



The “Forests COP?”:

Highlights on forests and indigenous peoples from the UNFCCC 19th Conference of the Parties, Warsaw, 11-22 November 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The 19th Conference of the Parties (COP19) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Warsaw from 11 – 22 November 2013 has been dubbed the “Forests COP”.

As a matter of fact, pending solutions for critical issues such as climate finance, emission reduction commitments and an effective mechanism for compensation for loss and damage, Parties managed to adopt a package of decisions on forests and REDD+ that will be instrumental in spurring further action and attracting more financial resources in climate change mitigation actions in forests. There were also other issues that were dealt with in Warsaw that have pertinence for indigenous peoples and their call for recognition and respect of their traditional knowledge, some of which are described below in this briefing.

1. INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

As regards the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice, (SBSTA) agenda item conclusions on the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change (NWP), for instance, the related COP Decision noted “*the technical paper on best practices and available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation and the application of gender-sensitive approaches and tools for understanding and assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change*”. It also acknowledged the mandate to organize under the guidance of the Chair

of SBSTA, a technical expert meeting on best practices and Best Available Technology (BAT) for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation, in conjunction with the Adaptation Committee’s workshop on best practices and needs of local and indigenous communities”. Parties are therefore invited to make submissions on this issue by 20 August, 2014. In parallel, the Adaptation Committee has already adopted a three-year work plan on the issue of best practices and needs of local and indigenous communities, which includes producing a scoping paper for the workshop by the first quarter of 2014, and then holding the workshop in the third quarter of

1 http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/6911.php?preref=600007715

2014, and lastly identifying and producing guidance for consideration by COP 20.² Both processes are hence expected to converge in 2014, the need to ensure that “internal” and “external” drivers are considered. In this case presenting cases about large infrastructures (i.e. large dams), unsustainable practices connected to oil palm plantations, pulp and paper, or timber and oil and mining industries and their impacts on forests, biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples’ rights, can be a good way to substantiate calls to consider internal and external drivers.

2. DRIVERS OF DEFORESTATION

The COP adopted a decision on drivers of deforestation too.³ While it fell short of acknowledging the role and impact of “external” drivers, such as trade and consumption of forest and agricultural products (mostly due to the pressure of Brazil and Indonesia), the document indeed encourages “Parties, organizations and private sector to take action to reduce the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation”. As expected, the key contentious issue for indigenous peoples was the ambiguous language that had been adopted at the SBSTA meeting in June 2013: “*Noting that livelihoods may be dependent on activities related to drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and that addressing these drivers may have an economic cost and implications for domestic resources*”. Indigenous peoples are concerned that this ambiguous language could consider their livelihoods as drivers of deforestation. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples Organizations and NGOs raised the matter to Parties in an attempt to reopen the text and reformulate the sentence so that it was clear that indigenous peoples’ livelihoods must not be considered as deforestation drivers but rather as contributors to forest conservation. However, since the text that had been adopted at the SBSTA meeting in June was sent directly to the COP it was impossible to reopen it and adjust the text, so a compromise was agreed to include an interpretation note informed by the IPOs’ concerns and demands in the COP report, clarifying that the text was not meant to stigmatise indigenous peoples’ livelihoods.

2 http://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/adaptation_committee/application/pdf/work_plan_final.pdf

3 http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_drivers_deforestation.pdf

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR REDD+

Other COP decisions dealt with coordination of financial support for REDD+.⁴ This was an item under the joint work programme of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the SBSTA and was quite controversial, especially given the tension between some Parties. Notably, Papua New Guinea called for the establishment of a REDD body under the UNFCCC, which many Parties objected to as they support a more active role of the Green Climate Fund. At the June session in Bonn, SBI did not even meet due to strong divergences on the agenda, hence two workshops were held before COP19 to spell out the elements of a possible decision. Papua New Guinea repeatedly tried to stall the negotiations on this matter to no avail. The final COP decision on the matter simply referred to the need to strengthen and enhance the sharing of information, recommendations on how to enhance effectiveness of finance, and encourages national entities and focal points and relevant REDD+ financing bodies to “meet on a voluntary basis in conjunction with the first sessional period meetings of the subsidiary bodies”. Indigenous peoples will be invited to provide input and relevant bodies, private sector and civil society and representatives will be invited as observers. The report of the outcome of the meetings will be produced by November/December 2017 and recommendations will be made to COP23 in the same year. Hence, the joint work of SBI-SBSTA for coordination of financial support was declared as concluded in Warsaw. Other aspects related to REDD+ financing are included in the report of the Standing Committee on Finance to the COP.⁵ The COP requests the Standing Committee on Finance to work on the issue of coherence and coordination of financing for forests, taking into account different policy approaches. An initial proposal was to hold a “forum” on forests but no reference was made to this in the final COP decision.

4 http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_mitigationactions_forest.pdf

5 http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_scf.pdf

4. PACKAGE OF DECISIONS ON REDD+

The REDD+ package that Parties adopted in Warsaw included decisions that were key in order to advance the implementation of REDD+ and to step up progress towards accessing results-based payments. This package included decisions on Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), Reference Emission Levels and Forest Reference Levels, as well as on modalities for National Monitoring Systems, Safeguards and access to results-based payments⁶. These decisions are key for adopting carbon measurement systems that use accounting methods specified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and also to assess the amount of carbon released without REDD+ initiatives, hence determining the amount of carbon emissions avoided as a result of REDD+. The last three decisions contain important references to how information on safeguards will be made public. The decision on National Forest Monitoring Systems “*acknowledges that Parties’ national forest monitoring systems may provide as appropriate, relevant information for national systems for the provision of information on how safeguards are addressed and respected*”. The decision on safeguards titled “The timing and the frequency of presentations of the summary of information on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected” had already been adopted in SBSTA in June this year and sent to the COP for approval. Accordingly, REDD governments when undertaking REDD programmes and projects should provide safeguard information systems (SIS), which demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. The SIS should be provided periodically and included in National Communications or communication channels agreed by the COP. The SIS can also be provided on a voluntary basis via the UNFCCC Web Platform. The COP also decided that developing country Parties

⁶ http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_redd_finance.pdf
http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_fms.pdf
http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_safeguards_1cp16a1.pdf
http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_mrv.pdf
http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_frl.pdf



The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) in Warsaw © Francesco Martone

should start providing the safeguard information systems in their National Communications, including the web platform, **after** the implementation of activities. This differs from what is being mandated as a requirement to access results-based payments. As a matter of fact, the decision produced by the COP work programme on results-based finance, recognises the role of the Green Climate Fund in channeling financial resources to developing countries, and catalyzing climate finance. It also conditions the capacity of countries to receive results-based payments on the full measurement, reporting and verification of their REDD+ actions. Developing countries seeking to obtain and receive results-based payments should provide the most recent SIS **before** they can receive results-based payments.

Other than what has been agreed in Warsaw, further work will be done in 2014 on Non-market based approaches and non-carbon benefits (submissions on these topics are invited by March 2014). An expert group meeting on non-market-based approaches will be organised at SBSTA 40 (June 2014) and a report prepared for SBSTA 41 (late 2014). SBSTA will also continue discussion on non-carbon benefits: submissions on the matter are invited by March 2014 and discussion will take place at SBSTA 40 in June 2014. As regards the provision of information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, these might be included periodically in national communications or other reports agreed by the COP. Interestingly, SBSTA invites submissions by Parties and observers on the type of information to be included in the SIS by 24 September 2014, and will consider the need for further guidance at SBSTA 41.

More generally, indigenous peoples started

considering the implications of the ongoing negotiations in the ADP (Durban Platform for Enhanced Action), the work stream that is expected to deliver a draft negotiating text in time for the next COP20 to be held in Peru. As a matter of fact, it is very likely that all REDD+ items will be brought into the wider land-based adaptation and mitigation negotiations already under discussion in the ADP. The risks of this are that all previously agreed language and references to indigenous peoples' rights and instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) might be lost in translation. This is even more evident considering that ADP will take into account all forests and not only those in the Tropics, hence a strong resistance to indigenous peoples' rights language is to be expected from those Northern countries that have not ratified the UNDRIP for instance. The broader concept of land-based mitigation and adaptation opens the path towards new approaches to forest management and conservation for climate-related purposes. One of these, "the landscape approach", was at the center of a two-day conference held at the University of Warsaw "The Global Landscapes Forum"⁷ where NGOs, experts, governments and private sector met to exchange ideas and views on how to further develop a landscape approach to mitigation and adaptation.

A landscape approach is meant to group together various aspects that relate to development benefits, such as food production, poverty eradication, green economy as well as mitigation and adaptation, farming systems, and non-carbon benefits. That this might be, together with "climate-smart agriculture" - an issue that still strives to find a clear place in the climate negotiations agenda - a new "buzzword" that will recur in future climate negotiations, which is evident from the launch in Warsaw, of a new initiative of the World Bank BioCarbon Fund. Managed by the World Bank, the "Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes," (ISFL)⁸ (funded by initial contributions from Norway (135 million USD), the UK (120 million USD), and the US (25 million) "*seeks to promote reduced greenhouse gas emissions from the land sector, including REDD+, more sustainable agriculture, as well as smarter land use planning and policies*".

A key role will be played by the private sector, with a

7 www.landscapes.org

8 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/11/20/biocarbon-fund-initiative-promote-sustainable-forest-landscapes>
http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/SDN/BioCF_ISFL_Flyer.pdf

view to ensure "forest-proof" sourcing of commodities and "redirecting market forces towards more sustainable and equitable land management practices". Some transnational companies have already endorsed the initiative, among them UNILEVER, Mondelez and Bunge. Companies will be asked to revise their demand-side commitments accordingly and ISFL will collaborate with companies that have committed to reduce their impact on tropical forests.

In a joint announcement on REDD+, delivered on the occasion of a side-event in Warsaw, the governments of Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States have announced other commitments reconfirming those already undertaken in a similar statement in 2012.⁹ The UK will contribute further to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's Carbon Fund, Germany will scale up its REDD+ Early Movers Programme (12 million Euro), Norway and Germany will increase their support for results-based payments in Colombia and Ecuador. The statement also endorses a key role for the Green Climate Fund in mobilizing incentives for better land use and payments for results. Governments also reiterated their support to the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020. A joint statement of Colombia, Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom was also made public, in support of the Colombian government's goal to reach zero deforestation in the Amazon by 2020. Norway and Germany will support Colombia through a payment for results scheme, while the United Kingdom has funded research on the drivers of deforestation and will support programmes addressing these drivers.¹⁰ Their aim is to operationalize the commitments undertaken in 2014. Furthermore, Norway announced the decision to allocate a further 40 million USD in support of UNREDD.¹¹

A set of statements delivered by Indigenous Peoples' representatives present in Warsaw can be found here: http://www.ccm.in.aippnet.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1164:statements-of-international-indigenous-peoples-forum-on-climate-change-iipfcc-at-cop-19ge&catid=1:news

9 <http://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130109092117/http://decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/tackling-climate-change/international-climate-change/7126-joint-statement-tackling-deforestation.pdf>

10 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70094/7126-joint-statement-tackling-deforestation.pdf

11 <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2013/11/22/the-un-redd-programme-receives-us-40-million-pledge-from-norway-to-help-48-developing-countries-halt-deforestation.html>