Expert Meeting on "Forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels for implementation of REDD-plus activities"

Bonn, Germany
14 - 15 November, 2011

Co-chairs' summary

Scope and purpose

- RELs and RLs are benchmarks to assess the results of the REDD+ activities

- There is a need to clarify the concepts of RELs and RLs and the differences between them. Two views at this point:
    - A single overall number reflects net emissions, which can be called either RL or REL. Emissions vs removals. For example, net source is REL and net sink is RL.
    - Two numbers. REL refers to the two activities that you are going to reduce emissions from (deforestation and degradation). RL provides you with carbon stock assessment.

- IPCC categories can be used as the basis for distinguishing activities

- The combination of RELs and RLs should be flexible enough to accommodate land use dynamics

- Excluding pools or activities from the accounting may lead to perverse incentives. Following the IPCC key category analysis will identify which pools should be included. In this context, countries need to consider which activities to include in the RELs and RLs

- Deforestation should be an activity that must be included in RELs and RLs; discussion about the requirement to include degradation

- The other activities shouldn't have to be included unless they are a major source of emissions

- Technical issues, including technical adjustments, related to RELs and RLs should be separated from policy issues and social/development considerations. The policy issues are more related to the basis for providing international incentives.

Characteristics

- RL and REL are measured in terms of units of tons per year

- The IPCC principles for reporting should guide the construction of RELs and RLs; comparability is important for the purposes of technical review. Other needs for comparability needs further discussion

Guidance for the construction

- New definitions of forests may not be needed; we should respect existing definitions

- RELs and RLs should be based on historic data (activity data and emission factor data)

- There is an interest in using projections to establish RELs and RLs, but sufficient data for doing that are not always available

- Projections could be made by extrapolating / averaging historic data and modelling. Adjustments may be needed to reflect future drivers of deforestation and degradation

- Types of information that should be provided include:
    - Scope of activities
    - Definitions
    - Time period for historical analysis
    - Scale (national/ subnational)
    - General description of agents and drivers
    - Identification of pools and gasses that have been included and explanations for exclusions
    - Descriptions of approaches, methods, models and assumptions used, and why
    - Stratification
    - Treatment of disturbances

- Guidance for conditions under which adjustments could be made, should be developed

- Transparent information should be provided to justify adjustments

- Guidance for the construction, including technical adjustments of extrapolations, of RELs and RLs should allow flexibility in order to accommodate national circumstances

- RELs and RLs should be revised over time to allow for improvement (due to better data and/or broader coverage)

- Using a stepwise approach may be useful: countries could move to higher "tiers" of RL/REL development, with different methods to project and the expansion of the coverage of pools and/or activities over time

- Guidance for the evolution of subnational RELs and RLs into national RELs and RLs should be provided

Process for communication

- Countries should submit RELs and RLs progressively, when they are ready to do so

Other

- Aligning the activities to forest related IPCC categories facilitates monitoring, estimating and reporting

- The principle of conservativeness could help in dealing with large uncertainties and in avoiding overpredicting future emissions

- Monitoring degradation is more difficult than monitoring deforestation; proxies could be used to estimate emissions associated with degradation

- The safeguards should help in avoiding perverse incentives

- Allowing tier 1 approaches facilitates broad participation of countries

- Issues were raised for further discussion, e.g. adjustments for approved policy changes, ex-post assessments of policy impacts and implications of future scientific and technical developments