

FOREST ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Background

The UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit and it became into force on 21st March, 1992. The first Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting was held in 1995 in Berlin, Germany and it continues annually with Parties responsible to develop their national inventories of sources and sinks with a special reference to the Article 4 Commitments.

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was significant with the commitment of 36 developed countries to reduce their emission by 4% between 1990 and 2012. Although it reduced emission by 24% for six times over the target, there were still challenging situations as it did not cover a number of issues under the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). In 2005, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (RED) was introduced in developing countries focused to integrating forestry to reducing global emission target. In 2009, it became Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+), includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

The world forest areas is 31% of the total world land surface with approximately 4,033 billion hectares of diverse forest covers. Consequently, it takes up roughly a third of the carbon dioxide emitted from burning fossil fuels each year. According to a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) study in 2014, it estimates that tropical forests absorb 1.4 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide out of a total global absorption of 2.5 billion. However a recent study of Canada's forest from 2000 to 2007 pointed deforestation specifically in the tropics amounts to an equivalent of a sixth of global fossil fuel emissions back into the atmosphere.

Emerging Issues under the Paris Agreement

At the COP 21 meeting in Paris in 2015, 196 Countries agreed to limit the increase in global average temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius. There were two competing approaches to minimize deforestation in the Paris Agreement as referred to in the Article 5¹ of the Agreement. These are;

¹ REDD+ and the role of forests a summary of Article 5 of the Paris Agreement: Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1(d), of the Convention, including forests.

1. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).
2. Joint Mitigation and Adaptation Mechanism (JMA).

In addition to specifics stated in Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, the 196 parties agreed to develop and scale-up their National Determined Contributions (NDCs) that formulate a country's mitigation strategies and goals and agreed to be bound by an enhanced transparency framework as a long-term commitment until 2030 (Refer to Table-1). Due to the requirement of the transparency framework, the participating countries have to submit two commitments which are; the national inventory report of anthropogenic emissions and the information necessary to track progress implementing the NDCs.

The shortfall of the Paris Agreement is that it defers actions to the future, by failing to usher in the immediate and steep emission reductions necessary to achieve the temperature goal, relying instead on removing carbon from the atmosphere at a later date. Moreover, it remains uncertain on the methodological procedures, monitoring indicators to measure the performance and transparency issue for immediate, short and long term period.

However, the outcome of the COP 21 can only be considered a real success once the Paris Agreement is being ratified and

implemented by all countries, the promised finances are made available and technology

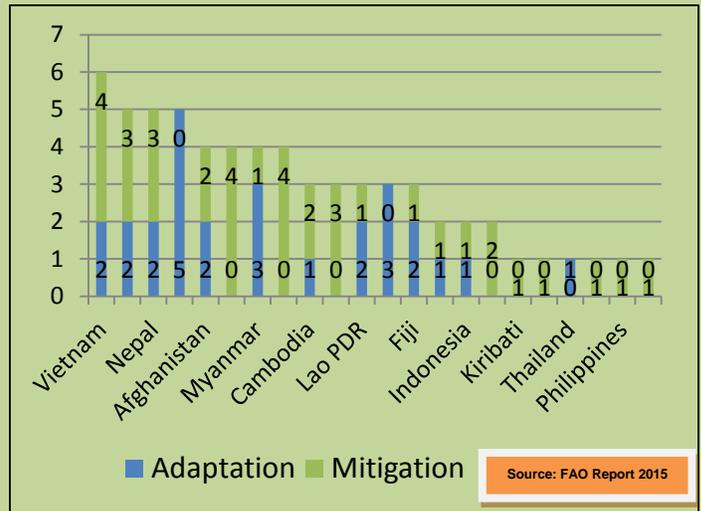


Table 1: Number of NDCs Forestry Actions in the Asia-Pacific

transfer is enabled.

Conclusion and Approaches for Addressing the Issues

The main message coming out of Paris Agreement is that it is the time for the world to act, by ending fossil fuel are within few decades. To achieve the goal of Paris Agreement that limit to temperature by 2 degree centigrade, natural ecosystem should be enhanced and conserved. This means we should stop destruction of natural forest and restore degraded and destroyed forest and the ecosystem. Therefore, eradicating poverty and respecting the rights of forest peoples to their land is essential to achieve ecosystem integrity and the protection of biodiversity to reach the goal of climate change.

Overall, individual signatory countries have to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement aiming to address the global concerns through the National Determined Contributions (NDCs). The Developing countries will need assistance and finance to scale-up NDCs activities through following approaches;

i. Reducing the Emission through deforestation and forest degradation, REDD+, which a market-based approach, by avoiding and reducing deforestation occurring as a result from current slash and burn unsustainable farming system, expansion of unplanned cash crop plantations and other unsustainable short term forest conversion activities.

ii. Joint Mitigation Adaptation Approach that is a non-market based undertaking which would potentially applied in many specific locations where forest based mitigation and adaption activities can be successfully implemented e.g. coastal and mountainous plantations specifically.

iii. Land and forest landscape restoration which can be implemented in areas where current different land uses are to be harmonized. For example, community forestry, livelihood agriculture, livestock, biodiversity conservation, ecological protection.

Policy Recommendations

The major recommendation is to scale-up individual NDCs through the following actions.

1. Strengthen collaboration, cooperation and coordination with other sectors and related stakeholders both in national and international level.
2. Refine the individual NDCs by setting clear, measurable and achievable target.
3. Set up effective and efficient institutions to implement NDCs.
4. Allocate the adequate resources to the concerned institutions
5. Establish appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism

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