/or improved.

1. Guidance on systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected

(a) Characteristics

One role of “systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected” is to enhance transparency, including maintain accessibility, of activities on safeguards referred in paragraph 2 in Appendix I to Decision 1/CP.16 and to improve and promote activities on safeguards. Also information provided through the systems could be used to identify capacity building needs on safeguards.

(b) Design

When designing systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, following elements should be taken into consideration:

- All safeguards referred in paragraph 2 of Appendix I to Decision 1/CP.16 should be treated in the systems, taking into account national circumstances and phases;
- Accountable criteria and/or indicators on safeguards should be set by using quantitative and qualitative methods, taking into account of national circumstances, according to available guidance and relevant international conventions and agreements. These may include not only outcome based indicators but also qualitative ones, such as policy measures and degree of their implementation;
- Access to the information should be maintained, including access by relevant stakeholders;
- It is efficient to use information under the existing international framework including UNFF, FAO, ITTO and CBD, existing national systems for collecting and reporting the information, and national forest monitoring system referred in paragraph 71(c) of Decision 1/CP.16. On this point, the systems would contain or relate with several elements, not only safeguards but also other elements including forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels, estimation of emissions and removals; and
- The information should be continuously provided and updated, and the quality should be improved.

(c) Provision of information

It is necessary to report progress of development of the systems and information on safeguards regularly through the National Communication, and for the report to be reviewed and assessed by experts, with assistance from the relevant organizations as necessary, taking into account of consideration of MRV of developing countries. While the information is provided internationally, it is also important to domestically publish the information to promote safeguards at all levels.

(d) Potential barriers, including barriers, if any, to providing information, on addressing and respecting safeguards

When information is provided, following issues should be taking into account:

- As information gained could be different among ground levels, local levels and national level, criteria and/or indicators should be set at each level so that safeguard measures will be implementable;
- The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to set criteria and/or indicators and to collect and accumulate information on safeguards;
- It is necessary to strengthen capacity, including capacity for information collection, maintenance and improvement of the systems, and governance to maintain the systems; and
- When the systems are designed, it should be taken into account not only construction costs but also operational costs to maintain the systems.

(e) Other relevant issues

It is necessary that bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies examine the provided information and results of international review as mentioned in (c) above and support required safeguard related activities when they consider investing in and supporting REDD-plus activities.

It is important to design framework on REDD-plus to co-benefit both to reducing emission by REDD-plus activities and to safeguards. To this end, the framework should have some flexibility to gradually enhance activities on safeguards, taking into account national circumstances and phases.

It is expected that REDD+ activities will become more effective by ensuring the information being comparable and the best practice being shared among countries through a common platform which allows information submitted by the countries in a common reporting format to be viewed in a consistent manner.

2. Guidance for modalities relating to forest reference levels and forest reference emission levels

(a) Scope and/or purpose

Japan thinks that forest reference levels and forest reference emission levels (hereafter refer as “reference levels”) are established as reference to appropriately evaluate fully measured, reported and verified “results” quantitatively, in comparison with real emissions and/or removals by implementing REDD-plus activities referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP.16.

(b) Characteristics, including elements listed in paragraph 1 of appendix I to decision 1/CP.16

In order that reference levels are reliable, they should have following characteristics:

- Transparency: Methodology for their establishment is transparent, including securing accessibility to the data used for their establishment;
- Scientifically verifiable: Reference levels are established scientifically, and be verifiable in scientific manner,;
- Consistency: Methodology to establish subnational reference levels are consistent with that to establish

national reference levels. And consistency over the years needs to be maintained; and

- Accuracy: In order to improve accuracy, uncertainty of reference levels are estimated quantitatively and are reduced to minimum level as possible.

(c) Guidance for the construction

Following elements should be taken into account in the guidance:

- While reference levels are established transparently taking into account historic data according to paragraph 7 of Decision 4/CP.15, data used for their establishment should be continuously monitorable. On this point, establishment of reference levels should be done together with development of forest monitoring system. In addition, methodology of data collection and accuracy should be consistent over the years, and relationship between historical data used for establishment and relevant data reported in the National Communication and forest related report by FAO should be accountable. On the other hand, it should be noted that availability of historical data and accuracy are different country by country. Taking into account such circumstances, some flexibility is also required;
- As far as environmental integrity is secured, methodology of establishing reference levels should be simple and effective;
- As data used for establishing reference levels would have uncertainty as mentioned above, national system for quality assurance and quality control should be established together with MRV system;
- Reference levels should be periodically reviewed, in accordance with evolving experiences and knowledge on methodologies and data accuracy, national circumstances and phase; and
- Experiences and knowledge gained from demonstration activities and consideration of paragraph (a) of Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16 should be taken into account.

(d) Process for communication

Developing countries should internationally report relevant information, including methodology for establishing reference levels, data used, progress on the establishment of a system for quality assurance and quality control, challenges faced, and efforts for capacity building. To this end, possible reporting system includes (1) biennial report, (2) existing national communications, and (3) supplemental report on REDD-plus in accordance with existing UNFCCC's reporting and review system. It is important that the report is reviewed by experts as high expertise is required to establish reference levels.

To reduce burden for reporting, taking account of discussion on MRV for developing countries, the report on reference levels should be made in conjunction, and consistent, with report under the UNFCCC and other relevant report on REDD-plus in the efficient manner.

(e) Other relevant issues

As establishment of framework on REDD-plus is evolving process according to each country's capacity and phase, it is important to reduce uncertainty through assessing and reflecting experiences and knowledge gained from demonstration activities to reference levels and to re-evaluate reference levels. Although it is important that pools, which would be significant sources by key sources analysis, are included when establishing reference levels, treatment of pools needs to be considered, taking into account of national circumstances and phases.

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

(a) Characteristics, including elements listed in paragraph 1 of appendix I to decision 1/CP.16

Measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, forest carbon stock and forest area changes resulting from the implementation of activities referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP.16 is important process to provide reliable estimate and assessment, to detect

the changes over the years, and to consider and implement further mitigation actions by identifying drivers of deforestation.

In order to enable to review and assess implementation of REDD-plus activities, it is necessary for developing countries to provide transparent, consistent, comparable, accurate and complete information and to continuously improve them, in accordance with capacity and phases.

Verification plays important role to develop more robust MRV system. Measured anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, forest carbon stock and forest area changes resulting from the implementation of activities referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP.16 and domestic MRV system, in accordance with phases referred in paragraph 73 of Decision 1/CP.16 and national capacity, should be assessed, and the results should be used to improve MRV and system for quality assurance and quality control.

It should be noted that elements listed in paragraph 1 of Appendix I to Decision 1/CP.16 seem to be qualitative.

(b) Elements

Information should be reported scientifically by using the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines. And methodology, data and emission factors used should be kept consistent over the years and between other land use categories. Following information is important to be reported:

- Methodology, emission factor, activity data;
- Assumption adopted for estimation;
- Uncertainty;
- Quality assurance and quality control;
- Forest monitoring system (e.g. forest inventory, relevant institution, organization, budget, human resources etc.);
- Implementation of REDD-plus activities and their effects;
- National system; and
- Change in methodology and national system

(c) Process for reporting

It is important that minimum requirement of MRV should be secured to perform REDD-plus. For example, following process would be assumed as reporting process: (1) a developing country regularly submits report based on common templates which assist to compare and assess, (2) the UNFCCC secretariat checks the report to see if it includes all elements to be reported, (3) the secretariat publishes the report on the website, and (4) the secretariat (or entrusted experts) reviews results of REDD-plus activities at regular intervals and reports it to the COP.

In the case that gases and pools are added or accuracy improvement is possible by improving inventory data and methodology, it is necessary to secure process to maintain consistency with reference levels without preventing efforts for improving inventory

As referred in paragraph (c) in Appendix II to Decision 1/CP.16, process should be consistent with guidance on measuring, reporting and verifying nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing country.

(d) Other relevant issues

Following issues should be taken into account:

- Idea of phased approach is useful in the establishment of the MRV system.
- It is important to effectively use existing data collection frameworks and forest monitoring system;
- It would be effective to make common reporting formats to promote reporting by developing countries;
- It is important to share information on MRV to know other countries' MRV related activities;
- It is also important to share developed countries' relevant experiences and knowledge including using relevant decisions, guidance and guidelines as developed countries have experiences on MRV including in the forest

sector;

- MRV process should minimize costs and losses as possible; and
 - It should be noted that assessing deforestation and forest degradation at the same timing is difficult, taking into account of current technological progresses.
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