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The Interface of REDD+ and INDCs in the New Climate Agreement: Implications for Africa

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Key message:

There is still lack of clarity of the scope and extent of forest and LULUCF considerations in different mechanisms under the UNFCCC negotiations, the multiple nuances of which have led to indecisiveness in some situations. This is clearly evident in the asymmetric and cautionary approaches adopted in the consideration of forests in the INDCs of countries. In this light, these are some key points for Africa:

1. The inclusion of land use, land use change and forest (LULUCF) sector in the INDC could potentially provide opportunities for countries to undertake activities that can contribute to the global efforts in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
2. REDD+ currently has a stand-alone UNFCCC mechanism with significant progress made in the negotiations informed and erected on a solid scientific base. Overlapping REDD+ into INDCs may undermine and undercut the fundamental principles of REDD+ as a mechanism that rewards countries for retaining their forests.
3. A review of submitted INDCs portrays that many African countries are inclined to make

contributions in the forestry, REDD+ and LULUCF sectors on condition that there are sufficient means of implementation (finance, capacity building and transfer of technology)..

4. In a situation whereby REDD+ and LULUCF activities have to be included in the INDC, it is imperative to pursue low-cost and self-sustaining policies and programmes that embody or promote both adaptation and mitigation benefits e.g. reforestation of Sudan's gum belt, Taungya agroforestry in Ghana, Central African Republic in Burkina Faso.

I. Background

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are expected to adopt a new and legally binding climate agreement at the Paris climate conference in December 2015 (COP 21). This agreement will be implemented as from 2020 when the Kyoto protocol expires. At COP 19 in Warsaw, parties were requested to elaborate and submit their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) by October 2015. In Paris, the quality and quantity of INDCs submitted by parties may represent a key determinant in reaching an ambitious global cli-

mate deal that brings on board and commits, in particular, all developed and emerging economies that are also major polluters and emitters of GHG.

In terms of global GHG emissions, most African countries are historically very low emitters. This is true even when we consider GHG emissions from agriculture, deforestation, forest degradation and other land uses. However, emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and other land uses contribute globally between 15-20 % of all GHG. In order to bring down this figure, Africa becomes inevitably part of the solution in terms of boosting carbon sequestering in forests as well as stabilizing and reducing forest and land use-based emissions. To date, at least 24 African countries are involved in the global mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation including efforts in forest conservation, sustainable forest management and the enhancement of forest carbon sinks (REDD+). REDD+ is a voluntary mechanism that intends to pay developing countries for keeping their forests standing.

In the context of INDCs, REDD+ activities may be addressed as part of the land use, land use change and forest (LULUCF) sector. REDD+ may also have some overlap with the traditional energy sector dealing mainly with firewood and charcoal (See Box 1). As countries elaborate and implement their INDCs, a crucial question remains on the extent to which REDD+ activities should be integrated into nationally determined contributions. Similarities between REDD+ and INDC include the fact they both aim at contributing to mitigate climate change and forestry activities are central. However, some differences exist as shown in Table 1. To further understand the interface between forest, REDD+ and INDC, we draw on selected INDC submissions by countries to highlight the current trends.

Box 1: LULUCF and REDD+ in the context of INDC

Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) commonly referred to by parties as the land sector commonly include amongst others the following activities:

(i) Afforestation, reforestation (A/R); (ii) Deforestation (iii) Forest management (iv) Cropland management (v) Grazing land management (vi) Or equivalent land-based accounting using UNFCCC reporting categories (vii) Other categories. LULUCF clearly takes into account three (A/R, deforestation and forest management) of the five REDD+ activities. Forest degradation and forest conservation are strictly not part of LULUCF activities. This situation may leave REDD+ countries in doubt of whether to or not to include forest conservation and degradation related activities in their INDC mitigation contributions?

Forest conservation: Countries like Madagascar, Gabon and other Congo basin countries putting huge efforts into forest conservation prefer not to include conservation as part of their LULUCF activities. While conservation activities especially in parks and protected areas arguably have stable carbon stocks in most cases, LULUCF typically measures differences in carbon stocks (CO₂) by estimating emissions and removals in a given land use category. Moreover, LULUCF also considers the conversion from one land use to another which is not the case with forest conservation.

Forest degradation: The extraction of wood from the forest for the purpose of getting charcoal and firewood energy is among the main causes of forest degradation in many African countries. While degradation is part of REDD+, it is not clearly identified as part of LULUCF. With the lack of clarity under LULUCF, countries may explore the option of reporting emissions from forest degradation driven by charcoal and firewood consumptions under the energy sector. At the end, countries are expected to avoid double counting by making a decision on whether to report degradation from charcoal and firewood consumption in the LULUCF (other categories) or energy sectors. With these options, the degradation part of REDD+ will be taken into account in the INDC process.

Table 1. Basic differences between REDD+ and INDC

Topic	REDD+	INDC
Official Start	2005	2013
Main idea and goal	Keep forests and trees standing to mitigate climate change	Submit national plans for reducing GHG emissions and climate vulnerability
Countries	Tropical developing forestry countries	Parties to UNFCCC and Kyoto protocol
Expectations	Verified performance-based payments to be provided to REDD+ countries	Implement national plans for reducing emissions and climate vulnerability
Approach	Top-down internationally determined	Bottom-up nationally determined
Focus and Scope	Reduce deforestation and degradation, sustainable forest management, conservation, reforestation/afforestation	Diverse and context specific mitigation and adaptation actions
Methodology	Defined and approved internationally e.g. Warsaw Framework on REDD+	Evolving and under development

II. An overview of forest, REDD+ and LULUCF activities in INDC submissions

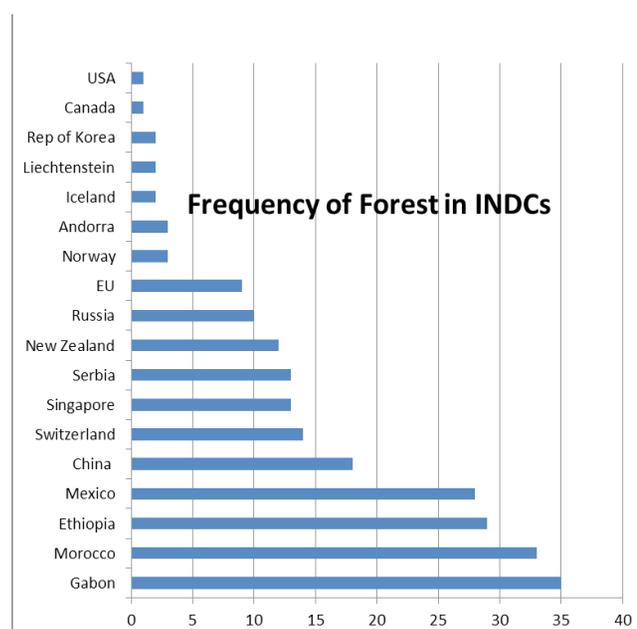
At the time of preparing this document, we analyzed all the INDCs submitted so far to the UNFCCC secretariat, and it represented 45 countries¹: Gabon, Morocco, Ethiopia, Canada, USA, Norway, Russia, Latvia and European Union, Switzerland, Andorra, Liechtenstein, China, New Zealand, Serbia, Iceland, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Mexico. Figure 1 highlights the visibility of forest and forestry related activities in the INDCs while Table 2 provides a list of the key proposals from submissions by Parties and indicates views and contributions related to LULUCF and REDD+ sectors. We identify key and common points around the different submissions in the view of highlighting the role of forest, REDD+ and LULUCF in the INDCs. This includes the following:

Forest and forestry is bypassed by many developed countries. Forest² is closely linked to the LULUCF sector which has so far not been clearly articulated in the intended national contributions

1 Parties submissions to UNFCCC: <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/indc/Submission%20Pages/submissions.aspx>

2 Words used to search forest: forest, forestry, reforestation, afforestation, rehabilitation, forêt, forestier, foresterie, ecosystem, mangrove, biodiversity, wood, timber, protected area, parks, conservation (refer to nature, ecosystem, biodiversity, habitat and not energy conservation),

of most developed countries. Figure 1 shows that developed countries have the lowest visibility of forest and forestry in their INDCs while developing countries have the highest visibility.

Figure 1. Visibility of forest in submitted INDCs

Land (LULUCF) sector and forest-based emission reduction are not addressed. Out of the 45 countries analyzed, about 34, predominantly developed countries, excluded commitments and contributions in the land or LULUCF sector. The reasons put forward are linked to the followings:

- Lack of methodological clarity at the international level (Iceland);

- Lack of a reporting system focusing only on the net change in emissions in the forest land sector (Switzerland);
- The need for a common framework for land sector accounting (Norway) as well as the ongoing elaboration of EU 2030 legislative framework on climate and energy (EU).

Many (developed) countries therefore plan to make their contribution in the LULUCF sector in the future.

Production approach will be used for emission accounting of harvested wood products. While many developed countries did not commit or plan to contribute in the land (LULUCF) sector pending further methodological and policy clarity, a few developed countries namely USA, Canada and New Zealand identified the “production approach” of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories and the 2013 IPCC Kyoto Protocol supplement as their accounting method for harvested wood products (HWP) on different land uses. The IPCC guidelines help countries to estimate and report annual CO₂ emissions and removal of HWP from agriculture, forest and other land uses (AFOLU).

Level of contribution is dependent on the provision of additional means of implementation (also known as the “conditionality approach”). The “conditionality approach” in the context of INDC is commonly used by developing and emerging economies like Morocco, Ethiopia and China. These countries are already putting policies and programs in place to combat climate change. They are willing to do even more upon the provision of additional means of implementation linked to capacity building, transfer of technology and the provision of financial resources. The means of implementation may come from a variety of public, private, bilateral and multilateral sources including in particular the green climate fund of the UNFCCC.

REDD+ and LULUCF activities are not clearly linked to emission reduction targets. Gabon is a highly forested country with about 88% forest cover that is currently not contributing much to emissions in the LULUCF sector. Furthermore, its high forest cover coupled with very low deforest-

ation rate has so far not brought any incentive to the government from bilateral deals or through the REDD+ mechanism. Gabon seems to pursue a low carbon development path and thus, not ready to mortgage its entire forest for the singular benefit of the global climate system. However, a lot has been done and is still happening. With a national forest code in place since 2001, 13 national parks established and a national land use planning underway, Gabon’s low carbon development vision intends to create a national sustainable development fund (equivalence of national climate fund) to channel financial resources from government, private sector, donors and international initiatives and mechanisms. Gabon also intends to establish a national market for GHG trading like in USA, China and other countries.

Synergies between adaptation and mitigation are promoted through forest ecosystem services. Some countries consider forest management as an entry point to provide ecosystem services that directly or indirectly contribute to the achievement of both adaptation and mitigation outcomes. Ethiopia and China for example seek to protect existing forests, conserve natural resources and rehabilitate degraded forest lands in the view of enhancing carbon sequestration, promoting forest based economic activities, conserve water and soil and to reducing vulnerability to desertification. Singapore on the other hand plans to engage in extensive urban forestry through tree planting in order to conserve biodiversity while indirectly sequestering carbon dioxide. Mexico and Morocco specifically envisage the implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in order to ensure the provision of diverse ecosystem services including biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, soil formation and enhancement of hydrological regimes. Moreover, Mexico plans to achieve a zero-net deforestation by 2030.

Forestry is a key strategy to enhance carbon sinks and contribute to emission reduction. Forestry and REDD+ activities such as reduction of deforestation and forest degradation, reforestation, afforestation, sustainable forest management and forest conservation are cited by many countries as actions to reduce or stabilize emissions. For example, about 80% of Ethiopia’s emission reduction

potentials are in agriculture and forestry sectors with an estimated 130 Mt CO₂e of emissions reduction expected to come from forestry activities. On the other hand, Morocco plans to carry out afforestation of about 200,000 ha of degraded lands and while China is aiming at reforestation and

afforestation to increase their forest stock volume to an estimated 4.5 billion cubic meters by 2030. With about 70% of all boreal forests located in Russia, sustainable forest management represents a key element of Russia's policy to reduce GHG emissions.

Table 2. Key REDD+ and LULUCF related proposals and trends in the INDCs

Proposals and trends	Parties
LULUCF sector and forest-based emission reduction are not explicitly addressed	Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Iceland, EU, Korea, Serbia
Existing IPCC guidelines may be used for LULUCF emission accounting of harvested wood products	USA, Canada, New Zealand
Level of contribution in LULUCF is dependent on the provision of means of implementation	Morocco, Ethiopia, China
REDD+ and LULUCF activities are not clearly linked to emission reduction targets	Gabon
Adaptation and mitigation synergies are promoted through forestry ecosystem services	Mexico, Morocco, Ethiopia, China, Singapore
Forestry is a key strategy to enhance carbon sinks and contribute to emission reduction	Morocco, Ethiopia, China, Singapore, Russia

III. Perspectives for Africa

Forest, REDD+ and LULUCF cover very important development sectors of African countries. It is therefore necessary for African governments in general and their representations within the UNFCCC in particular to understand the implications and options for their intended national contributions in the LULUCF sector. It is important to note that governments at the national level consider the forest as a development sector whereas the INDC process includes LULUCF as a sector for reporting emissions of GHG. Within the INDC, forest represents one of the many GHG reporting categories under the LULUCF sector. Despite the different classifications of forest there is a lot of global interest in curbing emissions from the forest, REDD+ and LULUCF activities. Our findings suggest that the contributions and views on LULUCF activities within the submitted INDCs are very different and sometimes send mixed messages. Based on our analysis of selected INDCs, we attempt to indicate future perspectives of the forest, REDD+ and LULUCF activities moving forward within a new global climate regime:

- a. Most developed countries would at some point contribute in their LULUCF sector using their own resources. Many African countries on the other hand would be willing but may not have the financial resources and in some cases technology and capacities to contribute as much as they may like. Current climate actions show that many African countries are already putting in place the necessary mitigation and adaptation policies, legislation, strategies, and programs and are willing to do more, provided they have the needed resources. In elaborating their INDCs, African countries would need to think carefully on how much they can do on their own, using their own resources. But also indicate how much they can do if provided with additional means of implementation – the “conditionality approach” already used by Morocco and Ethiopia in their INDCs.
- b. African countries that do not feel confident enough and need further policy and technical information before declaring their contribution in the LULUCF sector may do so in the future. There is a high chance that many other

countries will provide a second revised version of their initial submitted INDCs especially in the REDD+ and LULUCF sector. Ample evidence points to a future re-submission of a revised INDC by many parties with the need for further clarifications and specificities in the LULUCF sector. This can be seen in statements in submitted INDCs:

Republic of Korea: *“LULUCF will be made at a later stage”*

EU: *“...Policy on how to include LULUCF into the 2030 greenhouse gas mitigation framework will be established as soon as technical conditions allow and in any case before 2020..”*

Russia: *“GDP of the Russian Federation in 2012 amounted to 172.9% of the 2000 level while the GHG emissions (without land use, land-use change and forestry)...”*

Switzerland: *“Emissions/removals from forest land are not included in the base year, since only the net change in emissions is accounted for this sector “*

- a. Adaptation remains the priority for for most African countries, so this should also be reflected in their INDCs. Initially, the framing of the INDCs discourse at the UNFCCC level was widely perceived, constructed and understood through a mitigation lens with little or no attention on adaptation both in INDC content and preparation process. It is therefore no surprise to observe that the submissions from developed countries are almost mitigation focused. For Africa, it should be the responsibility of those in charge of overseeing the elaboration process of INDC to ensure that not a balanced but a skewed approach towards adaptation is adopted. Some developing counties are going for ecosystem based adaptation approach with a view of achieving adaptation and mitigation outcomes.
- b. It is not yet clear at the international level whether funding from bilateral and multi-lateral sources as well as the Green Climate

Funds shall be provided to support developing countries in the implementation of their INDCs. A cautionary approach should therefore be taken by African countries in analyzing the pros and cons of making very ambitious contributions related to REDD+ in their INDCs. African countries do not have the financial resources to implement REDD+ activities on their own so conditional support should be requested alongside intended ambitious contributions. Moreover, decision makers should always keep in mind that a strong inclusion of REDD+ in INDCs may also undermine and contradict the very fundamental idea to pay countries for keeping their forest standing (REDD+) through result based payments from the markets and non-market funding sources.

- c. One cost effective option would be for African countries to identify self-sustaining forestry, REDD+ and LULUCF related activities that can be implemented without requesting for external means of implementation. These activities will constitute the original contribution of African countries in their INDCs. Examples of such activities can be found in different parts of Africa. In the Sahelian region, a lot of degraded (forest) lands are being rehabilitated and restored using farmer assisted natural regeneration (FANR). This is also common in Vitellaria paradoxia (Shea butter) and Acacial senegal (gum arabic) agroforestry parklands. In West, Central and Eastern Africa, coffee and cocoa agroforestry are widely practiced by many farmers. All these practices generate income for farmers while restoring and maintaining the ecosystems with enormous carbon sequestration benefits.

Forests are at the heart of REDD+ and LULUCF (Photo: Kalame Fobissie)



Stakeholder participation in Liberia INDC National Validation Workshop (Photo: Kalame Fobissie)



INDC National Validation Workshop in Liberia (Photo: Kalame Fobissie)



INDC National Validation Workshop in Cameroon (Photo: Kalame Fobissie)



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