Mexico:

Community-Based Landscape Approach to Reduce GHG Emissions

ER-PIN Proposal Summary

The Emission Reduction Program Idea Note (ER-PIN) represents **Mexico´s community- based landscape approach** to reduce GHG emission. It builds on more than 10 years of successful experiences on sustainable forest management at the community level through policy instruments, particularly those related to forest policy, institutional reforms and community capacity building. Over the past decade, Mexico has taken critical steps such as the establishment of a dedicated institution (CONAFOR), the decentralization forest administration at the State level, the promotion of community forest management and the ambitious reforestation and forest landscape restoration, that are yielding today tangible results in terms of forest preservation. The proposed ER-PIN aims at further transforming the management of forests at the territorial level, going a step further through a truly integrated approach at the landscape level.

Mexico: A Conducive Environment for REDD+

Over the last century, Mexico has transformed its land tenure regime and community-based tenure has now become the dominant form of land tenure. The unique land tenure system, including forests, and the very diverse social mosaic in the country, with most of the forest (about 45%) under collective ownership by indigenous and local communities provides a firm basis for community-based landscape approach, proposed in this initiative.

Mexico has a solid legal framework, including the Climate Change General Law and the General Law for Sustainable Forest Development, which provides innovative tools and structures to meet the challenges of climate change and that are also relevant for REDD+. The National Climate Change Strategy was released in June, 2013. The National REDD+ Strategy (ENAREDD+) will be aligned with the targets, objectives and strategic actions for mitigation in the forest sector included in the Climate Change Strategy. The proposed ERPIN is fully aligned with the ENAREDD+.

Mexico has embraced REDD+ as one pillar of its Climate Change agenda. Mexico has made significant progress in assessing the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the potential options to promote REDD+ in the wider context of sustainable rural development. In conjunction with the preparation process of the National REDD+ Strategy, Mexico has developed REDD+ Early Actions (ATREDD+) which are a set of institutionally articulated efforts at the subnational level, including state and local governments, that aim to address the causes of deforestation and degradation in a given landscape. The ATREDD+ include policy instruments and specific interventions aligned and designed to pilot innovative governance models and to create opportunities for economic and social development of communities.

Mexico's significant experience in strengthening forest's capacity to respond to climate change, includes: i) capacity building for territorial management through the strengthening of community management, and training and certification of technical services, ii) consolidation of regional forest programs, iii) innovation and alignment of intersectorial policies at multiple scales, iv) participatory management through promoting participatory platforms for the design and evaluation of territorial plans, v) monitoring and evaluation, including mechanisms for policy evaluation.

The proposed ER-Program: A Community- Based Landscape Approach

Building on more than 10 years of CONAFOR's experience implementing programs, the ER-PROGRAM, , will be implemented in the early actions in the states of Campeche, Chiapas, Jalisco, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán. These 5 states represent a total area of 29,294,444 ha in which 17,376,328 ha is covered by forest. Currently the interventions made by CONAFOR in the ATREDD+ are articulated through the *Programas Especiales* and some of these actions are currently being piloted under the FIP. The FIP investments aim at strengthening the forest governance and the capacity building for the

sustainable management of landscapes. While the FIP investments will create the enabling conditions to alleviate pressures on natural forests, the ERs payments from the ER-PROGRAM will generate the incentives for rural communities to sustainably reduce deforestation and associated GHG emissions over time: the ER-PROGRAM, along with the innovation introduced by the FIP investments, is expected to transform and to give continuity to the management of natural resources at the landscape level in the Early Actions Areas. Moreover, these payments will help to scale up the lessons learned through the implementation of *Programas Especiales*, which will be eventually implemented in other regions of Mexico.

The ER-PROGRAM will combine a wide range of activities that promote rural development with low carbon emissions ranging from sustainable forest management to silvo-pastoral techniques, grazing rotation, conservation tillage, agro-ecology, afforestation, reforestation, restoration and forest certification to reduce emissions. The specific activities will be designed through a participatory process with local communities and included in a five year investment plan. CONAFOR, in collaboration with state governments will launch a call for applications (*convocatoria*) to develop the investments plans. The communities will receive support from local technical agents to help them choose the most appropriate mix of activities and define their own investment plan: particular attention will be given to safeguards measures, non-carbon benefits and fair benefit-sharing arrangements for the regions. The benefit-sharing arrangements will be prepared in a consultative, transparent and participatory process at the community level, in line with the existing legislation which establishes that property over forestry resources belongs to communities, *ejidos* and owners of territories. Though the specific benefit-sharing arrangements will be developed as part of the investments plans they will need to consider the existing legislation, such as article 5 of the General Law for Sustainable Forest Development, which establishes that property over forestry resources belongs to communities, ejidos and owners of territories. The ENAREDD+ establishes that once CO_2 is incorporated to biomass, the property over this carbon belongs to forest owners. Therefore, rights over avoided emissions will belong to forest owners.

Through the Investment plans, the ER-Program will scale up the approach taken so far through the *Programas Especiales*: investment plans will consider many communities inside a region in order to implement the integrated landscape management approach, considering also environmental boundaries (watersheds, biological corridors), whereas *Programas Especiales* are targeted to specific communities. This multi-level strategy will allow addressing the drivers of deforestation and degradation more efficiently and from different fronts.

The establishment of the reference levels will be derived from the national level (top-down approach) in order to ensure consistency in the use of data, methodologies and procedures. The reference levels of the states will be the basis for estimating the performance report within the intervention areas whose actions will be led from the state level (bottom-up approach). In this way, the nesting for accounting is ensured at the national level. The National MRV system will provide a broad platform for effectively addressing drivers and monitoring results. Currently, an interinstitutional initiative has been created in order to develop methods related with the forests integrity and natural protected areas. As part of this initiative a protocol for ecosystem degradation monitoring has been developed. This initiative will be implemented through 2014 at the national forest inventory (core piece of the emission factors of the MRV system) and the lessons learned from it will help to begin the discussion on how the non-carbon benefits identified by the ER-Program participant communities could contribute to the national system.

This proposal has received feedback from key stakeholders in Mexico. The proposal is supported by the state governments, and has been endorsed by the intersecretarial Commission for Climate Change (CICC) Working Group on reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (GT-REDD+). Additionally, it has been presented and received feedback from national consultation platforms such as the National Consultative Technical Committee on REDD+ (CTC-REDD) and the ENAREDD working group of the National Forest Council (CONAF).

This initiative represents an opportunity to test the forest mitigation policies at the landscape level and can constitute a laboratory of REDD+ actions that will allow the Carbon Fund to produce significant experience and lessons that can help REDD+ scale up at a national level.