

Country Submission of India
On
Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries

1. Background

The concept of “Compensated Reduction” (CR) was put forth by a group of Brazilian Non Government Organizations. This concept of “Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: Approaches to stimulate action” was placed in the plenary session of the Conference of Parties 11 (COP 11), Montreal on 30th November 2005 on the initiatives of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica. COP 11 in the decision FCCC/CP/2005/1.2 invited parties and accredited observers to submit their views on relevant scientific, technical and methodological issues by 31 March 2006, and requested the Secretariat to organize a workshop prior to 25th Session of SBSTA.

Accordingly SBSTA 24 decided to organize a Technical Workshop in Rome, Italy from 30th August to 1 September 2006 to facilitate experience sharing and consideration of scientific, socio-economic, technical and methodological issues and policy approaches and positive incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation in developing countries. The country submissions and recommendations of Rome Workshop were deliberated upon in the SBSTA 25 held in parallel with COP 12 at Nairobi in November 2006. It was pointed out in SBSTA 25 deliberations that the countries that have implemented strong conservation measures and regulations leading to enrichment and extension of forest cover also need to be suitably compensated and, therefore, it was essential to identify alternate approaches to reduce emissions from deforestation. India, in furtherance of the conservation and sustainable forest management based approach of Congo Basin Countries for providing positive incentives for the forest area managed sustainably, apart from reducing deforestation, presented during Rome Workshop, proposed the Mechanism of ‘Compensated Conservation’ to compensate the countries for maintaining and increasing the carbon stocks as a result of conservation and increase/improvement in the forest cover.

The SBSTA 25 accordingly decided to continue discussions on ongoing as well as potential policy approaches, and positive incentives along with related technical and methodological requirements, and invited Parties and accredited observers to submit to the Secretariat by 23 February 2007, their views in the matter for consideration of SBSTA at its Twenty Sixth Session.

2. Country submission

2.1 Forest Conservation and Carbon Capture

The Conference of Parties at its 12th session invited parties and accredited observers to submit their views to Secretariat by 23rd February 2007 on ongoing and potential policy approaches and positive incentives, technological and methodological requirements to their implementation, assessment of results and their reliability, apart

from any relevant information and data. The COP requested the SBSTA to consider this information at its Twenty Sixth Session (May 2007).

India has acknowledged the seriousness of threat of deforestation and wishes to participate actively in the international efforts to reduce deforestation at global level. India recognizes immense importance of the forest resources including land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) activities in contributing towards changes in emissions related to climate change.

India has a strong policy framework for conservation of its forests. Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (FCA, 1980) empowers only the Union Government to allow the diversion of forest land for non-forestry use. Forests are diverted only for essential and unavoidable national developmental needs and for each unit of such diverted land, compensatory afforestation on equivalent non-forest land is mandatory. The total forest area diverted for non-forestry purposes between 1950 and 1980 was 4.5 million ha (m ha) equivalent to an annual loss of 1,50,000 ha of forest land. However, after enactment of FCA 1980, the diversion rate has been reduced to about 30,000 ha annually.

Certain other important acts, rules and instructions having a bearing on protection and conservation of forests are: i) National Forest Policy, 1988, ii) Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, iii) Indian Forest Act, 1927, iv) Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and (v) National Environment Policy, 2006.

Further, mechanism of Joint Forest Management, facilitating greater participation of local communities has promoted regeneration and reforestation of about 15 m ha of forest land. India has initiated afforestation programme since 1980's on a massive scale. The cumulative area of forest plantation from 1980 to 2005 is about 34 m ha with an average annual rate of 1.3 m ha. The recorded forest area of the country at the time of independence (1947), as per Central Statistical Organization was reported to be about 40 m ha being about 12.20% of the total geographic area of India (328.72 m ha). The area increased to 68.96 m ha in 1950-51 with the addition of private forests of princely kingdoms. The area further increased to 75.18 m ha by early eighties after consolidation (SFR¹, 1999). Presently, the recorded forest area is 77.47 m ha (SFR¹, 2003).

Due to the aforesaid sustained initiatives, the forest cover of the country is now stable. The latest reports (2001 and 2003) of the remote sensing based biennial assessment of State of Forest Report (India) indicate increase in forest cover of the country. The forest cover which was 64.08 m ha as per the 1987 report (based on 1981-83 satellite data) has increased to 67.83 m ha as per 2003 estimates constituting 20.64 percent of the geographic area. Including the tree cover (forest patches of less than 1 hectare) of 9.99 m ha (3.04%), the total area under forest and tree cover is 77.82 m ha (23.68%). It may be mentioned that as per Global Forest Resources Assessment (2005) of FAO, India along with China are amongst the few exceptional developing countries reflecting net positive change in forest area during 1990s. It is pertinent to mention that out of total GHG emission of 1,226,540 Gigagram/year of

¹ State of Forest Report published biannually by Forest Survey of India

the country, LULUCF sector contributes only 14,292 Gigagram (1.16%), as per the NATCOM (India's National Communication to UNFCCC) which is one of the lowest in the world.

As per the projection of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, (2006) based on the analysis of forest cover, afforestation and reforestation, and other conservation measures, the forest cover is likely to register an increase during the period 2006-2030, and projected to reach 72.19 m ha (22%) by 2030 under the current trend scenario.

The estimated growing stock of the country in 1980 was 4,196 million M³ with the net annual increment of 52 million M³ or 1.24 % of the growing stock (SFR, 1991). The growing stock of the country in 1995 was estimated by Forest Survey of India at 4,740 million M³ with an average standing volume of 74.42 M³/ha. The total annual increment of growing stock was estimated at 87.62 million M³ (Extent, Composition, Density, Growing stock and Annual Increment of India's Forests-FSI, 1995). The growing stock of the country in 2003 as estimated by FSI is 6,414 million M³ which includes 4,782 million M³ of growing stock within forest area and 1,632 million M³ as trees outside forest (TOF). The estimates for removal of firewood from the forests vary largely, and are not reliable. However, as per the Good Practice Guidelines of IPCC, emissions from such removals may be treated as net zero.

The model based projection of carbon stocks in India's forests and tree cover, as per studies of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (2006), reflects an increase in the carbon stocks as contained in the country's forests from 8.79 GtC in 2005 to 9.75 GtC in 2030.

2.2 Proposed Policy Approach and Incentives

Proposed concept of 'Compensated Reduction' favours the countries with high deforestation rates, with the quantum of compensation likely to be proportionate to the reduction effected in current rate of deforestation.

India, therefore, as deliberated in COP 12 at Nairobi, proposes a new potential policy approach based on socio-political commitment and technological capabilities of the country. India proposes that the countries like India that have implemented strong conservation measures and regulations be suitably compensated. The proposed mechanism of "Compensated Conservation" is intended to compensate the countries for maintaining and increasing their forests as carbon pools as a result of conservation and increase/improvement in forest cover backed by verifiable monitoring systems. The conservation in India and other countries has been achieved, and is being sustained at huge costs on account of revenue loss from harvests and non-conversion to other more profitable land uses.

The incentive is proposed on maintaining and increasing the carbon stocks as a result of demonstrated implementation of strong conservation policies, and consequent increase/improvement in forest cover. This would be a strong incentive for developing countries to maintain and develop their existing forests. The incentive for maintaining baseline stock would act as insurance cover against loss of associated carbon stocks and would encourage the developing countries for enhancement of

extent and quality of forest cover, associated with increase in carbon stocks, and simultaneously contribute towards conservation of biodiversity. Such incentive needs to be provided to developing countries for effecting expansion, increment or enrichment of their forests from a previously set baseline, that may be fixed at 1990 or other appropriate level.

As per the policy approach of Compensated Conservation, for India, such incentive would not only be admissible on the incremental stock of 0.96 GtC between 2006-2030, the projected increase from 8.79 GtC in 2006 to 9.75 GtC in 2030), but also on the baseline stock of 8.79 GtC as on 2006 (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 2006).

The proposed policy approach of “Compensated Conservation” is intended to operate within the framework of international conventions, protocols, rules and regulations relating to climate change.
