



Progress on the New York Declaration on Forests

Technical Annexes

Goal 7: Agree in 2015 to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as part of a post-2020 global climate agreement, in accordance with internationally agreed rules and consistent with the goal of not exceeding 2°C warming

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Description of the Goal and the Indicators

Goal 7 aims for the inclusion of forest-related mitigation measures in a post-2020 climate agreement, expected to be concluded in Paris in December 2015. The 'Paris Agreement' would apply from 2020, and is expected to enshrine provisions on limiting the average global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It would build on existing negotiations, decisions and protocols adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the Kyoto Protocol, and the collection of UN decisions that have established the framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, known as REDD+.

The draft text of the agreement is still subject to intense negotiations (UNFCCC 2015), both at expert and political level. While the details are under discussion, it is increasingly clear that: (1) the text of the new agreement will be high-level in nature; and (2) it will be accompanied by the bottom-up commitment of countries to domestic mitigation efforts (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDCs). The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions will be critical for creating confidence in the Paris outcomes.

Observers have identified a number of ways in which a Paris climate agreement could build on previous land use agreements within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Lee & Streck, 2015):

- The agreement should recognize previous Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions, including those on REDD+, in order to provide continuity and predictability of ongoing efforts. The agreement could also build on existing agreements adopted in the context of the Kyoto Protocol;
- The agreement could include and expand agreement on measurement, reporting and verification of land use emissions;
- The agreement could reflect agreement on assistance to developing countries (finance, technology transfer and capacity building) to realize the full mitigation potential of forests and other land uses; and
- Parties could also be encouraged to include specific information and targets for land-use emission reductions or removals within the INDCs of countries with mitigation potential in the land-use sector.

With this in mind, the indicators we formulate, set out below, reflect elements of an agreement to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, excluding assistance to developing countries, which is addressed in Goals 8 and 9. It is important to note that, with the text of the agreement still under negotiation, it is too early to assess the extent to which these elements will be included. In assessing progress toward the indicators we do not, therefore, seek to make any predictions as to the final outcome, but instead focus on the status quo at the time of writing, which can later be built upon to more fully assess Goal 7 after the Paris Agreement.

Indicator 1 is whether the negotiating text includes references to land-use and REDD+. As negotiations are still ongoing, it is too early to assess how the post-2020 agreement will address forest-related emission reductions. Indicator 2 analyses whether the submitted INDCs envisage commitments in relation to the land-use or forestry sector and what accounting rules they apply to these commitments. The third indicator explores developments that relate to the operationalization of the REDD+ framework.

INDICATOR 1

References to land use (including REDD+) in the Paris Agreement text

INDICATOR 2

References to land use (including REDD+) in submitted INDCs

Main Concepts and Definitions

Land-use sector

The 'land-use sector' refers to forests and land-use, excluding non-land use based emissions from agriculture. In the UNFCCC context it incorporates the concepts of land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF), used under the Kyoto Protocol, and REDD+, as well as the concept of Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use, used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Key Messages

INDICATOR 1: REFERENCES TO LAND-USE OR REDD+ IN THE NEGOTIATING TEXT

- The current negotiating text (as of 1 November 2015) contains various options for including land-use and REDD+ in the final agreement and much negotiating remains to be done. It is therefore too early to assess how the post-2020 climate agreement will address land-use and REDD+.
- The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice adopted three new methodological decisions on REDD+ in 2015, essentially completing the REDD+ methodological framework. The Green Climate Fund is, however, still in the process of completing its modalities for defining how it would make results-based payments for REDD+.
- It is not yet clear if Parties will formally recognize existing UNFCCC decisions in the text of the Paris Agreement, a move that would clarify the continuity and validity of these decisions.

INDICATOR 2: REFERENCES TO LAND USE (INCLUDING REDD+) IN SUBMITTED INDCS

- The majority of states have set economy-wide mitigation targets in their INDCs. Numerous developing countries have expressed willingness to scale up their mitigation targets conditional on financial and technical assistance.
- 40 Parties have included specific actions on forests and land-use, which are framed in a wide variety of ways.
- There is some convergence among Parties that have addressed accounting methodologies for land use in their INDCs, though a considerable number of Parties have included preferences and views that will need to be negotiated.

Data Gaps and Limitations

With agreement due to be reached on a post-2020 climate agreement in December 2015, it remains too early to assess whether Goal 7 has been met. At present there remains much work to be done to reach agreement among Parties on key issues such as the extent to which land-use will be reflected in the Paris text at all and on accounting rules to ensure coherence in land-use commitments.

Findings

Indicator 1: References to land use or REDD+ in the negotiating text

Subindicator 1.1 Inclusion of broad agreement to address land use as part of mitigation framework of agreement

The current negotiating text includes various proposals for the inclusion of the land-use sector, including in the preamble and in the context of accounting rules and market mechanisms (UNFCCC 2015). As of 1 November 2015, the overall structure and substance of the agreement is intensely debated, and major changes to the text can be expected in the next round of negotiations as well as in Paris itself (ENB, 2015). For these reasons, it is early to assess how the Paris Agreement will frame land use and REDD+.

Subindicator 1.2 Inclusion of broad agreement to address land use as part of mitigation framework of agreement

Parties to the UNFCCC have been negotiating an incentive scheme to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation since 2005. Over the years, decisions of the COP have gradually fleshed out the main elements of a methodological framework for implementing REDD+. This includes phases, safeguards, reference levels, and rules for monitoring, reporting and verification. While the bulk of this framework had been agreed in Warsaw in 2013, a number of issues have remained on the negotiating agenda, in particular the question of whether and how to account for non-carbon benefits and how to address “alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation” (UNFCCC 2013), as well as additional guidance on safeguards.

In June 2015, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice adopted draft decisions on all of these issues and concluded its consideration of these matters. As such, the methodological framework for REDD+ can be considered to be, for all intents and purposes, complete. In order to ensure that this framework is integrated, it will be necessary for the Paris Agreement to recognize previous COP decisions relating to REDD+. It is also worth noting that the details of financing modalities for REDD+ results-based payments under the Green Climate Fund – a prerequisite to making REDD+ operational – remain to be finalized, though the Fund has adopted an “Initial Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework” (Green Climate Fund 2015) for these payments. The Green Climate Fund is expected to become operational by the end of 2015.

Indicator 2: The land-use sector in submitted INDCs

The Paris Agreement is expected to be a high-level and broadly formulated document. While the final text may contain references to the land-use or forestry sector, Parties may settle the main implementation questions in later COP decisions, e.g. principles of accounting for land-use emissions (Lee & Streck 2015). Against this background, the INDCs signal the scale of ambition of individual countries and provide preliminary information on the role of land-use in the national implementation plans up to 2030. INDCs should quantify targets and provide information on which the contributions are based. Such arrangements enable periodic review and revision towards more ambitious contributions, including a scaling up of financial support.

An analysis of the 122 INDCs submitted as of 2 October 2015 shows that the majority of states have set quantified economy-wide targets rather than sectoral targets. These economy-wide targets cover the land-use sector in principle, but retain discretion as to the sectors eventually targeted for mitigation efforts. Hence, such targets leave open the question of whether emission reductions will be achieved

in the land-use and forest sectors. Some 40 countries have, however, specified some form of land-use activities within their INDCs, usually in addition to their broader economy-wide targets. The content of these targets varies widely, from specific emission reduction targets to reductions in deforestation, increases in forest cover or increasing the share of protected areas. A large number of these do not specify an additional target, but rather state the proportion of their overall emission reductions that they intend to achieve through the land-use sector. Some 18 countries have, in addition, specifically excluded the land-use and/or forest sectors from their targets.

A large number of countries that included the land-use sector within specific or economy-wide targets have made at least some reference to the accounting principles or methodologies they intend to apply. At present there remains some convergence in the methodologies specified, though specific issues remain to be aligned. A majority of the countries to have specified a methodology refer to the use of Guidelines of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, though some specify the 1996 Guidelines while others refer to the 2006 version. In addition, several parties specify particular rules or approaches that their targets would be subject to, highlighting the need for further work on establishing rules that provide a common framework while taking into account different circumstances.

Technical Annex

Selection of Indicators

Indicator 1: References to land use or REDD+ in the negotiating text

While a Paris Agreement does not necessarily need to address land use in detail, including some reference to the sector in the text would serve to clarify Parties' intention to address land-use emissions and provide a basis upon which further rules can be built, including on accounting, differentiation and measurement, reporting and verification.

The operational framework for REDD+ does, however, provide some measure of progress on addressing forest emissions in the UNFCCC. As the chief mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, reducing such emissions in those countries on a large scale requires the REDD+ mechanism to be fully operational. While parallel mechanisms exist outside the UNFCCC, operationalizing this framework in the context of the Green Climate Fund will be an important aspect of scaling up finance.

Indicator 2: The land-use or forestry sector in submitted INDCs

Given the likely bottom-up approach of the Paris Agreement, the inclusion of the land-use sector within countries' INDCs is a crucial measure of the extent to which Parties will, in effect, agree to reduce emissions from the sector. Here we assess the number of countries that have adopted specific land-use sector targets, economy-wide targets (including the land-use sector) and those that have explicitly excluded the land-use sector. We also assess the extent to which parties' INDCs converge on accounting principles for land-use, since agreement on accounting rules will be crucial to the integrity of any land-use commitments.

Methodology

Parties are still heavily negotiating the text of the Paris Agreement and have yet to agree on a final structure and substance (ENB 2015). Delegates met in Bonn in late October 2015 and produced a new negotiating text ahead of the Paris COP. The current negotiation text leaves too many options open to assess how the eventual agreement will entertain land-use and REDD+.

Therefore we have chosen only to present the status of negotiations and INDCs as they stand as of November 2015, and have not engaged in any speculation as to the eventual outcomes.

Data Sources

For this Goal we have relied on the latest versions of the negotiating text and submitted INDCs to assess the current state of agreement under the UNFCCC. In addition, we have relied on secondary sources that have analyzed and summarized submitted INDCs, in particular the summary prepared by the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions (<http://www.c2es.org/indc-comparison>). In addition, we accessed UNFCCC decisions and draft decisions produced by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, and used secondary expert analysis to support the identification of key elements that would comprise an "agreement to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as part of a post-2020 global climate agreement."

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