

# Additional Guidance on REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems

*Briefing Paper*

36th Session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice  
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Bonn, 14-25 May 2012



REDD+ SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM  
WORKING GROUP



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Global Witness | HuMa (Association for Community and Ecology-Based Law Reform) | Institute for Law and Environmental  
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## What was agreed in Durban?

To obtain results-based finance for REDD+, developing country Parties should have in place a system for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected - a safeguards information system (SIS).<sup>1</sup> Some guidance was provided on these systems, and Parties agreed that in Bonn in May 2012, SBSTA would consider the need for further guidance to “ensure *transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness* and *effectiveness* when informing on how all safeguards are addressed and respected and, if appropriate, to consider additional guidance” and report to COP18.<sup>2</sup> They also agreed that a summary of information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected should be provided periodically and in national communications by developing country Parties undertaking REDD+ activities, or through communication channels agreed by the COP, and tasked the Bonn SBSTA meeting with discussing the timing and frequency of the summaries.<sup>3</sup>

## Why would additional guidance be useful?

- *To address gaps.* Although the guidance agreed in Durban is a start, it falls short in providing guidance that is adequate to ensure the REDD+ safeguards and the SIS can be effectively implemented. The 2011 submissions and Panama workshops under the UNFCCC and REDD+ Partnership provided a wealth of input on the SIS, but little was used. Consequently there are gaps, including on the characteristics of the SIS, the types of information to be provided and how to collect and provide information (see Box 1).

Several proposals in the submissions, omitted from the Durban guidance, have considerable support and so merit reconsideration (e.g. a participatory process, guidance on the type of information to be collected and data collection tools such as guidance on creating national indicators). Meanwhile a common reporting format and common international structure or platform, proposed by some Parties and observers, would not only make the task of information provision easier, they would foster a common understanding of the safeguards and help to ensure *transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness* and *effectiveness*, as well as accessibility for stakeholders.

### Box 1. Gaps in the Durban Guidance on the SIS<sup>4</sup>

- **Missing characteristics:** Many of the 2011 submissions consider the SIS should be *participatory, comparable, accurate* (or *reliable*<sup>5</sup>) and *accountable*. These characteristics (or qualities<sup>6</sup>) are missing from the Durban guidance.
  - Recognition of these additional characteristics would help to ensure *transparency, comprehensiveness* and *effectiveness*.
- **Types of information to be provided:** Nearly all submissions list information they consider should be provided but the Durban guidance does not address this.
  - Guidance on the types of information to be provided would ensure *comprehensiveness* and *effectiveness*.
- **How to collect and provide information:** Many submissions highlight the need for a participatory process in design, information collection and assessment. Several call for different actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities, to be involved in collection and monitoring, and for independent multi-stakeholder assessment. Many call for guidance on data collection tools such as creating national indicators. Several call for a common reporting format/template and/or a common international structure or platform for providing information. The Durban guidance, however, provides no advice on collecting information and little on its provision.
  - Guidance on participation and assessment would help to ensure *transparency* and *effectiveness*.
  - Guidance on data collection tools (e.g. creating national indicators) and a common reporting format would help to ensure *consistency* and *comprehensiveness*.

<sup>1</sup> In Decision 2/CP.17 para 64 Parties recall that to obtain and receive results-based finance developing country Parties should have the elements referred to in Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71, which include a system for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 12/CP.17 para 6. COP18 (the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties) will be in Doha, Nov-Dec 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 12/CP.17 para 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gaps have been identified from an analysis by WRI and ClientEarth of the 2011 submissions on the SIS (Gaia Larsen, Daniela Rey and Florence Daviet 2012. *Map of SBSTA Submissions: REDD+ Safeguard Information System*, WRI Working Paper, World Resources Institute, Washington DC, available online at <http://www.wri.org/gfi>).

<sup>5</sup> As proposed in the Panama workshop in October 2011.

<sup>6</sup> As referred to in Larsen et al 2012.

- *To facilitate coordination of information provision between REDD+ processes.* Different standards and tools relating to REDD+ safeguards and the provision of information on their implementation are being developed under the multilateral funding processes (FCPF, UN-REDD and FIP<sup>7</sup>), with an increasing number of countries and their sub-regions also engaging in the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES) process. Additional guidance addressing coordination of information provision between processes would facilitate attempts by countries to comply with and report on the multiple standards and policies required by different processes in addition to the UNFCCC safeguards. It would also help to level the playing field among developing country Parties, avoid multiple implementation and reporting burdens, and ensure more efficient use of resources.

Coordination is not an easy task. But addressing it earlier rather than later, and in an overarching forum like the UNFCCC in which all countries are engaged, would save effort and costs. Moreover, developing a robust SIS at the outset that enables a Party to satisfy requirements of all the relevant processes would save effort in the long run. SBSTA could play a useful role by providing guidance on how countries could approach the coordinated provision of information, drawing on any useful examples from countries engaged in multiple processes (e.g. Mexico). It would also help to ensure *consistency* and *effectiveness* of the SIS.

- *To elaborate how to build upon existing systems.* The Durban guidance provides for building on existing systems but gives no advice on how to approach this. Parties already report on information of significance to the REDD+ safeguards under several relevant international agreements, for example under human rights treaties and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as for the global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). However, building on these existing processes is technically challenging. Additional guidance would assist Parties and ultimately help to avoid duplication of efforts, ensuring coherence of international reporting as well as *consistency* and *effectiveness* of the SIS.
- *To support national strategies and action plans and access results-based finance.* The Durban guidance notes that implementation of safeguards and information on how they are addressed and respected should support national strategies and action plans and be included, as appropriate, in all phases. Furthermore, the Durban decision on REDD+ finance reiterates the requirement that to obtain results-based finance actions should be fully measured, reported and verified, and Parties should have a SIS in place.<sup>8</sup> Additional guidance could therefore help to speed the operationalization of the SIS for countries to access results-based finance, boost donor confidence and enable support for implementation of elements of national strategies and action plans that are currently under-funded, particularly with respect to safeguards.
- *To facilitate information provision to the registry and match funding with needs.* A registry, in the form of a web-based platform, is being developed under the UNFCCC to facilitate the matching of international support (financial, technology and capacity building) with nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs).<sup>9</sup> This registry could be used to facilitate the matching of support for REDD+ readiness with needs for REDD+ safeguards implementation and SIS development.<sup>10</sup> Additional guidance on using the SIS to identify these needs and linking it to the registry could therefore ultimately help to access funds, and ensure *effectiveness*.
- *To ensure consistency with policies and procedures under development for the Green Climate Fund (GCF).* The SIS will need to be coherent with procedures for monitoring and evaluation under the GCF. Harmonization of the two processes will avoid duplication and ensure *effectiveness* as well as *consistency*, for which additional guidance may be needed.

<sup>7</sup> Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, UN-REDD Programme and Forest Investment Program.

<sup>8</sup> Decision 2/CP.17 para 64.

<sup>9</sup> Decision 2/CP.17 paras 45-55.

<sup>10</sup> Developing country Parties are invited to submit information on, *inter alia*, “co-benefits for local sustainable development” (Decision 2/CP.17 para 46(h)).

## A proposal to inform negotiations in Doha

Discussions in Durban indicated that more consensus building could be helpful to inform negotiations on the SIS, both on additional guidance and on the channels and timing for providing information at the international level. Moreover, a wealth of experience is being accumulated in countries on establishing frameworks and standards for safeguards implementation and information provision. However, only some of it has been made available through *ad hoc* presentations at workshops and side events, or publications such as the guide for developing social and environmental safeguards for REDD+ based on Brazil's participatory process.<sup>11</sup> These *ad hoc* presentations and publications demonstrate that there are already many lessons to be learned, as well as challenges that countries have identified. However, these experiences are not all being communicated, illustrating the need for a common platform for sharing best practices, as Japan proposed in its 2011 submission.

To contribute to a more informed discussion in Doha, the following process is proposed:

- *Invite submissions from Parties and observers* on lessons and challenges as well as their views on the submission of summaries of information (see Box 2). This would provide all Parties with an opportunity to communicate their national experiences and inform additional guidance, along with the useful submission already made by the United States, and build consensus on approaches.
- *Commission an analytical paper* based on the submissions in coordination with the REDD+ Partnership, drawing also on the 2011 submissions on the SIS as well as the Panama workshops and recent US submission. This could identify common lessons and challenges as well as best practices and provide more informative input to a discussion on additional guidance, as well as communication channels, timing and frequency, at COP18 in Doha.

### Box 2. Suggested elements of a submission to inform Doha discussions on the SIS

- Relevant lessons learned and challenges in developing and implementing safeguards and information systems at the national level.
- Relevant country experiences from REDD+ multilateral processes, including the FCPF Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment (SESA) and UN-REDD Participatory Governance Assessments (PGAs), as well as the REDD+ SES.
- Challenges and possible approaches for the coordinated development of standards and provision of information between these REDD+ processes.
- Challenges and possible approaches for building upon existing systems under relevant international agreements and other processes such as the FRA, including:
  - Approaches based on existing best practices, e.g. the coordinated system developed for reporting under human rights agreements; and
  - Approaches to realizing synergies with the CBD process on biodiversity safeguards (e.g. through a joint work programme between the UNFCCC and CBD).<sup>12</sup>
- Identification of needs for the provision of support using the registry for NAMAs, and possible approaches to achieve coherence with GCF rules that are under development.
- Views on submission of summaries of information: what kind of information should be provided and how (using and building on ideas in 2011 submissions); usefulness of a common reporting format; timing and frequency; and channels of communication.
- Views on a common platform for sharing best practices.

Please contact REDDSWG@yahoo.com for questions, comments and suggestions. These will be referred to relevant working group members.

<sup>11</sup> Talia Manceira Bonfante, Mauricio Voivodic and Luis Meneses Filho, *Developing Social and Environmental Safeguards for REDD+: A guide for a bottom up approach* (Imaflora and Amazon Working Group, 2011). <http://www.conservationfinance.org/upload/library/arquivo20110316121255.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> The CBD is already producing valuable guidance including recommendations for an indicator framework linked with the strategic plan and Aichi Targets, based on one global and three regional workshops, a consultancy study and submissions from Parties and observers. See UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/8, Advice on the application of relevant REDD+ safeguards for biodiversity, and on possible indicators and potential mechanisms to assess impacts of REDD+ measures on biodiversity, 21 Feb 2012.