

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense, lush green forest. Two people are seen from behind, walking away on the path. The person in the foreground is pushing a bicycle heavily loaded with logs. The person further ahead is carrying a large stack of logs on their back. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating dappled light on the path.

# VPAs and NDCs: sharing the toolbox?

How lessons learned from EU FLEGT can be  
put to work for the Paris Agreement



**VPAs and NDCs: Sharing the Toolbox?** – How lessons learned from EU FLEGT can be put to work for the Paris Agreement

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The pledges made by many African states in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) fall far short of integrating forest governance to meet climate targets.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency).
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative.
CAR	Central African Republic.
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership.
CSO	Civil Society Organisation.
COP	Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC.
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade. An EU Action Plan agreed in 2003 that sets out a process and a package of measures through which the European Commission proposes to address the growing problem of illegal logging and related trade.
GEF	Global Environment Fund.
GHG	Greenhouse Gas.
EC	European Commission.
ERPDP	Emissions Reductions Programme Document.
ERPIN	Emission Reduction Program Idea Note.
EU	European Union.
(I)NDC	(Intended) Nationally Determined Contributions. Pledges that countries had to make ahead of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris. INDCs identify the post-2020 voluntary national climate targets, including mitigation and adaptation, which countries committed to. They become binding Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) when a country ratifies the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation.
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. Also aims to foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
TFA	Tropical Forest Alliance.
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement. Bilaterally signed between the EU and timber producer countries, VPAs set conditions for exporting timber into the EU. In certain cases, as in Cameroon, the country may include its domestic timber in the agreement.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme.
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
WRI	World Resources Institute.

## Key messages

- ▶ **Good forest governance is integral to the success of climate policies and actions in African forested countries.** In these countries, deforestation and forest degradation are among the top sources of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, surpassing 60 per cent in some cases. The pledges made by many African states in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) fall far short of integrating forest governance to meet climate targets.
- ▶ **Commitments made by African countries under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) must feature more prominently in their NDCs.** Currently, FLEGT and its mechanisms are not properly integrated in the forest-related actions prioritised by African VPA countries in their NDCs. This is a missed opportunity for making the NDC national processes and climate policies genuinely inclusive and holistic.
- ▶ **Impact can be maximised by transposing forest governance principles into the processes by which NDCs are drafted,** in particular by: promoting a multi-stakeholder approach; focusing on transparency and accountability; strengthening the technical capacities of all relevant stakeholders; and emphasising legal reforms and law enforcement.



## Introduction

**As the Paris Agreement is ratified by each of its signatory states, they commit to put into action their specific national plans to combat climate change. These plans are called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Fern believes that these NDCs will have maximum climate impact if they incorporate the best practice from existing forest protection and forest governance schemes. This is nowhere more true than in the heavily forested nations of Africa.**

The nation states of Africa have been important participants in the long process of arriving at a new climate change agreement, recognising that the future direction of development in a continent of such size and with such a wealth of natural resources (tapped and untapped) will have a crucial impact on our ability to keep global temperature rises to a maximum of 2 °C. This commitment is reflected in strategies and statements supportive of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), by the African Union over recent years.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

In parallel to the UN-led climate negotiations and agreements, many African forested countries have joined other initiatives that have the potential to strengthen climate action. These include Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+),<sup>5</sup> the European Union (EU)'s Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan,<sup>6</sup> the New York Declaration on Forests,<sup>7</sup> and the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) 2020 Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa.<sup>8</sup>

The capacity for these various schemes to halt climate change depends very much on the extent to which their work is coordinated and mutually supporting. An important case in point is the synchronicity (or sometimes lack thereof) between NDCs,<sup>9</sup> and the FLEGT Action Plan, which since 2003 has sought to improve forest governance and halt illegal logging.<sup>10</sup>

Five African countries – Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ghana, Liberia and the Republic of the Congo – have entered into Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA), under FLEGT, to improve the way their forests are governed and promote the trade in legally sourced timber with the EU. Three others – Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic

- 
- 1 Africa Union (2014), *Draft African Union Strategy on Climate Change*. [http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/cap\\_draft\\_auclimatestrategy\\_2015.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/cap_draft_auclimatestrategy_2015.pdf)
  - 2 Statement on behalf of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) By the Republic of Sudan, at the Opening Plenary of Seventh Part of the second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. Lima, Peru, 1-2 December 2014 (2014) [http://unfccc.int/files/bodies/awg/application/pdf/adp2-7\\_opening\\_statement\\_by\\_african\\_group\\_02dec2014.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/bodies/awg/application/pdf/adp2-7_opening_statement_by_african_group_02dec2014.pdf)
  - 3 [http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/Lists/OSPSubmissionUpload/211\\_128\\_130776266564236543-AGN%20Opening%20statement%20to%20the%20ADP%202-9.pdf](http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/Lists/OSPSubmissionUpload/211_128_130776266564236543-AGN%20Opening%20statement%20to%20the%20ADP%202-9.pdf)
  - 4 [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/marrakech\\_nov\\_2016/statements/application/pdf/niger\\_cop22cmp12cma1\\_hls\\_fr.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/marrakech_nov_2016/statements/application/pdf/niger_cop22cmp12cma1_hls_fr.pdf)
  - 5 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/redd-countries-1>
  - 6 <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/es/vpa-africa>
  - 7 <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/07/New-York-Declaration-on-Forest-%E2%80%93-Action-Statement-and-Action-Plan.pdf>
  - 8 [https://www.tfa2020.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/TFA2020\\_Marrakesh\\_Declaration\\_post-embargoed.pdf](https://www.tfa2020.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/TFA2020_Marrakesh_Declaration_post-embargoed.pdf)
  - 9 [http://unfccc.int/focus/indc\\_portal/items/8766.php](http://unfccc.int/focus/indc_portal/items/8766.php)
  - 10 <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/es/what-is-flegt>

of Congo (DRC) – are in the process of negotiating their own VPAs. All eight countries also submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in 2015 ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 21) held in Paris.<sup>11</sup>

FLEGT has prompted unprecedented reforms and improvements in forest governance and these efforts can effectively support the fight against climate change. An independent evaluation for the European Commission (EC), to assess 11 years (2004-2014) of FLEGT implementation found that it is an effective tool to address deforestation and support climate change initiatives.<sup>12</sup> The African forested countries that have entered VPA agreements have made major progress in forest governance.<sup>13</sup> However, the extent to which their NDCs encompass forest governance, and can learn from the FLEGT VPA process, is not well documented and largely overlooked.

This report is a collaborative effort between Fern and its local partners in five African countries namely: Civic Response in Ghana; Forêts et Développement Rural in Cameroon; Forum pour la Gouvernance et les Droits de l'Homme in the Republic of Congo; Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable in the Central African Republic (CAR); and ONG Volet-Vert in Côte d'Ivoire. Our objective is to analyse the role of forest governance in the NDCs of the five African countries who have entered into VPAs, and examine opportunities and challenges for building stronger linkages between forest governance and climate policies in African countries. We sought to answer these following questions:

- **To what extent has the process for developing (I)NDCs been inclusive of all major stakeholders?**
- **To what extent have forests and forest governance been incorporated into (I) NDCs?**
- **What are the linkages between improved forest governance and positive climate outcomes? and**
- **What changes can these five African VPA countries make, to better coordinate forest governance and climate change actions, and how can the donor community support this?**

11 [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php)

12 European Commission. 2016. *Evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) 2004-2014*. Staff Working Document <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/report-flegt-evaluation.pdf>

13 Idem



# Methodology

This report is based on desk and field research carried out in Cameroon, CAR, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Republic of Congo. Some basic desk research was carried out for DRC and Liberia. All these countries are implementing a VPA, except DRC which is currently in the negotiation phase. All submitted their INDCs in 2015, and are now implementing them.

The desk research focused on the following themes:

- The (I)NDC process and its link to the climate agenda;
- The (I)NDCs and the forest sector;

The development and content of the (I)NDCs of the aforementioned five countries as well as DRC and Liberia; and

- Climate policies and forest governance.

Our field research was based on interviews, followed by multi-stakeholder meetings to validate the interview data. Interviews were conducted with a broad range of stakeholders using an interview guide with a list of 13 qualitative indicators related to:

- Progress in the Elaboration and Review & Preparation phases;
- Levels of participation so far and power dynamics between the main stakeholders;
- Forest governance in the NDCs; and
- Context-specific recommendations to strengthen linkages between NDCs and FLEGT.

Interviews were conducted with 46 experts from government, Parliament, national and international civil society organisations (CSOs), and donor agencies. Country-level validation meetings were organised with the experts who had been interviewed and other relevant stakeholders. These meetings aimed to validate country data and information, and agree key recommendations. This approach helped to draw out various viewpoints and refine the analysis.

A discussion of some of the initial research findings took place at the most recent Meeting of Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), during a high-level panel on *How to promote accelerated and well-coordinated implementation of NDCs and REDD+ actions on the ground in the Congo Basin*. Informal meetings with key stakeholders from the Congo Basin region during this event also served as useful pointers for the research.



## NDCs: a roadmap to tackle climate change

In 2015, each party to the Paris Agreement negotiations was expected to provide an INDC plan. 195 countries have ratified and signed the Paris Agreement (with only one Party, the USA, indicating their wish to withdraw). In most cases, they have adopted their INDC, without amendment, as the NDC they are committed to implement from 2020. 170 NDCs or (I)NDCs are now in place<sup>14</sup> (see Box 1).

These NDCs are extremely important. They are a vital tool in the effort to keep global average temperatures to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and ideally 1.5°C by 2100. At the country level, they provide a framework to coordinate government action to mitigate (and in some cases adapt to) climate change. Alone, they are not sufficient to meet these targets but nevertheless, in scope and ambition, the current process is unprecedented.

### Box 1: From INDCs to NDCs

At COP 21 in Paris, parties to the UNFCCC agreed on a new climate treaty to set their post-2020 climate actions, based on their national priorities, circumstances and capabilities. These climate action plans were submitted to the UNFCCC before COP 21 and were then known as *Intended* Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). It was further agreed that to facilitate clarity, transparency, and understanding, the INDC may include: time frames and/or periods for implementation; scope and coverage; planning processes; assumptions and methodological approaches; and how each country considers its INDC to be fair and ambitious.<sup>15</sup>

For the whole Agreement to enter into force, at least 55 countries representing at least 55 per cent of GHG emissions needed to sign and ratify. As each country ratifies the agreement, its INDC ceases to be merely *intentional* and becomes a commitment to action: an NDC.<sup>16</sup> At this point, countries have the option of reviewing and improving the transparency and ambition of their NDC before beginning implementation.

14 <http://cait.wri.org/indc/>

15 UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.20 paragraph 14. [https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/lima\\_dec\\_2014/application/pdf/auv\\_cop20\\_lima\\_call\\_for\\_climate\\_action.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/lima_dec_2014/application/pdf/auv_cop20_lima_call_for_climate_action.pdf)

16 <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

## Rationale for the NDCs

A key principle underlying the NDCs is the *fair share*, which is grounded in the UN climate convention's core principle of *common but differentiated responsibility* in climate change. While all states must commit to climate change action, historically some have contributed much more to the problem. Moreover, in the present day, the capacity for action varies greatly between states, dependant on their wealth, infrastructure and economic development. In this context, the NDC's unique quality is its bottom-up approach. Instead of setting country-by-country emission reduction targets, countries are invited to commit to climate change action between 2020 and 2030, appropriate to their historic contribution to global warming, and their present-day capacities.

Although, alone, the NDCs might not be enough to achieve the 2°C target, they will definitely deliver various benefits at both national and global levels. They will strengthen the political will to deal with climate change, even in countries where previously it has not been seen as a major issue. Other expected benefits are: a strengthening of institutional and technical capacities; better coordination of government actions, especially in Southern countries; and anticipated non-climate benefits such as market stabilisation.

## The NDC drafting process

The pledges made in the NDCs are based on the specific circumstances of the country, and the data available, which are different in each case. While the UNFCCC has not issued binding guidelines for how to develop NDCs, a typical process might adopt the following approach:

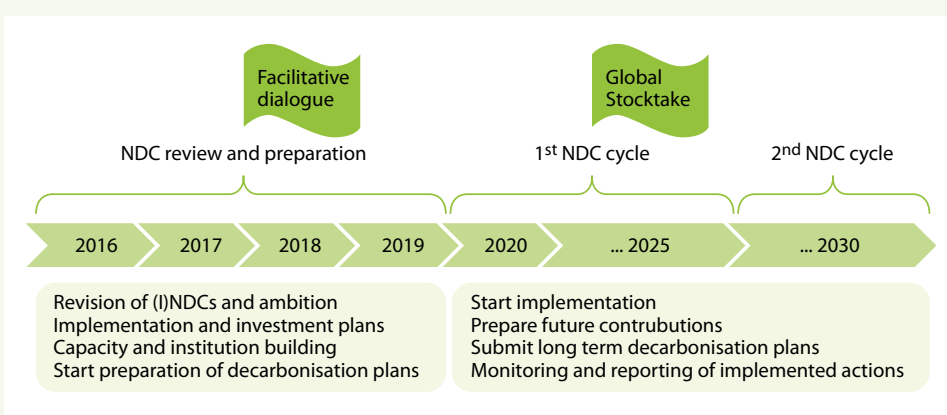
- Initiation phase: wide consultation with different parties;
- Data and analysis: country-specific data in relation to climate change drivers;
- Design of NDCs: by decision-makers with other relevant stakeholders; and
- Outreach and communication: to inform all parties and legitimise the process.

Central to the process is a collaborative approach, involving all relevant stakeholders dealing with environmental issues and climate change. This ensures strong leadership, with clearly stated roles and responsibilities, and coordination between stakeholders.

## Box 2: Phases of the NDC process

The process comprises two main phases: *Review & Preparation*, and *Implementation*. During the Review & Preparation phase, which started immediately after the Paris Agreement entered into force in 2016 and will last until 2020, countries prepare themselves to operationalise their conditional and unconditional pledges. Conditional pledges are subject to the availability of financial, technological and capacity resources. This availability is confirmed during the Implementation phase.

Implementation phase (2020–2030) ends with a global stocktake of actual achievements based on national efforts.



Sources: Röser et al. 2016<sup>17</sup>

The key timeframe for implementing the NDCs is 2020–2030. While countries can start immediately by implementing some mitigation measures between now and 2020, this period must mostly be devoted to reviewing and improving their contributions and preparing their implementation from 2020. The outputs that each country will need to deliver from the Review & Preparation phase include their revised NDC, implementation and investment plans, and improved capacities and institutions. During this phase, any gaps identified in the initial NDCs submitted between 2015 and 2016 can be addressed.<sup>18</sup>

A Facilitative Dialogue will take place in 2018 “to take stock of the collective efforts of parties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in Article 4.1” of the Paris Agreement; and “to inform the preparation of NDCs pursuant to Article 4.8” of the Agreement.<sup>19</sup> This key milestone will serve to take stock of the progress made by countries so far, and ultimately seek to create conditions for mutual learning and the enhancement of all NDCs.<sup>20</sup> This will be an opportune moment to provide recommendations on how forest governance can help to strengthen the NDCs.

<sup>17</sup> Röser, F. et al. 2016. *After Paris: What is next for Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)?* NewClimate Institute. GLZ.

<sup>18</sup> Röse, F. et al. /dem. Levin, K. et al. *Idem*.

<sup>19</sup> <http://unfccc.int/items/10265.php>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.wri.org/blog/2017/10/insider-clear-picture-emerging-talanoa-facilitative-dialogue-2018>



# The case for linking forest governance and climate change policies

The four top pledges made by states in their NDCs are: clean energy; better transportation systems; land use, land use change and forestry<sup>21</sup> and the REDD+ mechanism.

A common feature of the five African countries covered by this study is that they have made significant efforts over the past years to improve governance in their forest sector including signing or negotiating a VPA, and launching legal reforms and institutions to address illegal logging (e.g. the Independent Forest Monitor in the Republic of Congo).<sup>22</sup> Yet, in those countries, forest and land use remain important contributors to GHG emissions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: **Forest cover in the five African VPA countries**

Forest Sector	Cameroon	Côte d'Ivoire <sup>I</sup>	CAR	Ghana <sup>II</sup>	R. of Congo <sup>III</sup>
Percentage of forest cover in 2015. <sup>IV</sup>	51.4	32.1	36.2	37.9	66.5
Percentage of forest cover in 1990. <sup>V</sup>	39.8	32.7	35.6	41.0	65.4
Role of land-use change and forestry in GHG emissions (per cent). <sup>VI</sup>	58	15	22	53	64

I Coordination REDD+ Côte d'Ivoire. 2016. *Analyse qualitative des facteurs de déforestation et de dégradation des forêts en Côte d'Ivoire*.  
<https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/archive/Ghana.htm>  
 II Coordination Nationale REDD. 2016. *Stratégie Nationale REDD+ de la République Du Congo*. [http://www.cafi.org/content/dam/cafi/docs/RoC%20documents/RCongo%20National%20REDD+%20Strategy-%20%20validated%20version%2016%20July%202016\).pdf](http://www.cafi.org/content/dam/cafi/docs/RoC%20documents/RCongo%20National%20REDD+%20Strategy-%20%20validated%20version%2016%20July%202016).pdf)  
 III <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.FRST.ZS>  
 IV Idem  
 V Idem  
 VI CAIT Climate Data Explorer. 2017. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at: <http://cait.wri.org>

Data for Cameroon and CAR are drawn from various sources.<sup>23</sup>

Table 1 demonstrates that deforestation is a major source of GHG emissions. A recent WWF study of 75 recurring themes in NDCs points out ten recurring forest sector targets:

- Afforestation/Reforestation;
- Maintain/Increase Forest Cover;
- Improved Cooking Stoves;
- Sustainable Forest Management;
- Deforestation Commitments;

21 United States Agency for International Development Resources to Advance LEDS Implementation (RALI) Program. 2016. *Analysis of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)*. [https://www.climateintelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/INDC%20White%20Paper%20-%20June%202016\\_public\\_RALI.pdf](https://www.climateintelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/INDC%20White%20Paper%20-%20June%202016_public_RALI.pdf)  
<http://www.observation-congo.info/>

22 Tchatchou B, Sonwa DJ, Ifo S et Tiani AM. 2015. *Déforestation et dégradation des forêts dans le Bassin du Congo : État des lieux, causes actuelles et perspectives*. Papier occasionnel 120. Bogor, Indonésie : CIFOR

- Emissions Reductions;
- Forest Protection;
- Wood Processing/Reduced Impact Logging;
- Enhanced Carbon Stock;
- Agroforestry.<sup>24</sup>

However, forest governance does not directly appear in any of these options.

Poor forest governance is a direct cause of deforestation, and hence a contributor to climate change. In tropical countries, forest and other land uses contribute 11 per cent of GHG emissions.<sup>25</sup> Between 2000 and 2012, illegal logging led to the loss of more than 20 million hectares of forest worldwide.<sup>26</sup> Keeping forests as standing trees, or strengthening sustainable management of forests can help mitigate climate change in forested African countries.

Moreover, there is a growing literature on win–win experiences in linking forest governance and climate change policies, notably FLEGT and REDD+. VPA and REDD+ negotiations started in the five African VPA countries almost simultaneously. However, initially FLEGT and REDD+ were negotiated and implemented in silos, with very limited coordination, if any, between the actors driving them. In some cases, REDD+ was even considered as a possible threat to FLEGT’s objectives. In Ghana for example, CSOs felt that REDD+ could risk diverting government resources, and set lower governance standards for forests.<sup>27</sup>

In response, policy makers and forest governance advocates have launched initiatives to transpose FLEGT principles to REDD+.<sup>28</sup> As a FLEGT report has argued: “As the key framework to guide national climate policy, NDCs offer a platform that could be used to raise the profile of forest governance in climate debates.”<sup>29</sup> NDCs could open the space for a debate about the role of forest governance in GHG emissions, but also create synergies between forest and other relevant sectors. Because of its multiple contributions to governance improvements,<sup>30</sup> FLEGT holds invaluable lessons for the NDCs in the areas of inclusiveness, transparency, policy reforms, and monitoring.<sup>31</sup>

24 Petersen K. and Braña Varela J. 2016. *INDC analysis: An overview of the forest sector*. WWF.

25 IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Edenhofer, O., R. Pichs-Madruga, Y. Sokona, E. Farahani, S. Kadner, K. Seyboth, A. Adler, I. Baum, S. Brunner, P. Eickemeier, B. Kriemann, J. Savolainen, S. Schlömer, C. von Stechow, T. Zwickel and J.C. Minx (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

26 Global Forest Atlas. 201Y. *Illegal logging*. Retrieved from <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/forest-use-logging/logging/illegal-logging>

27 Leal Riasco I. and Opoku K. 2009. *Is REDD undermining FLEGT?* FERN. <http://www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/FLEGT%20and%20REDD.pdf>

28 Broekhoven, Guido and Marieke Wit (eds.). (2014). *Linking FLEGT and REDD+ to Improve Forest Governance*. Tropenbos International, Wageningen, the Netherlands. xx + 212 pp. <http://www.etfrn.org/publications/linking+flegt+and+redd%2B+to+improve+forest+governance>

29 EU FLEGT and REDD+ facilities. 2016. *FLEGT VPAs and Nationally Determined Contributions. Understanding opportunities*. Briefing. <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/fr/publications/flegt-vpas-and-nationally-determined-contributions>

30 European Commission. 2016. *Evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) 2004–2014*. Staff Working Document.

31 Idem.

### Box 3: Defining Forests and Forest Governance

The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) definition of forest, which is widely used among forest stakeholders in Africa, is: *“Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than five metres and a canopy cover of more than 10 per cent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use”*.<sup>32</sup> This is the definition used in this paper.

FAO and the International Timber Trade Organisation (ITTO) describe forest governance as *“the modus operandi by which officials and institutions acquire and exercise authority in the management of forest resources”*.<sup>33</sup> However, there is a wide variety of definitions of forest governance; and the *“utilisation of the term ranges from direct reference to governments, to more broad concepts of norms, processes, instruments, people, and organisations that shape interactions with forests”*.<sup>34</sup> This view of forest governance is supported by Van Bodegom et al. as they argue that forest governance also *“depends on underlying world views or paradigms.”*<sup>35</sup> The concept can therefore differ according to governments, regional or international institutions and organisations. While such diversity of definition can complicate the approaches for assessing good forest governance, the most frequently recurring principles include: accountability; coordination; transparency; stakeholder participation; and stakeholder capacity.<sup>36</sup>

The post-2008 surge in demand for land in Africa has significantly affected forest areas, as large amounts of land granted for agriculture, mining and infrastructure projects were located in dense forest areas (in particular, in Liberia, Republic of Congo, Gabon and Cameroon). Therefore, forest governance encompasses not only the way forest resources are managed through conventional forest operations, but also its clearance and replacement by other activities.

32 FAO. *FRA 2015. Terms and Definitions*. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/ap862e/ap862e00.pdf>

33 FAO and ITTO. 2009. *Forest governance and climate-change mitigation*. Policy Brief.

34 Global Forest Atlas. *Forest governance*. <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/forest-governance>

35 Van Bodegom, A.J., D. Klaver, F. van Schoubroeck and Q. van der Valk, 2008. *FLEGT beyond T: exploring the meaning of ‘Governance’ concepts for the FLEGT process*. Wageningen UR, The Netherlands. [www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/resources/Publications/](http://www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/resources/Publications/)

36 Fern. 2016. *Do FLEGT VPAs improve governance? Examining how FLEGT VPAs are changing the way forests are owned and managed*. Briefing note.







## Key findings

### How countries address forests in their NDCs

NDCs vary in ambition and focus but do have some common features. Of the 10 recurring themes identified by the WWF (see above) it appears that the most common pledges are improved cooking stoves, emission reductions, and sustainable forest management, notably through support to the private sector to improve logging operations.

Graph 1: **How the Forest Sector is represented in the NDCs of Seven African Countries**

	Cameroon	Republic of Congo	DRC	Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire	CAR	Ghana
FLEGT					✓		
Agroforestry	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Enhanced carbon stocks					✓	✓	✓
Wood processing/Reduced Impact Logging	✓	✓				✓	
Forest protection	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Emission reduction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deforestation commitments	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Sustainable forest management	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Improved cooking stoves	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintain/improve forest cover	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Afforestation/reforestation			✓	✓			✓

However, although forests appear across the NDCs in various guises, forest *governance* is mostly absent. FLEGT is not included in any of the NDCs shown in Graph 1, with the exception of Côte d'Ivoire, which states that implementing FLEGT can help revive the national forest sector, improve forest governance, and sustain ecosystem services. FLEGT is mentioned as one of the measures of the forest sector cluster, alongside: forest restoration; developing and implementing forest management plans; and slowing conversion of forest to plantations. In regard to forest governance, the Republic of Congo's NDC commits to several governance reforms in its mitigation measures including: the adoption of a new forest law; improving sustainable forest management; adopting a land use plan; certification of all logging concessions; and creating a forest observatory (see Table 2).

Table 2: Forest governance pillars in the NDCs

Key Pillar of Forest Governance.	Cameroon <sup>I</sup>	Côte d'Ivoire <sup>II</sup>	CAR <sup>III</sup>	Ghana <sup>IV</sup>	Republic of Congo <sup>V</sup>
Legal measures and policy reforms.	No specific action.	Improvement of forest governance.	Land use planning; sustainable forest management.	No specific action.	Adoption of a new forest law; management of forest concessions; implementation of REDD+; national land-use planning; setting up of a forest observatory.
Transparency.	In carbon market.	In carbon market.	In carbon market.	For the overall NDC process.	No specific action.
Participation.	No specific action.	Population's participation in forest management as a <i>benefit</i> .	No specific action.	Regular consultations with all stakeholders.	No specific action.
Coordination.	For the overall NDC process.	For the overall NDC process.	For the overall NDC process.	For the overall NDC process.	For the overall NDC process.
Capacity building.	Inform, educate and communicate on climate change.	Inform, educate and communicate on climate change.	Sensitisation, education about climate risks.	Strong component in the overall NDC process.	Training for forest officials.
<p>I République du Cameroun. 2015. Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC). <a href="http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Cameroon%20First/CPDN%20CMR%20Final.pdf">http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Cameroon%20First/CPDN%20CMR%20Final.pdf</a></p> <p>II Côte d'Ivoire. 2015. Contributions Prévue Déterminées au Niveau National de la Côte d'Ivoire. <a href="http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/C%3%B4te%20d%27Ivoire%20First/INDC_CI_22092015.pdf">http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/C%3%B4te%20d%27Ivoire%20First/INDC_CI_22092015.pdf</a></p> <p>III République Centrafricaine. 2015. Contribution Prévue Déterminée au Niveau National (CPDN). <a href="http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Central%20African%20Republic%20First/CPDN_R%3%A9publique%20Centrafricaine.pdf">http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Central%20African%20Republic%20First/CPDN_R%3%A9publique%20Centrafricaine.pdf</a></p> <p>IV Republic of Ghana. 2015. Ghana's intended nationally determined contribution (INDC) and accompanying explanatory note. <a href="http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Ghana%20First/GH_INDC_2392015.pdf">http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Ghana%20First/GH_INDC_2392015.pdf</a></p> <p>V République du Congo. 2015. Contribution Prévue Déterminée au Niveau National dans le cadre de la CCNUCC Conférence des Parties 21.</p>					

Source: Author

Table 2 provides an aggregated list of countries' commitments related to key forest governance pillars.<sup>37</sup> With the exception of the Republic of Congo, which explicitly highlights legal reform as a priority to achieve its NDC, forest governance is ignored or only appears marginally within other priorities. (See Box 4 on the importance for climate policies of law enforcement in the forest sector.) Côte d'Ivoire mentions FLEGT as a valuable measure to help reach its ambitions. It also mentions participation – not as an approach to implement forest-related measures or the entire NDC but rather as a co-benefit measure related to a process of participative management in gazetted forests. All NDCs, except that of the Republic of Congo, acknowledge that transparency is key to their implementation, but this is because it is seen as a demand of the carbon markets, rather than a tool for improved accountability and reporting in e.g. the forest sector. On the other hand, the fact that all NDCs consider coordination as an indispensable component of their approach may potentially lead to better consideration of forest governance, as forest ministry teams in charge of forest governance may ultimately have a say in the process.

37 While it should be noted that some of these commitments have been updated within strategic and operational planning documents during the current Review and Preparation phase (in the case of CAR), those updates remain insignificant too in terms of content and legal force to be considered in this study.



#### Box 4: **The fight against illegal logging: why law enforcement matters**

Deforestation is a major cause of climate change, and often linked to illegal logging.<sup>38</sup> Illegal logging derives from a complex range of factors including poverty, law and enforcement, supply and demand, and corruption.<sup>39</sup> In DRC for example, almost 90 per cent of the timber trade originates from informal (entirely or partly illegal) sources.<sup>40</sup> The usual pathway is that illegal logging leads to massive forest degradation, which in turn leads to deforestation. The resulting carbon emissions will inevitably delay countries' efforts to tackle climate change. Aside from these impacts, illegal logging can cause severe loss of revenue for countries. Each year, Africa loses US\$17 billion to illegal loggers.<sup>41</sup> In the Republic of Congo for example, these losses are equivalent to the entire budget in its NDC for strategic activities such as support to agro-industry and biofuel, improved cooking stoves, or support to build the capacities of decision makers. In Ghana, more than US\$40 million is lost every year due to Timber Salvage Permits (based on 2010 estimates).<sup>42</sup> These losses could fund a significant portion of all NDCs.

With this lack of proper consideration of the forest sector in their NDCs, countries not only fail to appreciate the importance of this sector in the fight against climate change, but also miss an opportunity for more efficient management of forest resources.

### Weak processes

NDCs have been put together without sufficient reference to all forest stakeholders. The lack of reference to forest governance is seen by interviewees, notably in Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Congo, as a sign of poor coordination between the government institutions that are in charge of implementing the VPAs. Besides poor coordination, a key challenge has been the participation of non-climate experts (CSOs and forest-dependent communities) in the NDC Elaboration phase. All interviewees for this study acknowledged that efforts are required to improve the level and effectiveness of participation of all key stakeholders.

In all the seven countries covered in this study, the NDC drafting process was led by environment ministries, with the financial support of international development agencies. Perceptions of the level of participation vary widely across our interviewees. **For some, mostly those in the environment ministries, the level of participation was sufficient, given the short timeframe and lack of funding.** However, experts from other ministries, independent researchers and civil society actors pointed out their lack of knowledge and the limited transparency of crucial information. In Côte d'Ivoire for example, interviewees from the EU delegation and civil society were unaware of the exact leadership structure of the NDC process.

38 <https://www.illegal-logging.info/topics/major-impacts>

39 Tacconi, L.; ed. 2007. *Illegal logging: law enforcement, livelihoods and the timber trade*. Earthscan, London, UK.

40 [https://indicators.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/reports/201404DRC\\_illegal\\_logging.pdf](https://indicators.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/reports/201404DRC_illegal_logging.pdf)

41 Africa Progress Panel. 2014. *Grain Fish Money. Financing Africa's Green and Blue Revolutions*. AFRICA PROGRESS REPORT 2014.

42 Global Witness. 2013. *Logging in the shadows. How vested interests abuse shadow permits to evade forest sector reforms. An analysis of recent trends in Cameroon, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia*. Global Witness Limited.

In Cameroon, CAR, Ghana, and the Republic of Congo, there were numerous instances where factual information (for instance on the existence on a clear organisational chart with roles and responsibilities in relation to the NDC, or the existence of a multi-stakeholder platform) was missing. Poor information sharing is just one illustration of the unsatisfactory levels of participation during the Elaboration phase.

**In reality, the participation of civil society in the NDC drafting process has mostly been limited to attendance at workshops.** Interviewees from CAR and Ghana felt the most positive about civil society participation. In CAR, the government convened three consultation meetings to discuss the NDC content before it was finalised. In Ghana in 2015, a CSO convened one of the most important events in the process. This event, organised by the Ghana Climate Change Coalition, saw strong participation by government representatives.<sup>43</sup> In spite of these achievements, all civil society groups and some others interviewed pointed out that participation was overall either weak or tokenistic. Aside from the officially appointed technical body and the environment ministry in each country, no one had a clear understanding of the agenda for the entire drafting process. Participants were generally invited only to the launch event at the beginning of the process, and the validation meeting at the end of the Elaboration phase. This limited the ownership of the NDC considerably and also hampered its credibility. For instance, organisations from the Republic of Congo explained that they first saw their NDC when the final draft was submitted.

**The limited participation of grassroots organisations and communities** is also a major concern. In Cameroon, representatives of grassroots and indigenous peoples' organisations attended the validation workshop. In Côte d'Ivoire, information meetings were held with a few traditional rulers, according to government officials. In CAR, Ghana, and the Republic of Congo, community groups were simply not included. Interviewees considered the process to be too complex and overly focused on consulting stakeholders in the capital cities. What is more, during the Review & Preparation phase that has already been running for two years, in none of these countries has there been an increased inclusion of community groups. Although Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire have performed better, this is more a reflection of the very poor levels of participation in the other three countries than any great achievement on their part. As pointed out by an interviewee from Côte d'Ivoire, *"we have the impression that civil society was used to validate the documents"* and give it some credibility. When grassroots organisations of limited capacity to engage, are only invited to the final stage of the process, it is no more than a symbolic gesture on the part of those leading the process, rather than a real desire to listen to their voices.

With the exception of staff directly involved, **the limited capacity of stakeholders to engage in the process is a problem** that cuts across all countries. The NDC introduced new and complex terminology requiring more time to get to grips with than the stakeholders were allowed. Attendees at meetings only received the background documentation one or two days beforehand, leaving them with no time for preparation. This ultimately gave them the impression that the NDC process was for the 'experts' only. A widespread complaint from CSOs is that either government actors did not properly understand the context, or they simply closed their eyes to the difficulties that most CSOs and all grassroots organisations and communities have in accessing the funding, required to develop their capacity to engage. While the process was quite new for everybody, a better analysis of the level of understanding before it started would have enabled more equitable engagement.

43 <http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2015/August-26th/cop21-paris-ghana-hopeful-of-meeting-deadline-in-indcs-submission.php>

**Representation and feedback** constitute another issue raised by interviewees.

Representatives from civil society were invited to the meetings by the technical team without proper consultation with the leading national environmental CSO platform. This led to organisations that had received no mandate from their peers being selected. Moreover, these CSOs did not feel obliged to report back to other CSOs. As a result, CSO representatives who attended the meetings were the only ones to be involved in the process, thus preventing civil society groups from building a common position.

As the key strategic document on climate action, NDCs must be owned and implemented by a very broad range of actors. The fact that many of the stakeholders interviewed for this paper had very little information on NDCs, and that some only discovered their content during the validation meeting, is a clear sign of poor ownership. Experiences from the FLEGT VPA<sup>44</sup> and REDD+<sup>45</sup> processes demonstrate that strong national and sub-national ownership of processes that affect various stakeholders is key to achieving common objectives.

Table 3: **Key features of the NDC Elaboration phase in the five VPA African countries**

Key components.	Cameroon	Côte d'Ivoire	CAR	Ghana	Republic of Congo
<i>Political ownership.</i>	Head of State.	Head of State.	Head of State. Presidential Decrees setting up the National Climate Unit.	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation.	Head of State.
<i>Known timeframe and responsibilities.</i>	Mostly by the Ministry of Environment.	Mostly by the Ministry of Environment.	Mostly by the Ministry of Environment.	Mostly by the Ministry of Environment.	Only by the Ministry of Environment.
<i>Inclusion of civil society.</i>	Six out of eight of the country interviewees considered it weak. Selection of CSO representatives was unclear. No report back to others.	Considered as weak to average; only invited to meetings. No reporting back to others.	Two CSOs represented, but their selection was unclear to others. No report back to the others.	One representative from civil society with no links to broader civil society.	Representatives from civil society had no mandate and did not report back to peers.
<i>Inclusion of vulnerable groups (local and indigenous communities).</i>	Involved in the validation meeting.	Information meetings with representatives of traditional leaders.	No inclusion of these groups; and no report back from CSOs to them.	No inclusion of these groups.	No inclusion of these groups.
<i>Coordination with other ministries.</i>	Involvement of other ministries, including the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, but no involvement of VPA structures.	Involvement of other ministries, including the Ministry of Waters and Forestry, but no involvement of VPA structures.	Involvement of other ministries. Process led by the Ministry in charge of forestry, but no direct involvement of VPA structures.	Involvement of other ministries, including the Ministry in charge of forestry, but no direct involvement of VPA structures.	Involvement of other ministries, including the Ministry in charge of forestry, but no direct involvement of VPA structures.
<i>Capacities of all stakeholders.</i>	Strongest capacity found in the Environment Ministry. Limited understanding in other government ministries.	Best capacities at the Ministry of Environment. Evidence of poor understanding by the others.	Best capacities at the Ministry of Environment. Evidence of poor understanding by the others.	Best capacities at the Ministry of Environment. Evidence of poor understanding by the others.	Best capacities at the Ministry of Environment. Evidence of poor understanding by the others.
<i>Donor</i>	AFD.	Global Environment Facility.	AFD.	AFD.	AFD.

44 European Commission. 2016. *Evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) 2004-2014*. Staff Working Document.

45 Luttrell, C. et al. 2011. *Lessons for REDD+ from measures to control illegal logging in Indonesia*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Center for International Forestry Research, Jakarta and Bogor, Indonesia. [http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/WPapers/WP740bidzinski.pdf](http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/WPapers/WP740bidzinski.pdf)



## Causes of the shortcomings in the NDCs

NDCs are still at a very early stage of their development, and this might explain the gaps described above. According to interviewees, both internal and external factors have limited the capacity, if not the will, of governments to properly incorporate forest governance within their NDCs.

**Short deadlines and lack of international support:** As the Paris COP 21 approached, international pressure was put on countries to meet the September 2015 deadline for INDC submissions. Developing countries and those studied in this paper received financial and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and the French Development Agency (AFD) in order to carry out their Elaboration phase.<sup>46</sup> However, leading teams complained that this support always came in late and did not allow for proper involvement of all stakeholders, or even enough time to share relevant information about the entire process. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, for example, arguably received only one quarter to one third of their financial expectations, and very late. Countries had four to six months to gather relevant data – mostly secondary data – and consult with various stakeholders.

**National structures:** Besides time pressures, the country contexts were not necessarily conducive to inclusive participation, let alone accountability. Participation is above all about power redistribution. It is therefore not something that is given; it is something that has to be taken and fought for. While the role of donors is often crucial in creating the space for participation, momentum within civil society is also needed. Those consulted, including members of the NDC coordination units, acknowledged that they knew very little about INDCs in 2015, and were therefore unable to scrutinise or contribute to the process. This situation has not changed significantly. Most key stakeholders are still learning about the process and the levers available to positively influence it. This lack of ownership is evidence of the poor level of information and participation that has so far characterised the process, but this lack, of itself, also indirectly leads to even weaker levels of participation.

<sup>46</sup> Only Ghana openly opposed the idea of recruiting external consultants from development partners' countries to prepare their NDC: <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/news/1871-ghana-to-contribute-to-emission-reduction-and-adaptation>

## FLEGT: an ignored opportunity

All the countries studied in this paper have experience of deliberative governance processes either through FLEGT or REDD+. There is no reason, therefore, why the NDC Elaboration phase could not build on lessons learned and best practice in engaging a variety of stakeholders including civil society groups and communities. The following FLEGT governance principles can help to strengthen the forest governance elements of NDCs and climate change policies more generally.

### Transparency and accountability

Transparency is the backbone of the Paris Agreement in general and of the NDCs more specifically. It will allow the global community to effectively:

- measure its collective progress towards meeting a 1.5 °C goal;
- determine if a nation is ‘ratcheting up’ its ambition over time (every five years) , in order to improve its contribution; and
- name and shame, if need be, parties that fall too far behind in achieving their pledges.<sup>47</sup>

By 2018, an international and enhanced transparency framework<sup>48</sup> will be created (to be formally adopted in 2020).<sup>49</sup> To meet this requirement, each country must develop their mechanisms for Monitoring, Reporting and Verification.

There are numerous examples of how FLEGT VPAs have improved transparency, including: civil society reports on the state of transparency in the forest sector (notably in Cameroon, Ghana and the Republic of Congo);<sup>50</sup> dedicated country websites that publish key documents on VPAs; and joint progress reports from VPA countries and the EU released and shared on major platforms.<sup>51</sup> Thanks to the FLEGT VPAs, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo have already started to properly compile, centralise and archive data and information on the forest sector.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, CSOs have been using mandated and non-mandated independent forest monitoring to generate information.<sup>53</sup> Improved transparency in some of these countries has led to reduced corruption, illegal activities being tackled and so reduced illegal logging, and communities reclaiming rights to their traditional lands.<sup>54</sup>

47 <http://envirocenter.yale.edu/transparency-the-backbone-of-the-Paris-Agreement>

48 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>

49 <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/insider-enhanced-and-effective-framework-transparency-and-accountability-paris>

50 Examples of such reports are available here: <http://www.foresttransparency.info/>

51 Such progress reports can be found here, by selecting a country: <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/es/vpa-africa>

52 Bigombe Logo, P. 2015. *Etude bilan du processus APV/FLEGT dans le bassin du Congo : Succès, contraintes et perspectives*. PNUE, FEM et COMIFAC.

53 Relevant information on independent forest monitoring can be found here : <http://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Final-monitoring-System.pdf> OR <http://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Independent-forest-monitoring-REDD-FLEGT-ENRTP-project.pdf>

54 Fern. 2015. *Seeing the Forests Through the Trees: VPA-led Transparency in Five African Countries*. Brussels.

## Multi-stakeholder processes

From negotiation to implementation, the VPA is driven by multi-stakeholder structures. Each timber-producing country creates structures adapted to the national context. During the negotiation phase, there are three main structures: Steering Committee, Negotiating Committee and Stakeholder Platform.<sup>55</sup> During implementation, there is usually a Joint Implementation Committee and a National Monitoring Committee or Secretariat.<sup>56</sup> A common factor of all VPA structures is that they are comprised of a wide range of stakeholders working according to clear rules established in advance. This not only enables ownership by various groups, it also allows respective interests to be taken into account and addresses issues related to inter-ministerial coordination and conflicting interests over the management of natural resources. As a process aimed at coordinating national climate change actions, NDCs should endeavour to involve a broad range of stakeholders and facilitate dialogue among them. This would allow better understanding and agreement between stakeholders of the final content. Key ingredients would include: agreed definition of roles; a timeline; inclusion of a broad range of actors; and strong coordination among those actors.<sup>57</sup>

## Strengthening institutional and technical capacities

A key success of the FLEGT VPAs has been the creation of civil society platforms during the negotiation phase. Where these platforms existed already, they were strengthened, and in other countries such as CAR and the Republic of Congo, they were created as part of the VPA process.<sup>58</sup> These platforms have grown stronger both institutionally and technically, and are now able to address governance issues in a variety of domains that go beyond the forest sector<sup>59</sup> to tackle forests and climate change, mining, and development.<sup>60</sup> As CSO platforms start to share their experience across the region,<sup>61</sup> it is likely that they will grow stronger and play a role in improving forest governance.

FLEGT VPAs have enhanced the capacities of all stakeholders, including government administrations, to address forest governance.<sup>62</sup> These capacities can serve the NDC process.

## Focus on legal reforms and enforcement

The enforcement of existing legal frameworks is crucial to the reduction of illegal logging, and therefore to mitigating the impact of deforestation on the climate. In countries where legal reforms are mentioned as priority actions in the NDCs, the multi-stakeholder approach from their VPAs can be replicated to develop just and inclusive reforms.

55 <http://www.vpaunpacked.org/vpa-structures>

56 Idem

57 Levin, K. et al. 2015. *Conception et préparation des Contributions prévues déterminées au niveau national (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, INDC)*. WRI et UNDP. <https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/designing-preparing-indcs-report.pdf>

58 Bollen, A. and Ozinga, S. 2013. *Improving Forest Governance: A Comparison of the FLEGT VPAs and their Impact*. Brussels: FERN

59 Fern. 2016. *Cameroon's emissions reduction proposals: Problems remain*. <http://www.fern.org/node/6097>

60 <http://forestwatchghana.org/campaigns/>

61 <https://plateformecfp.wordpress.com/2015/12/07/apv-flegt-la-societe-civile-dafrique-partage-son-experience/#more-108>

62 <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/es/publications/the-ghana-eu-voluntary-partnership-agreement>



FLEGT VPAs have clarified legislation by improving the definition of legality and its components.<sup>63</sup> In addition, newly created institutions and implementing measures have been put in place to ensure that the law is effectively enforced.<sup>64</sup>

## Growing experience of linking forest governance reforms and climate change policies and actions

There have already been national and international policy efforts to link forest governance and climate action, for instance through FLEGT and REDD+. A good example is the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). CAFI, which supports initiatives to mitigate climate change, provides strong support to FLEGT, alongside REDD+.<sup>65</sup> A 2014 report by Tropenbos International argues that FLEGT and REDD+ can help support both forest governance and climate change initiatives at the same time.<sup>66</sup>

All countries studied in this report have sought ways to strengthen the contribution of FLEGT to fighting climate change. For instance, the Republic of Congo's Emission Reductions Programme Document (ERPD) argues that improved forest governance can contribute to effective implementation of the REDD+ strategy.<sup>67</sup> Côte d'Ivoire's Emission Reduction Program Idea Note (ERPIN) is a key initiative to both reduce illegal logging and better boost the technical capacities of key stakeholders.<sup>68</sup>

63 <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/es/publications/the-ghana-eu-voluntary-partnership-agreement>

64 European Commission. 2016. *Evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) 2004–2014*. Staff Working Document. <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/report-flegt-evaluation.pdf>

65 <http://www.cafi.org/content/dam/cafi/docs/Our-work/Annual%20reports/CAFI%20Annual%20Report%202016%20-%20FINAL-%20ONLINE.pdf>

66 Broekhoven, Guido and Marieke Wit (eds.). (2014). Op. Cit.

67 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2017/May/Final%20ERPD%2020170502%20Eng.pdf>

68 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2015/September/Cote%20d%27Ivoire%20ERPIN%20EN%20FINAL.pdf>







## Conclusion and recommendations

NDCs are still at a very early stage in their development and not well understood by key stakeholders. NDCs provide a roadmap for each country to implement their vision for climate change action. Eventually, they will develop into a platform to coordinate national actions from 2020 onwards to keep the rise in global temperature to below 2°C. All African VPA countries including Cameroon, CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia and the Republic of Congo have formally ratified the Paris Agreement, turning their INDCs into NDCs.

Despite the commitment of participating countries to produce robust and reliable climate data – and hence national climate pledges – low levels of participation have weakened the entire process. Forest governance issues have been overlooked in the NDCs we studied, and key governance areas such as participation and accountability are either imprecise or absent from most NDCs.

There is ample evidence that good governance is essential for sustainable forest management and halting deforestation. African VPA countries should therefore ensure that forests and forest governance feature more prominently in their NDCs if they are to meet their national climate targets. The Review & Preparation phase and ongoing policy dialogue at the international level offer an opportune moment to strengthen NDCs and to draw on principles and reforms from FLEGT VPAs, both in terms of improving laws and policies, and creating a space for dialogue.

Forest governance issues have been overlooked in the NDCs we studied, and key governance areas such as participation and accountability are either imprecise or absent.



## Recommendations to National Governments

**Strengthening the NDCs and their implementation:** Governments and other relevant actors should strengthen NDC measures to improve forest and land governance. Such measures must be grounded in a proper analysis of the impact on GHG emissions from illegal logging, deforestation and forest conversion or land use change, and the contribution of sustainable participatory forest management models to the mitigating actions laid out in the NDCs.

**Access to information and communication:** Governments should put in place innovative and accessible information-sharing mechanisms to improve the transparency of the NDC process and encourage effective stakeholder engagement. Specifically, governments should work through national and grassroots CSOs to reach out to communities and clarify roles and responsibilities for each specific actor.

**Participation:** Governments should set up mechanisms to allow effective and inclusive participation of all key stakeholders. This should be done by mapping relevant stakeholders, and ensuring that a diversity of voices can be heard and contribute to the NDC process. Lessons learned about participation and awareness-raising tools should be borrowed from existing processes such as the FLEGT VPAs and REDD+.

**Coordination:** Governments should strengthen inter-sectoral dialogue on climate action, and more specifically on the NDCs. This could be done through existing structures and involve technical experts from those ministries whose mandates have a direct impact on climate.

**Capacity:** Governments should allocate technical and financial resources to train all stakeholders so that they can effectively and efficiently participate in the NDC process.

## Recommendations to donors

**Adequate support for the Review & Preparation phase:** Donors should increase and accelerate their support for the implementation of NDCs in those African countries that already have VPAs. As of 2018, many of these countries need and expect support to operationalise their NDCs.

**Develop well-thought-out, thorough and coherent processes:** Donors providing support for countries to develop their NDCs should be less hasty and understand the necessity of a more structured and elaborated process. This entails long-term planning with VPA countries to define the key areas of support and to get programmes up and running well in advance.

**Build on other donor-led or supported initiatives:** Donors are already funding and supporting programmes that incorporate governance reform and build participatory mechanisms to achieve climate and development goals. By sharing successful methodologies and lessons learned elsewhere in the forest and climate change sectors, donors can avoid delays and problems for which solutions have already been tried and tested. This will require improved dialogue and information sharing, through e.g. thematic learning exercises and cross-cutting monitoring and evaluation.

### Recommendations to CSOs

**Effective participation:** CSOs should be more proactively and strategically engaged in the NDC process. To achieve this, CSOs must not only advocate forcefully for effective climate action, but also address their own capacity to engage in the processes.

**Coalition building:** CSOs should break silos and improve collaboration between those working on forest issues and those active on climate change. This can be done by initiating a dialogue between different CSO platforms. Organisations or platforms working on REDD+, FLEGT, large-scale agriculture, mining and infrastructure should be able to discuss the links between those processes.



# Annexes

## Questionnaire - Indicators

### Framework of operation

1. What is the current state of Review & Preparation?
2. Is the political engagement strong and apparent?
3. Are roles, responsibilities, and timeline for the overall process clearly defined and known by major stakeholders?
4. What is the level of participation of all relevant stakeholders in the process?
5. Do the donors play, or have they played, an important role in the process and content of both the drafting and Review & Preparation phases?

### Content: Link with the forest sector

6. Were the countries' contributions effectively grounded on the strongest data available at national level?
7. Are forest governance aspects clearly set out as a major part of the country's NDC?

### Overall correlation

8. Is there an ongoing collaboration between FLEGT VPA and NDC leaders/champions?
9. Are there opportunities from FLEGT VPA that can help in reviewing and preparing the implementation of NDC and climate policies?
10. Can NDC offer a space to increase momentum for FLEGT VPA?
11. Overall, if you were to compare the drafting of the NDCs to other natural resource processes (FLEGT negotiations and REDD+ readiness), would you say that it was properly organised?

### Recommendations/expectations

12. In the short term, what can be done to improve the inclusion of forest governance (notably FLEGT) assets within NDC's implementation preparation phase?
13. In the longer term, what spaces could be seized to establish/reinforce the correlation between forest governance and climate policy?

## List of interviewees by country

Country	Name	Position	Institution
Central African Republic	Denis Beina	Directeur de la Division des Sciences Exactes et Naturelles; Expert adaptation dans le comité d'élaboration de la CDN.	Commission Nationale Centrafricaine pour l'UNESCO.
	Edouard Zama	Chargé d'études en matière de traçabilité.	Secrétariat Technique Permanent APV/FLEGT au Ministère des Eaux et Forêts, Chasse et Pêch.e
	Eric Force	Attaché de Coopération.	Ambassade de France en RCA.
	Jean Jacques Mathamale	Coordonnateur.	Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable.
	Jerry Maxime, Manza-Loti	Consultant Indépendant, Expert en Energie et Environnement, Expert atténuation.	Comité d'élaboration de la CDN.
	Maxime Thierry Dongbada-Tambano	Directeur chargé d'Atténuation des Changements Climatiques et de REDD+.	Coordination Nationale Climat.
	Philomène Bia	Coordonnatrice.	ONG Bata Gbako.
	Ralph Mercier Degue- Nambona	Directeur Général de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable.	Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable.
Cameroon	Eric Essomba	Congo Basin Team Leader.	Environmental Investigation Agency.
	Yves Boukong	Cadre.	Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune.
	Félicien Kengoum	Chercheur indépendant.	Independent.
	Augustine Njamshi	Executive Secretary.	National Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme, Cameroon.
	Dr Kagonbe	Point Focal CDN.	Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et du Développement Durable.
	Didier Hubert	Assistant Technique REDD+.	GIZ.
	Aristide Akem	Consultant.	Banque Mondiale.
	Durando Ndongsok	Consultant.	S2 Service (Bureau d'études).
	Professeur Amougou	Universitaire-Coordonnateur.	Observatoire National sur les Changements Climatiques.
	Congo (Republic of)	Mackita Jean Pierre Ruffin	Coordonnateur National.
Jean Ondongo		Point Focal Ministère du tourisme et de l'environnement.	Convention Cadre des Nations Unies sur les Changements Climatiques (CNUCC).
Adélaïde Rufine Chisso		Députée.	Assemblée Nationale.
Joseph Badevokila		Expert, ancien point focal CCNUCC.	SUSTA Consultant.
Léopold Develay		Chargé de mission.	Agence Française de Développement.
Mbouta Bafouidizo		Coordonnateur.	Centre d'urgence de développement (CUDEV).
Diabankana Merol's		Coordonnateur.	Centre Infrastructure et développement de la jeunesse (CJID).
Vénéérable Assambo Kieli		Sénatrice Coordonnatrice.	Réseau national des femmes sur le climat.
Marguerite Homb		Coordonnatrice.	Training Congo.
Joël Loumeto		Conseiller à l'environnement.	Ministère du tourisme et de l'environnement.
Côte d'Ivoire	Stephan Coco	European External Action Service.	European Union, Abidjan.
	Yanick Declier	Conseiller technique APV/FLEGT.	GIZ.
	Rodrigue N'také N'gnonzo	Facilitateur du processus APV/FLEGT.	Union européenne.
	Capitaine Ahoutou Kouakou Celestin	Membre.	Secrétariat Technique Permanent APV/FLEGT.
	Capitaine Cheick Tidiane	Point Focal APV /FLEGT.	Secrétariat Technique Permanent APV/FLEGT.
	Dr Koné Tiangoua	Sous-Directeur.	Direction de lutte contre les changements Climatiques, Ministère de l'environnement, de la salubrité et du développement durable/Direction du changement climatique.
	Marc Daubre	Consultant chargé de Coordonner l'étude lors de la phase d'élaboration des INDC.	Impactum.
	Tolla Kouassi Ismaël	Responsable Juridique.	ONG SOS Forêts.
	Baimey Charles Aubin	Directeur Exécutif.	ONG Jeune Volontaire pour l'Environnement (JVE Côte d'Ivoire).



	Pr Ochou Delphin	Point Focal National sur la réduction des risques de catastrophe.	Ministère de l'environnement, de la salubrité et du développement durable.
	Richemond Assié	Point Focal de la Convention Cadre des Nations Unies sur les Changement Climatiques.	Ministère de l'environnement, de la salubrité et du développement durable/Direction du changement climatique.
	Quequond Gelaaz	Resource person.	Personne Ressource ayant travaillé à la REDD+ lors de la phase d'élaboration des CDN.
<b>Ghana</b>	Robert Bamfo	Former Head of the Unit, Consultant.	Climate Change Unit of the FC.
	Charles Sarpong	Assistant Manager.	Monitoring, Evaluation & Budgeting, Climate Change Unit, Forestry Commission.
	Elvis Opong Mensah	Programmes Officer.	Civic Response.
	Delali Dovlo (PhD)	Senior Researcher.	Regional Institute of Population Studies. University of Ghana Legon.
	Winston Adams Asante (PhD)	Researcher & Program Manager.	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) & SOLIDARIDAD West Africa.
	Rita Effah	Programme Officer (Energy and Climate Change).	UNDP – Ghana.
	Daniel Benefoh	Programmes & a key lead on the Ghana NDC process.	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).





African VPA countries should ensure that forests and forest governance feature more prominently in their NDCs if they are to meet their national climate targets.



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