

Minutes of the First Federal REDD+ Steering Committee (FRSC) Meeting

Date: 29 March, 2013

1. Opening

H.E Ato Eristu Yirda, MDGs Project Office, State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture has welcomed the FRSC members on behalf of H.E. Ato Sileshi Getahun, Natural Resource Sector State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture. In his key note remarks, Ato Eristu indicated the significance of emissions of GHGs from the global forestry sector, representing about 17% of total emissions. REDD+, as set of policy approaches, has been designed to provide incentives for developing countries who attempt to address emissions from forestry and enhance carbon stocks in forest biomass.

He noted that given Ethiopia is a country with a large forest resource in the east African region and its forest largely threatened with destruction, Ethiopia recognizes the importance of participating in the international REDD+ mechanism. As a result Ethiopia has been in the REDD+ process since 2008, and is now preparing itself for REDD+ implementation. He said REDD+ will create national capacity for proper administration of forests and help generate revenue from forests that will support the socio-economic development, while contributing to the global climate change mitigation efforts.

Finally, he stressed that the implementation of R-PP is a complex, multi-sectoral and technically demanding process, and thus requires the active involvement several national and regional stakeholders, experts, development partners, civic societies, and NGOs. In particular, the oversight and monitoring of the activities by this important management body, the Steering Committee, is critical for the achievement of REDD+ Readiness of Ethiopia.

Participants

The meeting was attended by the following members.

1. H.E. Ato Erstu Yirda, State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture (on behalf of the Chairperson)
2. Her Excellency W/ro Frenesh Mekuria, State Minister, Ministry of Women, Children and Youth
3. H.E. Ato Abdifatah Mahmud Hassen, Vice President, Somali Regional State
4. H.E. Ato Kisros Bitew, Vice President, Tigray Regional State, and Bureau of Agriculture Head

5. H.E Ato Zelalem Jemaneh, Vice President, Oromia Regional State and Bureau of Agriculture Head
6. H.E. Ato Wondimu Tekle, State Minister, Ministry of Water and Energy
7. Ato Ewnetu Bilatu, Director, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority
8. Engineer Olero Oupiew, Bureau of Agriculture Head, Gambella Regional State
9. Ato Desalegn Mesfin, Deputy Director, Federal Environmental Protection Authority
10. Ato Tefera Tadesse, Director for Natural Resource Management, Ministry of Agriculture
11. Dr Solomon Asefa, Director General, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
12. Dr Tefera Mengistu, Dean, Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources
13. Dr Girma Balcha, Director, Ethiopian Climate Change Forum
14. Ato Dhida Diriba, Director General, Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise
15. Ato Feleke Tessema, Director General, Amhara Forest and Wildlife Enterprise
16. Ato Abdulahi Ahmed, Process Head, NRM, Somali Regional State
17. Ato Zeleke Woldetsadik, Institute of Biodiversity
18. Ato Hailu Sitie, Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency
19. Ato Sertse Sebu, CRGE Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture
20. Dr Yitebitu Moges, National REDD+ Coordinator (Secretary).

2. Agenda

Following the remarks delivered by the state minister, the REDD+ Secretariat coordinator introduced the agenda of the meeting.

The agenda was highlighted as follows:

- i. Presentation on overview of Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) focusing on agriculture sector,
- ii. Presentations on Introduction to REDD+, R-PP, assessment note, and status of REDD+ readiness phase,
- iii. ToR for Federal REDD+ Steering Committee for endorsement,
- iv. REDD+ readiness annual work plan of 2013 for endorsement,
- v. Procurement plan for 2013/14
- vi. Way forward

3. Background Presentations

The Agriculture Sector Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Coordinator presented background information on the CRGE, REDD+ is an important part. He explained that the goal of the CRGE is to make the fast growing economy of the country environment friendly, and achieve carbon neutral economy by 2030, and the contribution of REDD+ (forestry) to bring the emissions in the sector to zero and absorb emissions from other sectors has been emphasized.

Then, the REDD+ Project Coordinator made presentations on the concept and relevance of REDD+ for Ethiopia. He briefly described the R-PP and the objectives of its implementation to make Ethiopia ready for REDD+ implementation. The budget required to implement it is 14.2 million USD. He explained that Ethiopia will be ready for REDD+ implementation when the national REDD+ Strategy is developed and validated by stakeholders, the reference emissions from forestry sector and forest areas are determined following international standards, safeguards requirements and implementation frameworks (policy, institutional, legal frameworks) as well as the forest MRV systems are put in place.

An introduction to the R-PP supported by the World Bank as outlined in the Assessment Note was also made. Accordingly, the components of the R-PP that are being supported by the WB focus on strategy development, support to capacity development for REDD+ readiness management, and on creating enabling REDD+ implementation framework.

The inadequacy of WB support of 3.6 million USD for implementing the R-PP, and the ongoing processes to finance the gap, especially the encouraging status of the agreement processes with DFID (UK) and the Norwegian government, has also been explained.

4. Questions, Discussions and Suggestions

Questions and clarifications

The first two presentations were followed up by some questions raised by SC members. Presenters have clarified on the issues. The questions and clarifications are organized based on their common intent of addressing similar issues and are summarized as under.

Question 1

- From the presentation on REDD+, eligible activities seem to relate fully with forest management. However, activities which give alternative energy to firewood such as improved cook stoves, biogas and bio-fuels have significant contribution to achieve REDD+ objectives. Are such activities not eligible?
- The eligibility criteria for REDD+ activities look limited and this can undermine emission reduction efforts if thought is not to be given to other relevant activities which influence the sustainable management of forests. For instance, women involve largely in the collection of firewood. So how the issue of women taken and what is considered to improve their livelihoods? Is the mountain afforestation by the youth as it has been practice in Tigray eligible?

Clarification

REDD+ is not only about sustainable forest management. It's all about resolving the drivers of deforestation and degradation. The presentation may be brief due to time and all issues may not be presented. Otherwise, the common drivers of deforestation and degradation in Ethiopian forests such as firewood, agricultural land and livelihoods will be given priority in the preparation of REDD+ strategy for implementation.

Question 2

- With regard to the phases REDD+, it has been mentioned there are three phases. Is this a conventional way of classifying for the sake of addressing phases? Or has it considered the Ethiopian context and the achievements made so far?
Many efforts have undergone with respect to enabling REDD+. Large areas are rehabilitated with afforestation, reforestation and area closures. Other efforts have dealt

with alternative energy supply for the rural community. For example, about 4 million cook stoves have already been distributed to rural households by MoWE. Thus, shall we really place ourselves in phase I?

- In the REDD+ presentation, it has been described that Ethiopia is in the readiness phase. Why are we at this stage and how are we compared with other countries?
Are there any countries that are getting payment from REDD+ implementation? If so what it took them to realize this? What do we need to do to achieve this and can we take some lessons from front runners of REDD+?

Clarification

- Generally, when considering REDD+ activities we have to comply with the processes that the international community has agreed about. REDD+ payments are made on the basis of the achievements made in terms of reducing emissions and these needs to be quantified, monitored and verified. But it is also acceptable to consider all achievements made so far in terms of institutional arrangements, basic frameworks and enablers. We can assess all achievements we made in this aspect and we can revise the right phase we are dealing with. For instance, the activities that are in the second phase such as the Emissions Reduction Program in Oromia region is a step that indicates that we are already in the second phase. The need for speeding up the REDD+ has been underlined, and for that to happen, we need to make sure that the REDD+ Secretariat is fully staffed and optimally operational as soon as possible.
- With regard to experiences from other REDD+ countries, there are different practices and achievements such as in Costa Rica, Vietnam, Indonesia, etc. A lesson can be drawn from their practices and achievements in the form of experience sharing tours. But we need to identify which country would give us the best lesson according to our situation.

Question 3

From the experience of OFWE and FARM Africa in Bale eco-region, the presence of national parks adjacent to other forestlands has been a subject of concern as to whether to consider it for REDD+. Particularly when there is the issue of resettlement like that of Bale eco-region, development partners are not interested in taking part. Therefore, how are we going to resolve such issues as the country has substantial coverage of national parks?

Clarification

National parks are good forest assets and have greater role in generating carbon credits and contributing to REDD+. Therefore, issues of controversy need to be discussed at the SC level and consensus shall be reached to harmonize park and non-park forests for REDD+ projects.

Question 4

What is the role of media in the process of REDD+ and what are the planned activities that media is expected to address?

Clarification

The role of media is crucial in building awareness in the wider stakeholder and community as well as disseminating the objectives of REDD+ properly for better achievements. The media can broadcast programs that promote REDD+ in different languages to reach different stakeholders at different levels.

Question 5

- The actual implementation of the program will be carried out by regions and cascaded administration units. How is REDD+ to reach regions and woredas and how is the institutional arrangement in this respect?
- In terms of home take messages for regions, how is it planned to reach regions and grassroots level? What would be our follow up procedures?

Clarification

We are proposing regions to replicate the institutional arrangements made at federal level in the MoA. For the time being, we are communicating with regions using CRGE/REDD focal persons in each region. The main activities in the regions will be capacity building on REDD+, and piloting REDD+ on which regions can act now.

Discussions and Suggestions

- I. REDD+ has international context and paves the way to protect and manage our forests sustainably. As a result, there is a necessity to scrutinize the main REDD+ elements and they have to be integrated. There is a need furthermore to define the scope of REDD+ as to how it operates and integrates with other sectors and activities.
- II. The definition of forest in Ethiopia has to be properly addressed and has to be clarified for stakeholders in order to maximize our benefits from REDD+ carbon credits.
- III. The modalities of REDD+ have to consider the resources, potentials and skills in other stakeholders apart from the activities delegated to MoA. For instance, MoA can build partnership with Wondo Genet College of Forestry & Natural Resources in the areas of capacity building and skills in REDD+ MRV. WGCENR is currently engaged in establishing training programs on REDD+ MRV.
- IV. The R-PP has to be evaluated and revised based on new developments as things have been changing since its preparation. For instance:
 - reference levels
 - those being done in the energy sector (cook stoves)
 - other readiness activities, sector reduction mechanisms are to be implemented and these progresses can improve the readiness of Ethiopia for REDD+.

Therefore, we need to move into concrete actions than to focus on simply phases.

- V. On the issue of safeguards, we have to be cautious and we need to perform it ourselves rather than depending on expatriates, and we need to emphasize on our policy, i.e. on the environmental policy of the country and implementing EIA. There are different delicate issues which have no particular essence in REDD+ implementation but surface out from different directions.
- VI. There should be sufficient consideration that implementing REDD+ is different from BAU activities. It is about knowing the market of carbon credits. Carbon has become a commodity now. The activities which bring about transformation in REDD+ are being done now with the help of upfront support. But proper payment is made later in the future based on what we perform, our results. We cannot bring sufficient result by only implementing on some pilots. We have to broadly define our scope and reach more areas to have bigger impacts. We need also to develop our own capacity on MRV procedures in order not to depend on external

skills which are too costly that can undermine the reward that may be obtained from carbon credits.

- VII. Our MRV system has to consider our decentralized system too; it was suggested for instance to choose sub-national REDD+ as opposed to national approach. Therefore, to account for sub-national level MRV would benefit every region based on its own performance without referring to the fluctuations of payments in other regions of the country. If we opt for national MRV system, a good performance observed in one region may be lowered by a lower performance observed in another as the average is considered for payment.
- VIII. The ToR of the SC has been largely endorsed, but it was suggested that institutions that are very relevant to REDD+ should be represented, and considered in the revised version.
- IX. On the annual work plan, the SC considered the need for revision of the plan focusing on priority activities with clear milestones and timeframe, engaging federal capacity (research and academic intuitions), and with activities for capacity building of the regions, and considering the available capacity at the Secretariat.

5. Way forward

As next steps, the chairperson has highlighted that:

- The REDD+ process has to be speeded up and focus on progressing tangible actions by participating relevant stakeholders.
- Regions have to establish proper units which can shoulder the CRGE activities in general and REDD+ in particular.
- The SC has to focus on very strategic issues and there may not be need to approve every detail at the SC level.
- Agendas and papers which are supposed to be presented in SC meeting have to be prepared beforehand and circulated well ahead by the REDD+ Secretariat.

Finally, the chairperson has extended his thanks to participants, wished to see every SC member in the next meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.