

Tri-Caucus Submission on Further Guidance on REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems

Joint Submission by the Accra Caucus, International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), and REDD+ Safeguards Working Group¹

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As a loose collaboration of indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society organizations focused on rights and advocacy related to REDD+, we urge Parties to the UNFCCC to recognize formally the need for – and agree on – additional guidance for the REDD+ Safeguard Information System (SIS) at COP 20.

Each of our groups and respective caucuses has for years been involved in promoting the Cancun Safeguards for REDD+; and now that much of the REDD+ framework has been agreed upon at the international level, we want to be sure that our hard-fought protections of rights, traditional knowledge and biodiversity contained in the REDD+ safeguards are actually implemented. This will require an SIS that provides adequate guidance on monitoring national implementation and gives feedback on the impact of REDD+ activities on the livelihoods and customary tenure and governance of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as biodiversity. The current minimal guidance for countries developing their SIS is not enough to ensure that REDD+ both does no harm and provides added benefits beyond carbon to the forests, indigenous peoples and local communities, and biodiversity.

From our perspective as indigenous and community leaders and advocates, there is little direction to unpack what the safeguards actually mean. We believe and insist that the SIS provides a way to clarify what countries need to be doing to ensure that safeguards are addressed and respected in REDD+ implementation. While the UNFCCC requires provision of information on how the safeguards have been addressed and respected, the current guidance does not clarify whether and how countries should demonstrate that the safeguards have been *implemented* equitably and effectively. The SIS should serve not only as a repository of information but also as a means to check whether countries are stringently complying with all the seven safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation.

For us, this means that countries must report internationally on safeguards compliance according to a common format and with the full and effective participation of groups like ours from civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities. There needs to be more detail on the timing, frequency and type of information to be provided in the SIS report as well as what the response will be if the safeguards are not followed. An authoritative SIS should provide guidance, monitor national developments, and be capable of giving feedback on the impact of REDD+ activities, informed by national- and sub-national level experiences drawn from groups like ours on the ground.

Strengthening communities' rights over forests and effective safeguards implementation is fundamental to the success of all forest policies, including REDD+, and it depends on robust monitoring and reporting systems through the use of community-based and participatory monitoring tools and methodologies. As already decided in the Cancun agreement, our full and effective participation must be recognized in all phases of REDD+ implementation. Those of us at the community and grassroots levels must be involved in monitoring REDD+ in all phases and stages of REDD+ and our experiences included in the national SIS. Many of us have been monitoring forests for generations. As such it is essential we play an integral role in collecting, compiling and providing information for the summary reports for the SIS. It is therefore important that opportunities for capacity-building are available to indigenous peoples and local communities through direct and equitable funding for their effective engagement in the REDD+ initiatives.

Taking into account the vital role indigenous peoples and local communities play in monitoring activities on the ground, the SIS should also include a mechanism for consideration of independent reports by civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities who are working on REDD+, and a means for us to review and validate information to be provided in summaries. Verification and

¹ Views gathered from submissions by R-SWG and AIPP; a joint submission by Tebtebba and the Global Indigenous Peoples Partnership on Climate Change, Forests and Sustainable Development; and views expressed by the Accra Caucus.

validation of safeguards information is essential to avoid inconsistency of data and to ensure accuracy and credibility. At the same time, an SIS should not over burden indigenous peoples and local communities with new complex and complicated mechanisms. Doing so might not only result in reducing participation, but also make it difficult to demonstrate that through sustainable practices indigenous peoples and local communities are, in fact, already at the center of efforts to conserve and protect the forest and its biodiversity.

Finally, we believe that additional guidance on the SIS must recognize and respect the importance of traditional knowledge and customary governance systems, acknowledging that sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities play a vital role in safeguarding the forests and ensuring food security for their communities, especially considering a large part of the remaining forests in the world is on indigenous land. For us as members of this Tri-Caucus, the Cancun safeguards were only the first step. Most importantly will be how the safeguards are actually operationalized on the ground. We need further guidance on the SIS to make this critical step happen.

The Tri-Caucus

The Tri-Caucus is a loose collaboration of the indigenous peoples and other local communities as well as advocates focused on rights related to REDD+ from members of the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, the Accra Caucus and the REDD+ Safeguards Working Group.

The Accra Caucus is a network of NGOs representing about one hundred civil society and indigenous peoples' organization from 38 countries. The Caucus works to place the rights of indigenous peoples and forest communities at the center of negotiations on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+), and to ensure that efforts to reduce deforestation promote good governance and are not a substitute for emissions reductions in industrialized countries

International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) comprises of indigenous peoples organizations/institutions from seven regions of the world; namely; Asia, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Arctic, Latin America, North America and Russia. Indigenous leaders formed this forum in 2000 as a mechanism to develop and strengthen united position/statement of indigenous peoples on climate change adaptation and mitigation; and sustain its human rights based advocacy and lobby work with government representatives and other stakeholders in the UNFCCC meetings.

The REDD+ Safeguards Working Group is a North-South coalition of civil society, indigenous peoples' and local community organizations cooperating to ensure effective implementation of safeguards and the achievement of benefits for communities, climate and biodiversity through the global REDD+ mechanism. It currently comprises more than 30 organizations. For more information on our network, visit <http://reddplussafeguards.com/>.