

REDD-plus after Copenhagen: What Does it Mean on the Ground?

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Thousands came together in “Hopenhagen” from 7-18 December 2009 for what was the most covered and talked about of any United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) to date. Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD-plus)¹ was one of few issues on which progress was made. However, implications of the wider negotiations for REDD-plus are not yet clear. This summary considers the outcome of the COP15 negotiations, focusing on the status of REDD-plus and provisions in the current draft REDD-plus text for some of the conditions necessary to implement REDD-plus policies and programmes effectively on the ground.

Key Points from the Negotiations

- The two main negotiating tracks, the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP, are set to continue until COP16
- The COP “takes note” of the Copenhagen Accord = not legally binding, nor part of an official COP Decision – leaves uncertainties about implementation
- USD 30 billion committed for mitigation and adaptation (2010-2012)
- A REDD-plus mechanism likely to be agreed upon by the end of 2010, if a wider climate agreement can be reached
- Indigenous peoples and local communities feature as key players in REDD-plus
- Safeguards that are put into practice are a key instrument for creating REDD-plus systems that benefit all stakeholders



LONG QUEUES OUTSIDE THE BELLA CENTRE IN COPENHAGEN. BETWEEN 40,000 TO 100,000 PEOPLE WERE REPORTED TO HAVE ATTENDED THE COP15 NEGOTIATIONS AND RELATED EVENTS.

Outcome

The Copenhagen Accord

The Copenhagen Accord is not the legally binding outcome that many had hoped for. As a product of negotiations that included a diverse group of States representing more

than 80% of global emissions, the Accord is politically significant. However, as an agreement reached outside of the official UNFCCC process without the involvement of all Parties, its legitimacy is highly uncertain. As a result, the Accord is not part of an official COP Decision rather the Decision adopted “takes note” of the document. In

place of consensus to support the Accord, it contains a placeholder for Parties wishing to “associate” themselves with it. Whether association commits countries to implement the Accord is not clear. This uncertain status means that the significance of the Accord will ultimately depend on countries demonstrating their support through implementation. A first indication of this will be submission to the UNFCCC of national emissions reduction targets and mitigation actions by developed and developing countries respectively by 31 January 2010, though even this is “soft” deadline according to the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Yvo de Boer.

That REDD-plus is repeatedly mentioned in the Copenhagen Accord, and finance by developed countries committed, speaks to the support for the establishment of a REDD-plus mechanism by developed and developing countries alike. An increase of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is cited in the Accord as the maximum rise in temperature that work under the Convention will strive to keep the global temperature below. The Accord also calls for an assessment in 2015 that would include consideration of strengthening this goal, “including in relation to temperature rises of 1.5 degrees Celsius.” This is not the binding global emissions reduction target that many view as essential to the success of REDD-plus, but provides some quantitative guidance for the development of national targets. The onus is now on countries to develop reduction targets to meet this goal. The risk is that the “bottom up” approach to setting targets will result in inconsistencies between long-term goals and short-term targets.

Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Collaborative Action (AWG-LCA) Draft REDD Decision

An important outcome for REDD-plus was the Decision to extend the mandate of the AWG-LCA by one year. The AWG-LCA is the main negotiation track under which policy approaches and positive incentives for achieving REDD-plus are being discussed. The negotiations on a REDD-plus agreement under the UNFCCC are likely to continue within the AWG-LCA based on the draft text that was consolidated in Copenhagen. Emphasis on REDD-plus in the Copenhagen Accord is a good indication that a Decision on REDD-plus will be reached before the end of 2010. However the significance of such a Decision without a wider agreement on emissions reductions is questionable.

It is unlikely that the issues that have been agreed upon will be re-opened to debate this year. However, some brackets remain in the text, indicating issues that have not been agreed upon yet. Key agreed and undecided elements of the draft AWG-LCA text are summarized in the table below.

SBSTA Methodological Guidance for REDD-plus

One area of agreement was the Decision on methodological guidance for REDD-plus by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). The SBSTA text reinforces the AWG-LCA text in recognizing the need to engage indigenous peoples and local communities and develop guidance for their involvement in monitoring and reporting, but falls short of any reference to indigenous peoples’ rights.

Agreed (not bracketed)	Undecided (bracketed)
• Principle to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction	• Nature of financing (i.e. amount, source) – could be informed by Copenhagen Accord
• Safeguards (including rights, good governance and protection of natural forests)	• Scale – acceptance of sub-national implementation and monitoring
• Scope (i.e. REDD-plus)	• Link to nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs)/low greenhouse gas emissions strategies
• Phased approach (i.e. policy/strategy development; policy/strategy implementation; results-based actions)	• ‘Measuring reporting and verifying’ (MRV) for support provided by developed countries – could be informed by Copenhagen Accord
• Consideration of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure, forest governance, gender and safeguards when developing national strategies	• Commitment to MRV for REDD-plus activities and results-based actions in a phased approach
• Methodology for monitoring carbon requested - use of MRV language undecided	• MRV for safeguards included in MRV systems for REDD-plus activities



COP15 HIGH LEVEL NEGOTIATION SESSION

It accepts the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines as the basis for estimating emissions from land-use activities, removals of sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes. The draft decision allows for sub-national forest monitoring systems as long as they are part of a national system. It also promotes historic forest reference emissions levels (REL) and/or forest reference levels (RL)², adjusted for national circumstances. Adjustment means that countries with historically low levels of deforestation can add an estimated percentage increase to historical baselines to reflect changes anticipated in the absence of REDD-plus. Maintaining reductions below the adjusted level would qualify for payments, making REDD-plus attractive to a wider range of countries. It also means that some countries could receive financial support for increases above their current emissions levels.

A Closer Look at the Socio-Economic Aspects of REDD-plus

Scope

The language of the Bali Action Plan, “policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries,” is retained in the draft AWG-LCA text. This expanded discussion is labeled ‘REDD-plus.’

The scope of REDD-plus in the draft decision is very clear. The activities that can contribute to mitigation under a REDD-plus mechanism are:

- Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- Sustainable management of forest; and
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

While not entirely clear, “enhancement of forest carbon stocks” is generally thought to refer to afforestation, reforestation and restoration activities on deforested and degraded lands; though it may also include the sequestration of carbon in healthy standing forests. The reference to conservation is important particularly from the perspective of environmental NGOs. However, it is still unclear how it will be supported, because conserving stocks activities are in theory not associated with emissions reductions – one option could be to somehow skew the baseline by which performance is assessed. The draft decision requests SBSTA to undertake a programme of work to identify methodologies to estimate emissions and removals resulting from activities linked to the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

Early discussions on REDD focused on deforestation emissions only (i.e. RED) and the idea was most attractive to countries with high rates of deforestation. The scope of REDD has steadily broadened from RED to REDD-plus to accommodate different country interests. Under the broader REDD-plus, countries that are already effectively protecting their forests can benefit. Strategies which include sustainable practices that help poor people, such as providing access to forest goods, will be recognised and eligible for payments, although certain activities with livelihood benefits (e.g. shifting cultivation, which is sometimes rightly or wrongly associated with degradation emissions) may come under increased scrutiny. REDD-plus requires a more complex framework to accommodate the three additional activities, which could lead to higher transaction and implementation costs.

Financing

Developed countries responded to calls to “put money on the table,” with a commitment to provide “new and additional resources, approaching USD 30 billion for the period 2010-2012 with balanced allocation between adaptation and mitigation” in the Copenhagen Accord. A substantial portion of these funds are expected to flow through a new Copenhagen Green Climate Fund. The Fund is established in the Accord as an operating entity of the financing mechanism of the Convention to support actions

in developing countries related to mitigation, adaptation, capacity building and technology development and transfer. Six countries (Australia, France, Japan, Norway, Britain and the USA) committed USD 3.5 billion over the next three years, specifically for addressing deforestation.

In the Accord, developed countries committed to an additional goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address developing country needs “in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency in implementation.” This amount will come from public, private, bilateral, multilateral and “alternative” sources, though it is still unclear how much of this is new and additional. As such, the Accord leaves the difficult question of how to finance REDD-plus in the long-term decidedly open. A High-level panel to study the contribution of “potential sources of revenue, including alternative sources of finance” has been established to inform the ongoing debate.

The decision in paragraph 7 of the Accord to “pursue various approaches, including opportunities to use markets, to enhance the cost-effectiveness, and to promote mitigation actions” indicates openness to the private sector as one of several long-term funding sources for results-based REDD-plus actions. Given the low levels of public funding that are likely to be available to finance

REDD-plus, carbon markets may form an important part of the funding options in the long term. Emissions trading schemes in developed countries are gaining momentum, including possible legislation in the United States of America (USA), the proposals for which include significant market links to REDD-plus and also provisions for public funding. In the absence of a global deal, these domestic and regional systems, and the partnerships that they have with developing countries, could become increasingly important.

Openness to market-based funding has implications for whether REDD-plus can be expected to mobilize the resources needed to contribute significantly to poverty reduction. That said, the process through which benefits are received and distributed across stakeholders will be an equally if not more significant determinant of whether funds reach all relevant beneficiaries, including those most in need. Markets alone cannot be expected to achieve this, and existing experiences in emissions trading systems have a poor track record of financing projects in low income countries. Establishment of an equitable benefit distribution system at national or sub-national level must be a key element of REDD-plus readiness for all developing countries. Without its effective implementation will not be possible. Some countries have already begun to move in this direction. Vietnam, for example, has conducted a

Box 1: Reflections on Private Sector Financing for REDD-plus

Skepticism about private-sector contributions has been prominent in discussions about financing REDD-plus. Indigenous peoples and local communities question whether REDD-plus will differ from negative past experiences with commercial development in forests. Some early experiences may support such concerns. For example, Papua New Guinea has already encountered difficulties partly as a result of unregulated and uncontrolled private sector involvement. Some instances have been reported where so-called “carbon traders” with armed police and hard cash are using REDD to make deals with village elites, acquiring the land rights and sources of livelihood of villagers lacking the necessary information. However, this is one example and does not appear to be the case in all REDD-plus pilot schemes, for which experience is only just beginning to develop.

REDD-plus does have some differences which may enable it to diverge from the past:

- It brings a new logic to what is being paid for, with revenues derived from keeping trees standing rather than cutting them down
- Payments for emissions reductions will be performance-based
- The number of well-informed experts and watchdogs monitoring REDD-related programmes and projects is unprecedented.

The REDD pilot project in [Madagascar’s Makira Forest Protected Area](#) illustrates how this new logic can have the positive effect of creating incentives to strengthen local governance structures. National policies that support forest management by community associations in Madagascar have allowed for the creation of community groups that are benefiting directly from carbon credit sales. Buyers to date include Mitsubishi Corp., Johnson and Johnson, Pearl Jam and the Dixie Chicks among others.

study on the [design of a national REDD-compliant benefit distribution system](#) as part of its UN-REDD programme.

Safeguards

‘Safeguards’ refer to provisions in the draft REDD-plus Decision to guide effective REDD-plus implementation on the ground. The current draft Decision includes recognition of the following as elements to be “promoted” and/or “supported” in REDD-plus implementation:

- Consistency with national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- Knowledge and rights of local communities and indigenous peoples, including reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN-DRIP);
- Basic governance conditions including transparency and “full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders”
- Conservation of natural forests and biodiversity;
- Actions to address the risks of “reversals” in emissions reductions and/or carbon storage and “displacements of emissions” resulting from REDD activities³.

Including these safeguards in the operational portion of the text is widely seen as an advocacy success for the many civil society organizations involved in the debates. For indigenous peoples’ organizations, inclusion of the UN-DRIP is certainly good news. That said, “taking into account” relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws is comparably stronger than “noting” the General Assembly’s adoption of the UN-DRIP.

This indicates prioritization of the former as a framework for respecting knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. While this reference to national circumstances and laws was to be expected, many had hoped to see the UN-DRIP on equal footing. Explicit mention of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for indigenous peoples was absent from the AWG-LCA texts circulating in Copenhagen. However, reference to the UN-DRIP could be interpreted as also “noting” indigenous peoples’ right to FPIC, a key element of the Declaration.

What remains undecided for the safeguards is the strength of the wording used to commit Parties to apply them when undertaking REDD-plus activities. Whether an eventual COP Decision will affirm that safeguards are “promoted,” “supported,” or both, remains undecided. This is an important distinction. Affirming that safeguards should be ‘supported’ implies responsibility on the part of Parties to actively make efforts to incorporate safeguards in REDD-plus activities. To ‘promote’ is more passive, and could be interpreted as freeing Parties from a responsibility to take action.

Safeguards are likely to be some of the key instruments for creating REDD-plus systems that benefit all stakeholders. However, there is concern among Parties about the extent of language on safeguards in a future agreement, as stringent safeguards could preclude participation in REDD-plus and possibly infringe on sovereignty. From the perspective of poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups, safeguards are essential. These provisions are also

central to public and private investors in REDD-plus. Safeguards, including clear tenure rights, are key to reducing risks associated with investing in REDD-plus.

Text on including safeguards in REDD-plus monitoring systems is bracketed in the current draft AWG-LCA text, and as such undecided. For many civil society groups and governance experts, including Global Witness and the World Resources Institute (WRI), incorporation of safeguards in national MRV systems is a pre-condition for effective REDD-plus. Mechanisms for ensuring that safeguards are implemented are key to ensuring they are effective, but are highly



PRESENTATION AT THE SIDE EVENT “REDD MONITORING FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION: GOVERNANCE, ISSUES AND IMPACTS BEYOND CARBON”.

controversial, because of concerns about infringements on sovereignty and questions such as which actors legitimately have the right to verify compliance.

National & Sub-national Implementation

The draft AWG-LCA Decision leaves open the question of whether REDD-plus will allow for sub-national strategies and monitoring frameworks.

Most countries agree that whether or not sub-national implementation is permitted, accounting will ultimately have to be conducted at the national level to account for displacement of emissions and to implement REDD-plus at national scale. The risk of displacement of emissions is significantly higher in a framework that measures individual projects' emission changes, rather than changes across a whole country, which would undermine REDD-plus effectiveness. National accounting is one way to minimize this risk but would require significant improvements in monitoring capabilities in many countries. It has therefore been suggested by several Parties that developing countries could begin with sub-national accounting and then upscale to national level systems.

Colombia and the USA blocked agreement on this issue in Copenhagen by insisting that the draft REDD-plus text retain the option for separate sub-national accounting. In Colombia, implementing a national REDD-plus programme would be constrained considerably by the fact that much of its most densely forested areas are under the control of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and outside of the national government's ability to govern effectively. This impediment would also be a challenge for other countries. USA support for a sub-national approach is more difficult to understand. It appears in part to be due to a growing interest in accessing carbon offsets among companies in the USA, which is thought to be easier under a sub-national approach.

Ownership and Coordination

Ownership, coordination and implementation of REDD-plus policies may have significant socio-economic and cultural impacts. A number of phrases in the AWG-LCA text reflect these issues, including requirements for REDD-plus to:

- Be “country driven” and “consistent with national sustainable development goals.” This reflects concerns that REDD-plus may not align with other country priorities, such as achieving poverty reduction goals

Box 2: Getting Specific about Safeguards

Parties are “requested” in paragraph 6 of the draft AWG-LCA decision to: “address, inter alia, drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure issues, forest governance issues, gender considerations and the safeguards identified in paragraph 2 above, ensuring the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia, indigenous peoples and local communities” when developing and implementing their national or sub-national action plans.

While ‘request’ is weak, reiteration of safeguards and explicit naming of key issues such as tenure rights and gender considerations, encompassed by broader language used in the safeguards, offers positive guidance for REDD-plus planners and implementers. Anything stronger would have been difficult to achieve at the international level due to concerns about sovereignty. Also, this applies for both REDD-plus development and implementation. This encourages participation of relevant stakeholders in the planning process from the onset, not only during implementation once key decisions have already been made.

or targets for economic growth. This could increase the likelihood of failure, for example through an inability to generate high-level political commitment. It could also weaken government institutions by introducing conflicting priorities within government departments.

- “Promote broad country participation”. There are concerns among many developing countries that the rules associated with REDD-plus will preclude participation in the mechanism. For example, the stringency of REDD-plus MRV rules may preclude some countries from engaging in REDD-plus. Concerns also surround whether REDD-plus will be like another ‘Clean Development Mechanism’ (CDM) with rules that are too complex for many low income countries to benefit from.
- “Coordination of support” is another key principle, reflecting concerns about the potential lack of coordination in processes surrounding REDD-plus. A lack of coordination between international donor interests is an issue that has been highlighted under the [Paris Declaration](#), because it can undermine country systems, rather than strengthening capacities to deal with issues such as healthcare, agricultural development or environmental management.

It is easy and relatively uncontroversial to develop such principles in the context of a REDD-plus agreement, but it may be difficult to put them into practice. For example, developing rules for reference level establishment that allow broad country participation, may also reduce the efficiency of reductions that can be achieved through REDD-plus. This will attract concern from those financing REDD-plus. Evidence from national REDD-readiness efforts and pilot projects indicate that coordination issues are arising between different international interests, between and within government departments and with private sector and NGO led REDD-plus initiatives. With the increasing financial pledges on REDD-plus, the large range of donor interests and already multiple financing mechanisms in existence, these issues will need to be kept in check moving forwards.

Linking REDD-plus to the Wider UNFCCC Debate: LULUCF, the CDM and Agriculture

The REDD-plus negotiations have mainly taken place within a particular agenda item in the AWG-LCA process. However, REDD-plus is linked to discussions under other agenda items. These include agriculture (under an item called “Cooperative sectoral approaches and sector-specific actions”), nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and also discussions in the separate Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) process in relation to expanding the eligibility of land use, land-use actions and forestry (LULUCF) activities under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

These have important socio-economic implications that have been increasingly highlighted during negotiations in 2009. For example, a lobby has grown around the inclusion of agricultural emissions within a future climate change agreement, highlighting, amongst other things, links to food security and the economic opportunities of linking agriculture to carbon markets. Whether such opportunities could be realised needs to be further explored, as there is a large range of potential approaches which would affect poor people in different ways.

Following Copenhagen, the relationship between REDD-plus and the CDM is still unclear. The decision under the AWG-KP states that “Activities additional to afforestation and reforestation will be eligible” if agreed upon by future decisions. Some countries have been pushing for the expansion of CDM LULUCF eligibility in order to improve

access to the CDM. However, others have suggested dealing with additional emissions sources such as REDD-plus under separate systems given that integrating REDD-plus into carbon markets could have uncertain impacts on how such markets perform. There were no substantive links between REDD-plus and LULUCF agreed upon in Copenhagen, although some NGOs lobbied for the REDD-plus safeguards to be applied to LULUCF.

Outlook for REDD-plus

While many have described the negotiations in “Brokenhagen” as a failure, progress toward an international REDD-plus framework that recognizes good governance and engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities as key to REDD-plus effectiveness is a very positive outcome. The hard work from here will be mobilizing and directing the resources committed toward putting some of the good outcomes into practice. The true significance of the Copenhagen Accord will reveal itself in the coming months. In the meantime, there is a lot of work that can be started at the national level. The draft REDD-plus decision offers sufficient guidance to get started.

Recommendations for Effective and Equitable REDD-plus

Continued political momentum is needed to develop a strong international climate agreement in 2010. The current AWG-LCA text on REDD-plus represents a good basis for moving forward in 2010, but REDD-plus will only be effective in the context of a broad agreement on emissions reductions between all Parties.

International financial pledges must be honoured immediately and be additional to existing overseas development assistance. This is particularly critical given the likelihood that the private sector will be a source of long-term financing. Existing experience with carbon markets indicates that a lack of basic infrastructure, institutions and resources can preclude low income countries in particular from engaging in markets. Without additional up-front support for readiness activities, including safeguards, developing countries will not be able to build the systems needed to plan for and implement REDD-plus effectively.

High-level political commitment to REDD-plus and coordination at the national level need to be secured. Weak coordination must be corrected and the commitment of sectors outside of the forestry sector must be enhanced

in order to effectively address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. This will be increasingly important with more REDD-plus finance coming from a wider variety of sources. Here it will also be important for those supporting REDD-plus to stick to the principles agreed in the Paris Declaration.

Safeguards must be proactively supported in REDD-plus planning and implementation. This will require accountable and transparent REDD-plus governance systems to be established, which take into account the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and establish equitable and transparent benefit distribution systems. Beyond financing, these efforts can be supported at the international level with development of approaches for their practical implementation, drawing on existing experience. MRV of safeguards systems will be important in understanding the effectiveness and impacts of REDD-plus. However trade-offs such as high costs and independence of monitors will have to be taken into account.

Transparency must be ensured throughout REDD-plus planning and implementation at all levels. Difficulty in accessing programme and project information about REDD-readiness programmes and REDD pilot projects is frustrating forest stakeholders in most countries. Decision-makers and implementers must recognize the strong mandate to ensure transparency contained in the draft REDD-plus Decision and reverse this trend. This is equally important at the international level to help ensure a wide sense of ownership and commitment, as well as an outcome that takes into account realities on the ground.

Box 3: Events to Watch For in 2010

- Informal Meeting of European Union (EU) Heads of State, 11 February 2010 in Brussels
- Second Brazil, China, India, Russia (BRIC) Summit in Brazil
- G20 preparatory meetings
- Next meetings of the SBSTA and the AWG-LCA, 31 May to 11 June 2010 in Bonn
- UNFCCC COP16, 29 November to 10 December 2010 in Mexico City

Endnotes

- ¹ 'REDD-plus' has now replaced 'REDD,' due to agreement on the scope of activities eligible for payment under the global mechanism being negotiated. For a full explanation, see the section on Scope on page 3.
- ² RELs refer to gross emissions from a geographic area estimated within a reference time period. RLs include gross removals (of atmospheric carbon) and net emissions from a geographic area estimated within a reference time period. An important distinction when it comes to setting baselines is that while RLs allow for a historical baseline to be based on a proxy of X hectares of forest, RELs require historical baselines to be based on actual emissions over time. This has been a source of disagreement between Parties.
- ³ "Reversals" and "displacement of emissions" is the current language used in the draft AWG-LCA text to refer to the concepts more commonly known as 'non-permanence' and 'leakage' respectively.

About REDD-net

REDD-net is an international knowledge forum for southern civil society organizations through which they can access information about efforts to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, share their own experiences and help to build pro-poor REDD projects and policies. REDD-net is a partnership between Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD). REDD-net is funded by Norad and the World Bank.

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REDD-NET'S GLOBAL LAUNCH TOOK PLACE AT FOREST DAY 3 IN COPENHAGEN. REDD-NET WAS INVITED TO SPEAK AT THE 'SOCIAL EFFECTS OF REDD INITIATIVES' LEARNING EVENT AND RUN AN EXHIBITOR STAND.