



BRIEFING NOTE

Unpacking the 'Warsaw Framework for REDD+' The requirements for implementing REDD+ under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Introduction

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) has been a central issue in the global climate negotiations since the 2007. REDD+ recognizes five activities that developing countries can do to earn compensation from developed countries, including: Reducing emissions from deforestation; Reducing emissions from forest degradation; Sustainable management of forests; Conservation of forest carbon stocks; and Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Although the concept may seem straightforward, there are many issues that had to be worked out to make REDD+ a reality.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 19th Conference of the Parties (COP19) took place in Warsaw, Poland from 11-22nd November 2013. One of the most important outcomes from Warsaw was the adoption of the 'Warsaw Framework for REDD+', which makes REDD+ a reality under the UNFCCC and enables countries to move forward with the implementation of REDD+ activities under the UNFCCC.

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ is comprised of a series of decisions that together are referred to as the 'REDD+ rulebook' on how REDD+ must be implemented. The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ builds on previous relevant decisions adopted at COP13, COP15, COP16, COP17, and COP18.

The objective of this Briefing Note is to unpack the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ and consequently the relevant decisions adopted by previous COPs, to provide clarity regarding the:

- 'requirements' developing country Parties must fulfil when implementing REDD+; and
- guidance, support, and/or relevant institutional arrangements available for countries when implementing REDD+.

This Briefing Note is divided into seven sections, corresponding with the seven decision areas that comprise the 'REDD+ Rulebook':

1. Measurement, reporting and verification,
2. Forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels,
3. National forest monitoring systems,
4. Safeguards,
5. Drivers of deforestation,
6. Finance and results based payments, and
7. Institutional arrangements.

1. Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ confirmed that REDD+ activities¹ should be implemented in phases,² and phase III of REDD+ aims to involve results-based actions that are to be fully measured, reported and verified.³

What are the requirements for developing country Parties in relation to MRV?

- For developing countries to obtain results-based funding for REDD+ they must fully measure, report and verify “anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes” resulting from the implementation of REDD+ activities.⁴ What, how, and procedures related to MRV are discussed below.
- Developing country Parties must utilize the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidance and guidelines as a basis for estimating forest related emissions, removals, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes.⁵
- Developing country Parties must also monitor and report on emissions displacement at the national level.⁶

What must be subject to MRV?

It is important to clarify ‘what’ exactly needs to be subject to MRV. The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ confirms that developing country Parties must measure, report and verify “anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes” resulting from the implementation of REDD+ activities.⁷

How to MRV REDD+?

Developing country Parties are expected to do the following:

- Use data that is transparent, and consistent over time and with the established forest reference emission level and/or forest reference levels (REL/RL)⁸ to estimate emissions, removals and forest-area change in relation to REDD+ activities.
- Undertake MRV as part of the National Forest Monitoring System⁹ (see section below for decision on NFMS).
- Express the results of the implementation of REDD+ activities, as measured against the forest REL/RL in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.¹⁰
- Use data that is consistent with established or updated forest REL/RL.¹¹

¹ Those listed in Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 70: (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation; (b)

² Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 73: Phase I involves the development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building; Phase II is the implementation of these plans, policies and measures with phase III being results-based actions.

³ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 73

⁴ Decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 64, Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁵ Decision 4/CP.15 paragraph 1(c)

⁶ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71 (c)

⁷ As detailed in Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 70

⁸ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 4

¹¹ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 5

- Apply to REDD+ activities any MRV guidance developed on the measurement, reporting and verification of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs).¹²

How should MRV data be submitted?

- The MRV data and information requested by the COP should be provided through Parties' biennial update reports, taking into consideration the additional flexibility given to least developed countries and Small Island developing States.¹³
- In addition to the MRV data, country Parties should also supply a technical annex¹⁴ on a voluntary basis in line with previous guidance and in the context of results based payments.¹⁵

What is the Verification Process?

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ clarifies that, in order to receive payments the submitted data must be verified by a team of technical experts, including two land use, land-use change and forestry experts, one each from a developing country and a developed country party.¹⁶

The technical experts will verify:¹⁷

- The accuracy of the results,
- The consistency in methodologies, definitions, comprehensiveness, and information between the assessed reference level and the results of the implementation of the REDD+ activities,
- The consistency of the data and information provided in the technical annex with the guidelines provided by UNFCCC,
- The extent to which this information is transparent, consistent, complete¹⁸ and accurate.

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ further establishes that this technical analysis should result in a report published on the REDD+ information hub of the UNFCCC website.¹⁹

2. Forest reference emission levels (REL) and forest reference levels (RL)

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ recalls and builds upon several decisions that set the context and provide guidance on this matter:

- REL/RL are to serve as benchmarks for assessing each country's performance in implementing REDD+ activities.²⁰
- A step-wise approach to developing REL/RLs 'may be useful' to consider, in terms of enabling Parties to improve them by incorporating better data, improved methodologies and, where appropriate, additional pools.²¹

¹² Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 6 the guidance on NAMAs is contained in Decision 2/CP.17 Annex III

¹³ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 6

¹⁴ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 7

¹⁵ Guidance is contained in Decision 4/CP.15 and 2/CP.17 Annex III

¹⁶ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 10

¹⁷ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 11

¹⁸ Complete means the provision of information that allows for the reconstruction of the results

¹⁹ Decision 14/CP.19 paragraph 14

²⁰ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 7

²¹ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 10

- Subnational forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels may be elaborated as an interim measure.²²
- Developing country Parties are invited to submit proposed forest REL/RLs on a voluntary basis,²³ as well as information and rationale on the development of their forest REL/RLs and provide details of national circumstances and how these were considered. The information provided should follow the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and guidelines²⁴ and the guidelines adopted by COP17.²⁵
- Forest REL/RLs that are submitted will be subject to a technical assessment that will seek to assess the information submitted against the guidelines provided, and offer a technical exchange of information with a view to supporting and developing countries in the construction and improvement of their REL/RL.²⁶ The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ details the scope and procedures for the technical assessments.²⁷

What are the requirements for developing country Parties in relation to REL/RLs?

- Developing country Parties aiming to undertake REDD+ activities need to develop a national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.²⁸ This is a requirement to access results based payments (see section 6).
- The national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level is to be established in a manner that is consistent with the anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks contained in each country's greenhouse gas inventories.²⁹
- National forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels are to be established "transparently", "taking into account historic data"³⁰ and be updated periodically.³¹

3. National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS)

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ recalls and builds upon several decisions that set the context and provide guidance on this matter:

- Developing countries were first requested to establish a "robust and transparent" national forest monitoring system (NFMS)³² in Copenhagen at COP 15, as part of the general guidance on MRV for REDD+.³³
- Methodological guidance on NFMSs was adopted at COP15, namely stating that countries should use a combination of remote sensing and ground-based carbon inventory approaches for estimating emissions, removals and forest area change.³⁴

²² Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 11

²³ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 13, Decision 13/CP.19 paragraph 2

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Decision 12/CP.17 Annex

²⁶ Decision 13/CP.19 paragraph 1

²⁷ Decision 13/CP.19

²⁸ Or, as an interim measure subnational forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels. Decision 1/CP.6 paragraph 71(b)

²⁹ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 8

³⁰ Decision 4/CP.15 paragraph 7

³¹ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 12

³² And if appropriate, sub-national systems as part of a national system

³³ Decision 4/CP.15 paragraph 1(d)

³⁴ Decision 4/CP.15 paragraph 1(d)(i), (ii) and (iii)

- There is clear acknowledgement that NFMS may provide relevant information for the systems designed to demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected.³⁵ This acknowledgement seeks to encourage countries to explore synergies and efficiencies between these systems.

What are the requirements for developing country Parties in relation to NFMS?

- Developing country Parties need to develop a NFMS,³⁶ with the purpose of monitoring and reporting of REDD+ activities and estimating “anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes”.³⁷ The key characteristics the NFMS must fulfil are detailed below.
- Development of NFMS must “take into account” the guidance provided by the COP and be guided by the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and guidelines.³⁸
- NFMS are to be robust and provide data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, and are suitable for measuring, reporting and verifying ‘anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes’ resulting from the implementation of REDD+ activities.³⁹ This should be consistent with guidance on measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) by developing country Parties agreed by the Conference of the Parties.⁴⁰
- Sub-national forest monitoring systems should seek to include monitoring and reporting of emission displacement at the national level.⁴¹

Key characteristics of the NFMS:

- a) Should build upon existing systems,⁴²
- b) Should enable the assessment of different types of forest in the country, including natural forest, as defined by the country⁴³
- c) Be flexible and allow for improvements,⁴⁴
- d) Reflect the phased approach to REDD+.⁴⁵

4. Safeguards

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ recalls and builds upon several decisions that set the context and provide guidance on this matter:

- The UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards (hereafter referred to as the Cancun safeguards) were adopted at COP 16 as part of the Cancun agreement⁴⁶ and constitute the set of safeguards that all REDD+ activities are to be consistent with.

³⁵ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 5

³⁶ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71(c)

³⁷ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 2

³⁸ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 2

³⁹ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71(c) footnote 7

⁴² Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 4(a)

⁴³ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 4(b)

⁴⁴ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 4(c)

⁴⁵ Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 4(d)

⁴⁶ Decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 2: “When undertaking the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported (a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and

- The Cancun agreements, as well as subsequent decisions make it clear that safeguards are a central part of the REDD+ mechanism, with reporting requirements that are linked to the prospect of obtaining results-based-finance.

What are the requirements for developing country Parties in relation to safeguards?

- REDD+ activities⁴⁷ are to be implemented “in accordance with” the Cancun safeguards, which in addition are to be “promoted and supported.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, COP 17 clarifies that regardless of the source and type of funding for REDD+ activities, all REDD+ activities should be consistent with the Cancun safeguards.⁴⁹
- Developing country Parties aiming to undertake REDD+ activities are required to develop a system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected (a safeguards information system or SIS).⁵⁰ This constitutes a requirement to access results based payments⁵¹ (see section 6 below). The Durban decision provides initial guidance on the characteristics the national system for providing information on safeguards.⁵²
- Developing country Parties are also required to provide a summary of information on how all of the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the REDD+ activities.⁵³ This constitutes a requirement to access results based payments⁵⁴ (See section 6 below). The procedures for the reporting on safeguards are elaborated below.

What needs to be reported?

- A summary of information should provide information on how all of the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected.⁵⁵
- The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) has been mandated to consider the need for further guidance to “ensure transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness when informing on how all safeguards are addressed and respected.”⁵⁶

relevant international conventions and agreements; **(b)** Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty; **(c)** Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; **(d)** The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision; **(e)** That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits; **(f)** Actions to address the risks of reversals; **(g)** Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.”

⁴⁷ Those activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 70

⁴⁸ Decision 1/CP. 16 paragraph 69

⁴⁹ UNFCCC decision 2/CP. 17 paragraph 63

⁵⁰ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71(d), Decision 9/CP. 19 paragraph 3

⁵¹ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁵² Decision 12/CP. 17 paragraph 2

⁵³ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 3

⁵⁴ Decision 2/CP. 17 paragraph 64, Decision 9/CP.19 Paragraph 4

⁵⁵ Decision 12/CP.19 paragraph 1

⁵⁶ Decision 12/CP. 17 paragraph 6

How must it be reported?

- The summary of information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected should be provided periodically and be included in national communications, consistent with relevant COP decisions relating to national communications.⁵⁷
- An additional and voluntary way of reporting⁵⁸ is by providing the summary of information via the newly established⁵⁹ REDD+ information hub on the UNFCCC website.⁶⁰

When must reporting begin?

- Developing country Parties need to start providing the summary of information after the start of the implementation of REDD+ activities.⁶¹

When must the information be reported?

- As developing country Parties will be using national communications to submit their summary of information, the frequency for reporting on safeguards should be consistent with their submission of national communications (average of 4 years).
- In addition and on a voluntary basis they could report in a more frequent basis utilizing the UNFCCC website.⁶²

5. Drivers of Deforestation

At COP 13 in Bali the issue of drivers of deforestation was raised and Parties were encouraged to explore options and undertake efforts to address the drivers of deforestation with a view to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and enhancing forest carbon stocks due to sustainable management of their forests.⁶³ This encouragement was reiterated in Copenhagen⁶⁴ and Cancun⁶⁵ where the COP mandated the SBSTA to identify land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) activities that are linked to the drivers of deforestation.⁶⁶

Although the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ integrates drivers and recognizes the importance of addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the context of REDD+, it does not set out any requirements for countries.⁶⁷

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ simply encourages country Parties, multilateral, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector to take action to reduce drivers⁶⁸ and to share the results of their work on this matter on the UNFCCC's REDD+ web platform.⁶⁹

⁵⁷ Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 4, Decision 12/CP.19 paragraph 2

⁵⁸ Decision 12/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁵⁹ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 9

⁶⁰ <http://unfccc.int/redd>

⁶¹ Decision 12/CP.19 paragraph 4

⁶² Decision 12/CP.19 paragraph 5

⁶³ UNFCCC decision 2/CP.13 paragraph 3

⁶⁴ Decision 4/CP.15 paragraph 1(a)

⁶⁵ Decision 1/CP.16 paragraphs 68 and 72

⁶⁶ Decision 1/CP.16 Appendix II

⁶⁷ Decision 15/CP.19 paragraph 1

⁶⁸ Decision 15/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁶⁹ Decision 15/CP.19 paragraph 4

6. Finance and results-based payments

The discussions on how to finance REDD+ have been on going since COP 13 and progress on clarifying the source and channels of funding for REDD+ has been slow.⁷⁰

The decision derived from the COP work program on Results based finance clarifies a few important issues, but some elements are left out (i.e. such as how to address the need to scale up finance for REDD+). The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ sets out:

- The need to scale up and improve the effectiveness of finance for REDD+ activities (an acknowledgment that funds to implement REDD+ at a global scale are currently insufficient).⁷¹
- Finance for REDD+ can come from different sources, including public and private, bilateral and multilateral,⁷² without creating any specific commitments.⁷³
- Adequate and predictable financial and technological support for all phases of REDD+ is necessary.^{74 75}
- Finance for REDD+ activities will be channelled to developing countries through funding agencies such as the Green Climate Fund.
- Existing and potential REDD+ funding agencies should coordinate their support better and ensure that it aligns with established UNFCCC rules.⁷⁶
- An 'information hub' should be established on the UNFCCC website. The information hub will feature information on REDD+ activities, including results-based payments, technical reports that describe how greenhouse gas emissions savings are calculated, national forest strategy and action plans, information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, and more.

What are the requirements for developing country Parties to receive results-based finance for REDD+?

For developing country Parties to receive results-based finance for REDD+ they must:

1. Ensure that the anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals resulting from the implementation of REDD+ activities are fully measured, reported and verified (MRV), in accordance with UNFCCC guidance⁷⁷ (see section 1).
2. Provide the most recent summary of information on how all Cancun safeguards have been addressed and respected before receiving payments⁷⁸ (see section 5).
3. Have in place:⁷⁹
 - a national strategy or action plan,

⁷⁰ UNFCCC decision 2/CP.13 paragraph 7

⁷¹ UNFCCC Decision 9/CP.19 preamble and paragraph 1

⁷² Public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources, as referred to in decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 65

⁷³ Decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 65

⁷⁴ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 2

⁷⁵ According to Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 73: **Phase I** involves the development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building; **Phase II** is the implementation of these plans, policies and measures with **Phase III** being results-based **actions**

⁷⁶ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraphs 5 and 6

⁷⁷ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 3

⁷⁸ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 4

⁷⁹ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraph 3

- a national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level, or if appropriate, as an interim measure, subnational forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels,
- a robust and transparent national forest monitoring system for the monitoring and reporting of REDD+ activities, and
- a system for providing information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.

7. Institutional arrangements for REDD+

Taking into account the need for further coordination of support, the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ sets out certain institutional arrangements that are expected to be implemented at the country level:

- Countries are encouraged to set up a national REDD+ entity or designate a focal point to serve as a liaison with the Secretariat and the relevant bodies under the UNFCCC for REDD+ related matters.⁸⁰
- The national REDD+ entity or focal point can nominate their entities to obtain and receive results-based payments, so long as the nominated entities comply with the requirements of the entities providing the payments.⁸¹
- National REDD+ entities or focal points, countries and relevant financing entities are encouraged to meet regularly and share information and experiences, as well as cooperatively identify gaps, needs, and good practices on REDD+ activities and financing arrangements.⁸² The UNFCCC Secretariat is to facilitate the organization on these meetings.⁸³

No decision was adopted on international institutional arrangements for REDD+. The issue of institutional arrangements for REDD+ has been a source of much debate and disagreement during the negotiations. COP 18 in Doha mandated the SBSTA and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to examine existing institutional arrangements and consider potential governance alternatives including the possibility of establishing a “body, board or committee” at the international level to improve the coordination of support for the implementation of REDD+ activities.⁸⁴ However, this matter was not resolved in Warsaw, with the COP merely requesting that the SBI review the meetings of the national entities that are to take place in the next three years and continue to consider institutional arrangements with a view to providing the COP with recommendations in 2017 (COP 23).⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Decision 10/CP.19 paragraph 1

⁸¹ Decision 10/CP.19 paragraph 2

⁸² Decision 10/CP.19 paragraphs 3 and 4

⁸³ Decision 10/CP.19 paragraph 5

⁸⁴ Decision 1/CP.18 paragraphs 34 and 35

⁸⁵ Decision 10/CP.19 paragraph 9

Concluding remarks

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ set out a 'REDD+ Rulebook' comprised of a set of requirements and methodological modalities and guidance, which enables countries to move forward with the implementation of REDD+ under the UNFCCC.

The adoption of the 'REDD+ Rulebook' is also meant to ensure that a consistent set of rules are applied and followed, leveling the playing field for countries which to date have faced different rules depending on which multilateral agencies and donor countries they are working with. It is important to note that the 'REDD+ Rulebook' is linked to accessing results based finance,⁸⁶ which means that developing country Parties are required to implement the rules before they can access such finance, while existing and potential REDD+ funding agencies and donors are expected to ensure the REDD+ rulebook is applied when supporting the implementation of REDD+ activities.

Although the 'Warsaw Framework for REDD+' makes REDD+ a reality under the UNFCCC and countries can move forward with its implementation, there are some pending issues subject to further discussions. Decisions are pending in relation to:

- What will be the ways and means to transfer results based payments,
- How REDD+ finance will be scaled up,
- Further Guidance on safeguards information systems,
- Methodological approaches to non-carbon benefits and non-market based approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches (championed by Bolivia), to support the implementation of REDD+ activities.

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⁸⁶ Decision 9/CP.19 paragraphs 5 and 6