



# Conserving Forests to Combat Climate Change

What is REDD+, how was it created  
and where is it going?

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the environmental integrity  
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REDD+ requires a national  
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# Executive Summary

In December 2015, with the signing of the Paris Agreement, the nations of the world reached agreement on a historic, collective and comprehensive approach to combat climate change. The primary goal of the agreement, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and try to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

Within that agreement is a recognition of the critical role of forests, including actions to halt and reverse the rate of deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, which have contributed up to 20 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions. To assist countries in these actions, the agreement includes a framework of policies and incentives for reducing deforestation and forest degradation and increasing carbon storage in forests through conservation and sustainable management. This is known as REDD+.

REDD+ has evolved over a decade of discussions, research and negotiations to become a key piece of the newly adopted climate architecture. It is flexible by design, as it recognizes the significant differences across countries in terms of societal and governance structures, histories, laws, economies, and ecological and environmental factors. It is intended to support the

necessary economic transitions and shifts to sustainable landscape management as part of a country's low carbon development. To ensure that it contributes to the environmental integrity of the climate regime, REDD+ requires a national commitment—not isolated projects.

No more foundational decisions are needed for REDD+ to be fully implemented. The adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 solidified the foundation for REDD+. The agreement referenced, in a single paragraph, the entire body of decisions, including the objectives, rules, guidelines and guiding principles for REDD+.

The focus now is on actions to implement and support REDD+ initiatives.

To do so, a solid understanding of REDD+ and the Paris Agreement is needed. The aim of this paper is to provide a foundation for describing what REDD+ is, in a manner that is accessible to policy makers, scientists and civil society and in a form that is completely consistent with the UNFCCC decisions and agreements.

**The broad intent of REDD+ is to help countries shift to low-emissions development pathways by increasing the value of healthy forests relative to other land uses.**

# Introduction

Greenhouse gas emissions are at an all-time high. If emissions are not reduced, it will be nearly impossible to hold global warming to below 2°C.

One of the best ways to address this challenge is to keep trees standing, as healthy forests are one of the largest store houses of carbon. And unhealthy forests—those that have been degraded or deforested—are the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, after the burning of fossil fuels.

An approach called REDD+ is one of the most promising means for keeping trees standing in developing countries. “REDD” stands for “reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation.” The thought leaders behind REDD+ agreed that incentives are necessary not only to reduce emissions by tackling the drivers of forest loss, but also to avoid emissions and increase storage by taking proactive measures to conserve and restore forests. That is the “+” in “REDD+.”

The aim of REDD+ is to slowly halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss in developing countries. The broad intent of REDD+ is to help countries shift to low-emissions development pathways by increasing the value of healthy forests relative to other land uses. Achieving and sustaining the objectives of REDD+ requires the transformation of economic activities within and outside of the

forests, often referred to as the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

REDD+ was born in 2005 but its importance was not fully and formally recognized until December 2015, when the 197 parties to the UNFCCC adopted the Paris Agreement—a landmark global pact to curb climate change. Recognizing REDD+ in the Paris Agreement was seen as a means to highlight and validate the system of incentives for developing countries to conserve forests in the context of poverty reduction and economic development.

It also filled a gap left by the Kyoto Protocol, which went into effect in 2005. Prior to the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol was the main tool to achieve the objective of the UNFCCC: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. However, the protocol did not include emissions caused by the unsustainable exploitation and destruction of forests in developing countries.

With the Paris Agreement in place, REDD+ are now a key piece of the new climate architecture adopted by every country in the world. No additional foundational decisions are needed for REDD+ to be fully implemented. The focus now is on implementation and support of REDD+.



# REDD+ in a Nutshell

REDD+ is a voluntary approach for developing countries and includes five activities:

- Reduce emissions from deforestation
- Reduce emissions from forest degradation
- Conserve forest carbon stocks
- Sustainably manage forests
- Enhance forest carbon stocks

It has four components:

- A national strategy or action plan
- A national forest reference level as the basis for accounting the results of REDD+ activities
- A national forest monitoring system
- A system for reporting how all of the REDD+ social and environmental safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities

Countries implementing REDD+ may pass through three phases:

- The development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building
- The implementation of national policies and measures, as well as national strategies or action plans, that could involve capacity building, technology development and transfer, and results-based demonstration activities
- Results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified

Financial support for REDD+ may come from a variety of sources, such as the public and private sectors and bilateral and multilateral agreements. This funding may include payments for emissions reductions achieved through the implementation of REDD+ activities. These are called results-based payments.



# What is the Mitigation Potential from Avoiding Tropical Deforestation?

The *Third Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>1</sup>, published in 2001, concluded that tropical deforestation accounted for roughly 20 percent of global, human-caused emissions. In its 2014 *Fifth Assessment Report*, the IPCC estimated that net emissions from forest loss accounted for about 11 percent of global emissions.<sup>2</sup> However, this net figure includes the positive effect of forest regrowth. The latest estimates of mitigation potential from avoiding tropical deforestation are up to 20 percent of total annual emissions. In addition, continuing to reforest cleared land could bring the mitigation potential up to 31 percent.<sup>3</sup>



# The Birth and Evolution of REDD+

2003

The original concept of an international incentive system for reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries was first presented to UNFCCC<sup>4</sup> participants in a side event at the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP9<sup>5</sup>) in 2003 (Santilli *et al*, 2003<sup>6,7</sup>) as a scheme of “compensated reductions.” The basic premise of this model was that the promise of payment for emissions reductions from avoided deforestation would be an incentive for the additional domestic actions needed to slow and halt deforestation. A key difference in this concept from previous attempts to provide incentives for emissions reductions in the forest sector was the focus on results at the national scale.

When the eligibility of avoided deforestation was previously discussed, under the UNFCCC’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the focus on project-based activities brought up the concern that the causes of deforestation, if excluded from the project area, would simply shift their influence outside of the project’s boundary. This problem is known as “leakage.” The compensated reductions proposal (Santilli *et al*, 2003<sup>8,9</sup>) addressed the problem of domestic leakage by calculating emissions reductions from avoided deforestation against a national baseline and requiring a national monitoring system. The risk of international leakage is addressed if all countries participate in this effort. Another significant concern included the ability to establish a credible baseline against which to measure and verify reductions in emissions.<sup>10</sup> There also were questions about whether the reductions could be emitted at a future date and, therefore, would not be permanent. While solutions were developed to address these issues in the case of afforestation and reforestation projects under the CDM, avoided deforestation projects were excluded.

2005

In 2005, the COP11 initiated a formal process to consider “Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action.”<sup>11</sup> This was the outcome of a request to do so by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, the IPCC’s latest findings on the magnitude of the emissions from deforestation,<sup>12</sup> and the potential for developing countries to meaningfully participate in emissions reductions.

The process included a series of official workshops that served as open fora for sharing views, experiences and proposals to address the full range of issues raised by countries and observers. It also included two years of in-depth technical discussions.

**2007**

This led to an agreement at COP13 to launch a formal work program under the 2007 Bali Action Plan to address “policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to REDD+.”<sup>13</sup> Notably, the COP13 decisions also broadened the scope of activities that now comprise the acronym REDD+: reducing deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

COP13 also provided preliminary guidance<sup>14</sup> for undertaking and evaluating a range of demonstration activities to address the drivers of deforestation. This guidance captured some of the conclusions of the workshops related to issues of scale and reference levels, highlighting the role of national government oversight of demonstration actions and encouraging independent expert review. The preliminary guidance coincided with the launch of the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility<sup>15</sup> and the UN-REDD Programme.<sup>16</sup>

**2008-11**

The process of negotiations launched by COP13 produced, in relatively rapid succession, the key REDD+ decisions at COP14 (Poznan, 2008), COP15 (Copenhagen, 2009), COP16 (Cancun, 2010) and COP17 (Durban, 2011).

**2013**

Next came the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ at COP19 (2013), which resolved key areas of contention, resulting in seven separate decisions informally referred to as the REDD+ Rulebook.

**2015**

Three more decisions were agreed,<sup>17</sup> along with the adoption of the Paris Agreement at COP21 (2015). The Paris Agreement highlights the role of forests in combatting climate change and formally recognizes all of the existing rules and guidance for REDD+ previously agreed to by the COP.



These milestones would not have been reached if the concerns related to REDD+ had not been addressed. There were concerns, for example, about the capacity in developing countries to apply REDD+ methods and tools to confidently monitor and measure changes in forest carbon stocks. Also, civil society organizations and several governments were concerned about the ability to monitor safeguards associated with the conversion of natural forests and the conservation of biodiversity. Advances in science and technology helped address those concerns and provided confidence that other concerns and challenges could be overcome.

The advances also informed the development and implementation of the UNFCCC guidance on REDD+. They, too, informed the development of methods and tools for forest measurement; monitoring and estimating related GHG emissions; determining reference levels; and measuring, reporting and verifying results of REDD+ activities.<sup>18</sup>

Continuing advancements in science and technology—such as data collection through aerial and satellite imagery and ground surveys—will further enhance measurement and monitoring capability, thereby increasing confidence in the results of REDD+. However, advancement in the state of science does not guarantee that the technical capacities and available resources will be sufficient and applicable in all countries.

**REDD+** refers to policy approaches and positive incentives for activities in developing countries that aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss.

# How does the UNFCCC define REDD+?

The purpose of this section is to explain REDD+ and how it is intended to work, based solely on the UNFCCC decisions. Our aim is to provide explanations that are as clear and simple as possible, while remaining true to the meaning and intent of the text of the UNFCCC agreements and decisions. Many of the elements that define the REDD+ framework are the product of multiple and successive decisions, with the most recent decisions recalling previous relevant decisions. The explanations generally paraphrase the negotiated text but, occasionally, incorporate pieces of the referenced UNFCCC decision text to ensure an accurate interpretation.

REDD+ refers to policy approaches and positive incentives for activities in developing countries that aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss.

REDD+ is defined by five activities:<sup>19</sup>

- Reducing emissions from deforestation
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation
- Conservation of forest carbon stocks
- Sustainable management of forests
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks

In UNFCCC decision texts, REDD+ activities are always referred to as “the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of decision 1/CP.16” after the initial definition within the Cancun Agreement text. Acronyms, other than UNFCCC and COP, are not used in COP decisions.

*The purpose of REDD+ is to contribute to climate change mitigation.*

All countries acknowledge that they should do what they can—according to their responsibilities and capabilities—to slow, halt and reverse the loss of forest cover and carbon loss in order to help achieve the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC: to stabilize the global climate at a “safe” level.<sup>20, 21</sup>

*REDD+ must be implemented at the national level.*

All of the guidance and decisions of the COP related to REDD+ refer to actions at the national level. There is not a project-based approach for REDD+ under the UNFCCC and REDD+ is not part of the Clean Development Mechanism. If a country is not yet able to do so at a national level, there is allowance for sub-national monitoring and reporting of REDD+ activities as an interim measure.



*REDD+ is voluntary.*

Developing countries are encouraged, but not required, to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector through the UNFCCC framework for REDD+. They can determine if and to what extent they will contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking REDD+ activities in accordance with their respective capabilities and national circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

The 2010 Cancun Agreement clearly establishes the geographical scope of REDD+ under the UNFCCC at the national level. It sets requirements for a national strategy or action plan, a national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level, and a national forest monitoring system for the monitoring and reporting of the REDD+ activities.<sup>23</sup> Sub-national forest reference levels and monitoring and reporting systems can be recognized as interim measures. But leakage must be monitored and reported at the national level.<sup>24</sup>

### *There are three phases to REDD+ implementation.*

The Cancun Agreement<sup>25</sup> describes three phases of implementing REDD+ activities:

- **Readiness:** The development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building.
- **Implementation:** The implementation of national policies and measures—as well as national strategies or action plans—that could involve further capacity building, technology development and transfer, and results-based demonstration activities.
- **Results-based finance:** Results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified. Full implementation of REDD+ activities, for the purpose of receiving results-based payments, refers to this third phase.<sup>26</sup>

These phases are meant as a guide, rather than a series of

requirements, for developing countries and those providing support.<sup>27</sup> Given the range of national and sub-national circumstances and capacities, it is expected that countries will begin the REDD+ process in different phases.<sup>28</sup>

The three phrases were created to recognize that countries face different challenges based on their respective capacities and capabilities and need varying amounts of time and support to achieve results under REDD+.

### *Who is responsible for providing financial support for REDD+?*

REDD+ decisions, dating back to COP13, have consistently recognized the importance and necessity of adequate and predictable international financial support for all aspects and phases of implementation of REDD+ activities.<sup>29</sup> Financial support may come from a variety of sources, such as the public and private sector and bilateral and multilateral agreements.<sup>30</sup> The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) have important roles in supporting the implementation of REDD+ activities,<sup>31</sup> given that they are the financial institutions linked to the UNFCCC. The COP has specifically requested that the GCF apply the methodological guidance for REDD+ when providing results-based finance for the full implementation of REDD+ activities.<sup>32</sup>

As part of their obligation under the UNFCCC,<sup>33</sup> developed countries are encouraged to provide adequate and predictable financial

resources for REDD+ actions, including through results-based payments. In this context, results-based payments are payments for metric tons of net emissions reductions achieved.

Funds should be used to support capacity building; provide technical assistance; facilitate the transfer of technology to improve data collection, the estimation of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and monitoring and reporting; and address the institutional needs of developing countries to estimate and reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.<sup>34</sup>

### *What are the pre-requisites for receiving results-based payments for REDD+?*

If a developing country is seeking to receive results-based finance for REDD+ activities (i.e., payment for results), four elements must be in place:<sup>35</sup>

- A national strategy or action plan
- A national forest reference level as the basis for accounting the results of REDD+ activities
- A national forest monitoring system for the monitoring and reporting of the REDD+ activities
- A system for reporting, and a recent summary of information, on how all of the REDD+ social and environmental safeguards<sup>36</sup> are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities<sup>37</sup>

With these elements in place, a country is eligible to receive results-based payments if their results have been fully measured, reported and verified in accordance with the relevant UNFCCC guidance and processes.<sup>38</sup> Once all of the information is available and communicated to the UNFCCC, it will be published on the UNFCCC REDD+ Information Hub,<sup>39</sup> along with information on corresponding results-based payments.<sup>40</sup>

### *What are the requirements and guidance for a national REDD+ strategy or action plan?*

The strategy or action plan should identify what is causing a country's deforestation and forest degradation (commonly referred to as "drivers"); how to address the drivers; and what activities are undertaken in order to reduce emissions, increase removals and stabilize forest carbon stocks. In developing and implementing national strategies or action plans, countries should ensure the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders (including indigenous people and local communities) and address land tenure issues, forest governance issues, gender consideration and the REDD+ safeguards.<sup>41</sup>

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+<sup>42</sup> recognized the multiple causes of deforestation and forest degradation and that actions to address these drivers are unique to countries' national circumstances and capacities. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector are encouraged to take action to reduce the identified drivers while managing the potential impact on local livelihoods.



*How are the “results” of REDD+ measured?*

The results of REDD+ actions are the emissions reductions achieved through the implementation of REDD+ activities, such as reducing deforestation or reforestation efforts. The results of implementing one or more REDD+ activities, over a given period, are measured against the forest reference levels and should be expressed in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.<sup>43</sup>

## *How are unintended negative social and environmental impacts avoided?*

The 2010 Cancun Agreements established a set of seven social and environmental safeguards when implementing REDD+ activities, as well as guidance for systems to provide information on how countries are implementing the safeguards.<sup>44</sup> Countries should start providing a summary of that safeguard information to the UNFCCC once they begin implementing REDD+ activities and periodically thereafter.<sup>45</sup> Doing so is a means for reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts REDD+ could have on social and environmental values, beyond GHG emissions and associated climate change.

The social safeguards promote and support good governance, respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous people and members of local communities, and the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of REDD+ activities.

The environmental safeguards promote and support the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity. This helps ensure that REDD+ actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are, instead, used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, as well as to enhance other social and environmental benefits.

To maintain the environmental integrity of REDD+, countries should address the risk of reversals of GHG benefits when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans, since reversals may result in the non-permanence of emissions reductions or carbon storage. Reversals can be characterized as unintentional risks (e.g., due to natural disturbances beyond a country's control) and intentional risks (e.g., caused by harvesting, land clearing, intentionally-set fires and other purposeful actions).<sup>46</sup> In addition, countries should promote and support actions to reduce leakage.<sup>47</sup>



## *What is a REDD+ safeguard information system and why is it needed?*

Countries are required to develop a system for providing information on how the REDD+ safeguards are addressed and respected.

Systems for providing this information should:<sup>48</sup>

- Be consistent with the guiding principles of the Cancun decision on REDD+;<sup>49</sup>
- Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
- Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
- Provide information on how all of the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected;
- Be country-driven and implemented at the national level; and
- Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

## *What is the purpose of a national forest monitoring system and what are the requirements?*

The purpose of a national forest monitoring system (NFMS) is to provide country-specific data on activities affecting forests. This is necessary for measuring the impacts of REDD+ activities. The NFMS should follow the latest scientific guidelines published by the IPCC in order to produce high quality and consistent data. Countries wanting to obtain results-based payments for REDD+ must provide information on their NFMS<sup>50</sup> as part of their biennial update reports to

the UNFCCC.<sup>51</sup> Monitoring and reporting may be done at a sub-national level as an interim measure.

For measuring and reporting on REDD+ activities, developing countries are requested to use the latest IPCC guidelines, as appropriate,<sup>52</sup> and to establish a robust national forest monitoring system that provides estimates that are transparent, consistent, as accurate as possible and reduce uncertainties.<sup>53</sup>

## *What is the purpose of a national forest reference level for REDD+ and what are the requirements?*

A national forest reference level (RL) is the baseline used to calculate the change in GHG emissions resulting from the implementation of REDD+. RLs should be based on historic information over a chosen period of time,<sup>54</sup> including rates of deforestation, harvesting and other activities that affect the amount of carbon stored in the forest. RLs should be reviewed and revised periodically. The UNFCCC provides guidance on the construction of RLs and manages a process of independent technical assessment of RLs submitted by countries.

On a voluntary basis, a developing country may submit a proposed forest RL to the UNFCCC secretariat so it can be technically assessed, which is a pre-requisite for results-based payments. In the construction of the RL, the country must maintain consistency with its greenhouse gas inventories, utilize the latest IPCC guidance,

and provide information and rationale on the development of the RL, including for any adjustments to account for specified national circumstances. In the course of developing a national RL, an interim RL may be submitted that covers less than the country's entire forest area. Following a stepwise approach that encourages improvement to the quality of the RL, a country should periodically update their RL to take into account new knowledge, new trends and any modification of scope and methodologies.<sup>55</sup> The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ includes detailed guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of proposed RLs submitted by countries. RL assessment reports are published on the UNFCCC REDD+ web platform.<sup>56</sup>

### *What is required to measure, report and verify the results of REDD+ activities?*

There are rules and procedures established under the UNFCCC for measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) all mitigation actions in all sectors, applicable to all countries. For those countries seeking to obtain results-based payments for REDD+, additional rules, procedures and guidance for MRV have been established.<sup>57</sup>

- **Measurement:** REDD+ activities and their effects (GHG emissions and removals) are measured at the national level using the latest IPCC guidance, as appropriate. On an interim basis, they can be measured at the subnational level. Consistency in measurement is essential when comparing the GHG emissions and removals to the established RL, in order to

determine the results of the REDD+ activities undertaken.<sup>58</sup>

- **Reporting:** Countries seeking to obtain results-based payments must report the data and information used in measuring the results. This information is included in their biennial update reports. The reports are submitted by developing countries under the UNFCCC every two years and contain a national inventory report and information on mitigation actions, needs and support received. Additional flexibility is given to the least developed countries and small island developing states.<sup>59</sup>
- **Verification:** Verification is addressed at the international level under the UNFCCC, as part of a broader process of review of the biennial reports called "international consultation and analysis." Procedures and specific guidance are provided for the analysis of the technical annex containing the REDD+ results and for the composition of the team of experts conducting the technical assessment of the annex. Two technical experts assess the annex containing REDD+ results and engage in a process of discussion and clarification with the REDD+ country. The results are assessed for consistency with the established guidelines. Potential areas for improvement are then suggested. Technical reports prepared by each technical team of experts are published by the UNFCCC secretariat on the UNFCCC website.<sup>60</sup>



*What is the relationship between REDD+ activities and non-carbon benefits?*

The UNFCCC recognizes the importance of incentivizing non-carbon benefits for the long-term sustainability of the implementation of REDD+ activities. But those benefits are not a requirement for countries seeking support for implementation or results-based finance for REDD+ activities. While the focus of measurement is on carbon and GHGs, the importance of non-carbon benefits is also reflected in COP decisions and guidance. Countries seeking support for the integration of non-carbon benefits into REDD+ activities may provide relevant information for consideration by interested countries and relevant financing entities.<sup>61</sup>

**All nations should take action to conserve and enhance the role of “sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gas emissions.”**

# Implications for REDD+ under the Paris Agreement

The 2015 Paris Agreement highlights the role forests and other carbon stores (known as “sinks and reservoirs”) should play in meeting global and national climate change mitigation goals. In particular, Article 5 of the agreement highlights the role of forests in combatting climate change and effectively recognizes all of the existing guidance for REDD+ previously agreed to by the COP. This article states that all nations should take action to conserve and enhance the role of “sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases,” which include biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.<sup>62</sup> Nations are encouraged to take action to implement and support the existing REDD+ framework as set out in related guidance and decisions.<sup>63</sup> This can be done in several ways, including through results-based payments. As specified in Article 4 of the Paris Agreement, REDD+ activities will also contribute to the goal of achieving a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century. Key elements of the agreement are addressed below.

## *What is the connection between REDD+ and Nationally Determined Contributions?*

REDD+ is a voluntary tool. In the agreement, there is no specific guidance for its consideration in Nationally Determined Contributions

(NDCs). However, Article 4, paragraph 14, of the agreement states that, “In the context of their nationally determined contributions, when recognizing and implementing mitigation actions with respect to anthropogenic emissions and removals, Parties should take into account, as appropriate, existing methods and guidance under the Convention, [...]”. This implies that the REDD+ activities, if planned or implemented, could be recognized in an NDC as part of the mitigation potential that the country can achieve in the forest and land sectors. Furthermore, Article 5, paragraph 1, of the agreement states that “Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases [...], including forests.” Therefore, following Article 5, paragraph 2, Parties are encouraged to consider REDD+ activities or their potential contributions to national emissions reductions in NDCs, taking into account the existing REDD+ framework as set out in related UNFCCC guidance and decisions.

## *What are the transparency requirements?*

The agreement created a transparency framework to ensure a degree of accountability for promised targets and contributions.<sup>64</sup> It outlines a process requiring regular disclosure of performance against NDCs and any financial obligations, accurate and complete data, independent reviews and consistent reporting. It allows



flexibility for poorer countries that may have insufficient capacity to fully respond. The process to develop rules and procedures for the transparency framework, through its reference to the transparency arrangements under the Convention, implicitly draw upon the REDD+ reporting and verification provisions agreed under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+.<sup>65</sup>

Article 13 of the agreement, while not specific to REDD+, also requires each country to regularly provide a national GHG inventory report that should include significant forest-related emissions and removals. It also requires the provision of information necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving its NDC. If a country included REDD+ actions within its NDC, progress made—including any results—would be reported here.<sup>66</sup> Developed countries are required to provide information on financial, technology transfer and capacity building support provided to developing countries. Where these countries provide support for REDD+, it would be reflected here.<sup>67</sup> Developing countries should provide information on financial, technology transfer and capacity building support needed and received. Again, REDD+ could be reflected here.<sup>68</sup> The transparency framework includes a process for a technical expert review of the information submitted by each country.<sup>69</sup>

### *Can international transfers of REDD+ results be made?*

Article 6 of the agreement establishes two approaches for pursuing voluntary cooperation in the implementation of NDCs. The intent

of this is to allow for higher ambition in mitigation and adaptation actions and promote sustainable development and environmental integrity. Towards the achievement of their NDCs, Parties may use internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs) and/or participate in a sustainable development mechanism (SDM). An ITMO involves an agreement between participating countries to, in effect, transfer a quantity of emissions reductions as a means to achieve their NDCs.<sup>70</sup> The SDM is a mechanism that, once fully developed, will contribute to the mitigation of GHG emissions and support sustainable development.<sup>71</sup> The agreement contains no rules or guidance specific to REDD+ or any individual sector's mitigation activities.

Countries that choose to engage on a voluntary basis in cooperative approaches that involve the use of ITMOs towards NDCs, as authorized by participating countries, must promote sustainable development and ensure environmental integrity and transparency (including in governance) and must apply robust accounting to ensure, inter alia, the avoidance of double counting.<sup>72</sup> The SDM is under the authority and guidance of the COP, which must adopt rules, modalities and procedures and designate a body to supervise the SDM.<sup>73</sup> While earlier decisions under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ do not pre-judge future decisions of the COP regarding, in effect, ITMOs or the SDM,<sup>74</sup> it was agreed that additional verification procedures may be needed in the context of market-based approaches that could be developed under the UNFCCC.<sup>75</sup>

# Endnotes

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- 16 See [www.un-redd.org](http://www.un-redd.org)
- 17 UNFCCC, 2015. Decisions 16, 17 and 18 / CP.21.
- 18 Scott J. Goetz, Matthew Hansen, Richard A. Houghton, Wayne Walker, Nadine Laporte, and Jonah Busch. 2014. "Measurement and Monitoring for REDD+: The Needs, Current Technological Capabilities and Future Potential." CGD Working Paper 392. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. <http://www.cgdev.org/publication/measurement-and-monitoring-redd-needs-current-technological-capabilities-and-future>
- 19 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70.
- 20 The Paris Agreement effectively defines "safe" as "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" (UNFCCC, 2015, The Paris Agreement, Article 2, paragraph 1(a).)
- 21 United Nations, 1992. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article 2; and UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16. Preamble of Section C and Appendix 1, paragraphs 1 (a) and (b).
- 22 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16. Paragraphs 70 and 74, and Appendix 1, paragraphs 1 (c) and (e).
- 23 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71; and UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 11/CP.19, paragraphs 2 and 4.
- 24 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(c) and 77.
- 25 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 73.
- 26 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 77.
- 27 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 2.
- 28 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 74.
- 29 UNFCCC, 2015. Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 54; and UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 9/CP.19, preamble.
- 30 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 1.
- 31 UNFCCC, 2011. Decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 68 and UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 5.
- 32 UNFCCC, 2011. Decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 68 and UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraphs 5 and 7.
- 33 United Nations, 1992. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article 4, paragraph 3.
- 34 UNFCCC, 2007. Decision 2/CP.13, paragraph 2.

- 35 UNFCCC, 2013. Decisions 9/CP.19 paragraph 3 and Decision 11/CP.19; and UNFCCC, 2011. Decision 12/CP.17.
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- 41 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 72 and UNFCCC, 2009. Decision 14/CP.15 paragraph 1 (a) and (b)
- 42 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 15/CP.19.
- 43 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 14/CP.19, paragraph 4.
- 44 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 2; UNFCCC, 2011. Decision 12/CP.17; and UNFCCC, 2015. Decision 17/CP.21.
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- 46 World Bank, 2013. FCPF Carbon Fund Discussion Paper #6: Risk of Reversal (Permanence)
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- 48 UNFCCC, 2011. Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
- 49 UNFCCC, 2010. Decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 1.
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- 51 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 14/CP.19, paragraphs 3 and 6.
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- 54 UNFCCC, 2009. Decision 14/CP.15 paragraph 7.
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- 57 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 14/CP.19.
- 58 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 14/CP.19, paragraphs 1 to 5.
- 59 UNFCCC, 2013. Decision 14/CP.19, paragraphs 6 to 9.
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- 66 UNFCCC, 2015, The Paris Agreement, Article 13, paragraph 7.
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This report was written by Peter Graham for World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

*Note from the author:* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the government negotiators, civil society and indigenous peoples' representatives, and the UNFCCC Secretariat staff who contributed with skill, dedication and good humor over many years to the remarkable achievement that is REDD+. Special thanks to Josefina Brana-Varela, Brad Schallert and Karen Petersen. I also would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of Mama Konaté of Mali (1950-2011), who played a key role in advancing the REDD+ agenda as chairperson of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice.



**WWF's Forest and Climate team works to ensure that the conservation of tropical forests as carbon stores is secured by green economic development that benefits people, the climate and biodiversity in transformative ways.**

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