



Climate change negotiations and REDD

Forest Carbon Initiative Fact Sheet

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The Bali Action Plan, which emerged from COP13 in late 2007, officially put REDD back on the UNFCCC agenda. But under the Action Plan, if REDD is to be included in the post-2012 framework, decisions about the scope of REDD, who will pay for it, and how a mechanism will be structured must be agreed upon at COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Significant progress has been made under the Bali Plan as in the intervening period, a number of REDD focused workshops have taken place, many countries have submitted proposals and a negotiating text, which includes various options for REDD, is now on the table. However, substantial work remains if a coherent REDD mechanism is to be successfully included in the post-2012 agreement.

The section on REDD in the current text for the climate treaty is being actively negotiated and on critical issues, substantial differences exist between the various proposals. Scope is one area where there are differences in opinion and a lack of clarity in the negotiations. While some countries propose keeping a focus on reducing deforestation, others are seeking to include afforestation, reforestation, management of forest stocks, and diverse sources of terrestrial carbon. Over the past year, competing interests have led to a convergence toward a broader scope, referred to as REDD+. But there is little agreement as to which activities REDD+ actually incorporates and how it would be structured. The debate about REDD+ is likely to be a key issue as we move towards Copenhagen, as a number of countries have made this a priority issue. Therefore, to avoid a delay in consensus, it is necessary to clarify the scope of REDD as soon as possible.

National REDD programmes address both the risks with leakage and encourage implementation of measures to combat the drivers of deforestation at the national and local level. More recently, there has been an emerging convergence towards a phased approach to REDD – where national programmes are built through steps of initial assessment, planning and piloting and then full implementation. A phased approach to REDD is favoured by many countries as a way of providing support to developing countries as they build their capacity to tackle and monitor emissions from deforestation.

BACKGROUND

Efforts to mitigate dangerous climate change revolve around the overarching goal of holding the average increase in global temperatures to well below 2°C.

With deforestation accounting for approximately 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions, it is clear that any solution to the climate change problem must include a solution to deforestation.

Forests have had a complex history in the international climate negotiations. The Marrakech Accords explicitly excluded deforestation from the Clean Development Mechanism, owing to a number of concerns over technical feasibility, risks of leakage (i.e. simply shifting deforestation from one site to another) and emphasis on the need for developed countries to take a lead in reducing their emissions. Fortunately, many of these concerns have been addressed through subsequent technical improvements in monitoring forest cover through satellite imagery and a shift to focus on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) at a national level.



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The source of financing for REDD is an area where there are a range of different proposals from governments. Among these are for developed countries to make voluntary donations to a fund, for REDD to be included in compliance carbon markets, and for funds to be raised by auctioning emission allowances to developed countries. What is critical, but currently missing from the draft negotiating text, is a clear path to committed, predictable REDD funding at the levels necessary.



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While recent additions to the text addressing governance are promising, the current text is not strong enough to ensure that transparent and equitable processes underpin both national strategies and the international framework. In addition, there are questions raised by some governments as to how much REDD should incorporate safeguards or benefits for broader forest values, such as biodiversity and livelihoods. REDD policies must be consistent with national sustainable development objectives that promote conservation and biodiversity, and protect the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples.



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THE WAY FORWARD

REDD is a vital component of the global emission reductions required. A global objective of zero net deforestation through a 75% reduction in gross deforestation by 2020 should be adopted. To achieve this, a reasonable scope for REDD must be established. Care should be taken that any activities included under the scope of REDD can deliver real and verifiable emissions reductions.

It is vital that the final text of the post-2012 agreement include firm commitments from developed countries to provide financial and technical support to developing countries, including during the early phases of REDD. This is needed to provide an incentive for developing countries to participate, to ensure progression towards full implementation of REDD and to provide “payments” for the emission reductions achieved. While compliance carbon markets can play a role in later phases of REDD development, reliable and predictable public funding is critical and will be the predominant REDD funding source for the coming years.

A phased approach should be agreed on by the UNFCCC, which ensures that developing countries are provided with support to build their capacity and test approaches to work towards national REDD programmes. Language addressing governance must be clarified and strengthened to ensure that REDD is implemented through transparent and independent processes. This applies to both national-level REDD implementation as well as to the international-level verification regime. Finally, the Copenhagen agreement should recognize the broader values of forests and processes must be put in place to ensure that the impact of REDD projects on biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities is positive.

It is essential that a robust, effective REDD mechanism be formally adopted in the post-2012 UNFCCC framework. Forests have a critical role to play and reducing deforestation and forest degradation must be part of the solution to the global climate change problem.

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