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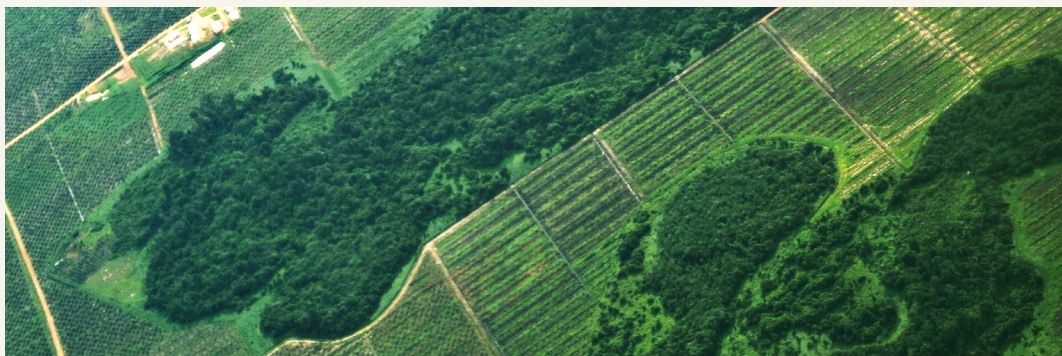
BRIEF

INT

2013

Policy Brief

UNFCCC-COP 19: WARSAW, POLAND THE NEED FOR ROBUST AND TRANSPARENT REDD+ REFERENCE LEVELS



WHY ROBUST AND TRANSPARENT RLS?

- Robust and transparent reference levels (RLs¹) ensure the climate integrity of REDD+ activities (i.e. show that emission reductions are real) by providing empirically-determined and internationally assessed benchmarks from which to measure performance.
- Demonstration of climate integrity will strongly appeal to donors and investors in REDD+ activities; therefore, robust and transparent RLs are key to attracting scaled up finance for REDD+.
- Forest monitoring systems are likely to be methodologically linked to RLs, since MRV systems will increasingly seek to answer whether REDD+ is performing quantitatively. As countries strengthen their forest and REDD+ MRV programs, internationally assessed RLs will be important guideposts for what will be monitored, measured, reported and verified

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¹ In this brief, “RLs” refers to both reference levels and reference emissions levels.



WWF EXPECTATIONS FOR UNFCCC-COP19

Overall, the current draft decision (FCCC/SBSTA/2013/L.12) on RL assessments is a strong and important basis for advancing REDD+. Given the often limited time for detailed negotiations, WWF feels it is important that Parties focus on agreeing to the most parsimonious language by referring to prior decisions and agreements. It will be a very disappointing outcome if small differences prevent a broader agreement on completing this decision and the overall technical basis for REDD+.

At UNFCCC-COP19, Parties should complete a REDD+ RL decision that gives confidence to all Parties that REDD+ can yield performance based results, calculated against an assessed RLs, in the near future. These decisions should include:

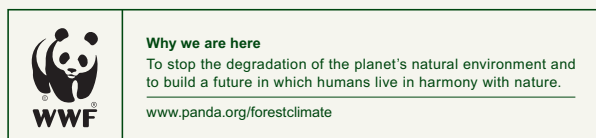
1. Language which clarifies the urgent need for **new training** platforms for the technical work underpinning REDD+ RLs. Regional and national institutions should be supported, and International cooperation encouraged. These are needed to fill critical outstanding gaps in training so REDD+ RLs can be developed, submitted and assessed. It has been two years since the COP17 provided guidelines for submission of RLS and invited developing country Parties to submit RLs. One reason no REDD+ RL has been submitted to the UNFCCC is the delay in finalizing the technical assessment of proposed REDD+ RLs, highlighting the importance for an overall RL assessment decision. Another reason is the considerable technical challenge of developing rigorous RLs. Additionally, training programs are needed to build global REDD+ RL capacity.
2. A decision to **forward assessed REDD+ RLs to the COP for possible adoption**. This is a critical point and is needed to ensure that RLs are not just technical exercises, but lead to continued international cooperation that scales up conservation and restoration of threatened forests.
3. Text that clarifies the **objectives of the RL assessment**. WWF believes the objective should be

to assess the degree to which proposed RLs are in accordance with previous guidelines from COP17 for submission of proposed RLs. It is our view that this approach can best facilitate an agreement and not allow the multiple options from blocking overall agreement.

4. In terms of the **scope** of the RL assessment, language should be agreed on that requires the assumptions (as well as data, methodologies and procedures) to be evaluated.
5. There is currently a detailed approach to the **general procedures**. Language could be added to ensure that any assessors should be free from conflicts of interest. This would ensure that the assessment process is seen as fair, and would require strengthening the existing language that precludes nationals or individuals funded by the Party whose RL is being assessed. And while the general procedures are detailed, it might be useful to add language to ensure that the UNFCCC secretariat can determine the venue of the assessment as well as the overall manner of the assessments.
6. The UNFCCC secretariat should also be asked to prepare **annual reports** on assessed RLs. The current text calls for only one report. Submissions and assessments of RLs will be an on-going process. Parties should also agree to make the assessed RLs themselves available on the UNFCCC REDD Web Platform. This transparency will ensure that REDD+ continues to inspire more mitigation and financial commitments by all Parties.

In addition to these topics currently under debate, Parties should explore ways to incorporate assessed RLs into other elements of the UNFCCC process. And to ensure overall environmental integrity of REDD+, Parties should begin discussions on ensuring that the application of collective REDD+ RLs overtime in an evolving agreement are contributing to the overall objective of the UNFCCC.

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