



THE FORESTS DIALOGUE

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Dialogue on Forests and Climate Change

1-2 April 2008 – Washington, DC, USA

Co-Chairs' Summary Report

Stewart Maginnis, James Griffiths, Gerhard Dieterle,
Lars Laestadius and Roberto Smeraldi

On 1-2 April 2008 in Washington DC, The Forests Dialogue (TFD) convened more than 50 leaders for the first full dialogue under its new forests and climate change (FCC) initiative. Hosted by The World Resources Institute, this dialogue was part of a 2 year initiative focused on stakeholder engagement on this important issue. The dialogue was preceded by a smaller "scoping" dialogue held in conjunction with the UNFCCC's COP 13 in Bali, Indonesia on 9 December 2007. Reports and related materials can be found at www.theforestsdialogue.org/climate.html.

The principle objective of the DC FCC Dialogue was to explore the nature of and reasons behind the "fracture lines" or tensions between different stakeholder groups arising from existing and proposed climate policy mechanisms for the treatment of forests. A related objective was to identify possible options whereby stakeholder groups within the broader forest community can work together to overcome some of these differences, thus collaborating to shape and influence future forests and climate policy frameworks and decisions.

The DC dialogue confirmed that there is strong common cause for forest stakeholders to work together to better inform climate policy negotiators on forestry issues in the lead up to COP 15 (December 2009, Copenhagen). There was also agreement that TFD should convene further dialogues this year aimed at developing a set of common messages for climate negotiators that will present a more unified view on key issues of agreement (and disagreement) among a representative set of actors in the forest sector.

General Overview

The dialogue began with participants identifying aspects of forestry that are currently considered of importance within the climate change arena. Brief updates on the current status of land-use based, climate mitigation options such as afforestation/reforestation, Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), and biofuels led into a discussion on what has been lacking, and how emerging fracture lines within these fields can be addressed.

Strong concern was expressed that approaches taken to date to incorporate forests and associated land-use management into both formal and voluntary mechanisms for the reduction of green house gases have many flaws. Concern was raised that these approaches do not necessarily take into account the decades of experience around issues of sustainability, equity and conservation that the broader forest community has generated.

The issue of sustainable forest management (SFM) was recurrent throughout the 2 days, and appeared to underlie many of the fundamental requirements of successful integration of forests into a future climate regime. However, it was highlighted that even within the forest sector there is some debate over what exactly is encompassed within this term, and therefore some further discussion may be necessary on this topic as well.

Stakeholder agreement and disagreement

With the above general discussion in mind, smaller randomly mixed groups were tasked to come to some agreement on the key issues that negotiators need to address if, in the opinion of the participants, they are to successfully consider forests in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. These sessions yielded a wealth of information and gave great insight into the prevailing stakeholder perceptions and priority issues. The results of the ensuing discussions were broken down into areas of agreement, disagreement and next steps. A representative sample is below:

Issues participants agreed on

- ➔ Securing land tenure and user rights is central, as is secure and transparent governance structures;
- ➔ Forest-based mitigation activities should be seen in the context of being additional to, not a substitute for, necessary reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from other sectors;
- ➔ It is important not to focus solely on mitigation - adaptation also has a key role. Forests and forest communities may not be in a position to respond to these changes.
- ➔ More attention needs to be focused on forest degradation, and the potential of forest restoration;
- ➔ Forest degradation is caused by a lack of active and effective forest management and other external issues. Understanding the drivers of deforestation is key (ie, Palm oil or beef);
- ➔ Deforestation is largely the result of forest conversion to agriculture, pasture and other land-uses. Increasing demand for food and energy will put additional pressure on forests. Understanding the underlying drivers of land-use change and interchange with the agriculture, livestock and energy sectors is key to halting it or slowing it down.
- ➔ Finance from carbon alone is not enough to halt deforestation. Therefore, in order to achieve SFM objectives, focus need to be on capturing multiple services from forests;
- ➔ The cross-sectoral nature of forest management and planning means that institutional and governance arrangements to address deforestation have to be embedded within national development strategies;
- ➔ The value of sustainably produced forest products as a mitigation strategy through substitution for non-wood, energy intensive alternative products (plastic, steel) needs to be understood and promoted.

Issues that participants disagreed on

- ➔ The concept and definition of SFM, in terms of whether it addresses in a unifying way the different environmental, social and economic needs and aspirations of the broader forest community;
- ➔ Which financial transfer mechanisms can and should be utilized.

Participant suggestions for moving forward

- ➔ There is strong agreement that it is not a question of whether we should move ahead, but how. The role of forests and the policies that govern their use and management in the context of climate change will continue to evolve, with or without input from the forestry sector;



Carlos Chex

- ➔ There are a number of clarifying questions that need to be answered: Most significantly, how such a message would be characterized and on behalf of whom it would be issued?
- ➔ All agreed that we should move forward with a tangible plan that encompasses all different voices within the forest community.

Crafting the message to climate negotiators

After the discussion on the key issues, the participants again broke into randomly selected small groups to define how this message to climate negotiators should be developed and what the aims and objectives should be.



The group largely agreed that TFD should facilitate the creation and delivery of a clearly defined message with a maximum of 3-4 brief, strong points. This could be accompanied by an annex of tangible steps and actions that can be taken to achieve them. The message should:

- ➔ be clear, concise, understandable and speak specifically to our target audience (i.e. delegates to UNFCCC COPs) agenda;
- ➔ indicate who it is supported by;
- ➔ illustrate practical actions that can be taken by different stakeholders and
- ➔ give representative examples of those that have committed to action;



Jutta Kill

The Preamble

There was much discussion on what the preamble should consist of, with full agreement that there should be a sense of urgency about the message. It should highlight that establishing a basic set of improved forest governance arrangements is fundamental to realizing the contribution forests could make to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.



Equally, the message needs to be very clear that failure to do so means that the climate negotiators will not be able to achieve their collective goal of avoiding significant emissions from the forest-related activities and mitigating the effects of climate change. The fact that climate change objectives cannot be achieved, either in the short or the long term without the involvement of forest stakeholders and rights-holders in the design and implementation of post 2012 arrangements, is perhaps the most fundamental message to be conveyed. The group also stressed that the negotiators needed to acknowledge the complexity of these issues and the necessity of learning from the wealth of experience provided by the forest sector. Finally it was agreed that the message should be clear that the services and values provided by forests are more than just carbon and that for the carbon benefits to be realized, a more integrated approach to the issue will be essential.



Varghese Paul

Key themes

It was agreed that the bulk of the document will focus on the key themes for consideration by negotiators. There was much debate and discussion about the most important issues from the group. At this early stage, most of the issues raised can be collected under 5 broad themes. It was suggested that these themes provide the nucleus and structure for the message. The themes are:

1. Recognize and incentivize the full contribution of sustainably managed forests to addressing climate change in one mechanism;

2. Explicitly discourage using corrupt, inequitable and opaque practices to meet climate objectives;
3. Recognize the importance and specifically encourage the linking of mitigation strategies to adaptation strategies in this sector;
4. Encourage countries to include climate commitments in their procurement and consumption of goods that drive deforestation;
5. Empower marginalized groups to play an informed and equal role in this process.

The co-chairs note that as it is still early on in this open and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue process. The above themes reflect a preliminary synthesis and will act more as stimulus for discussion rather than a set, final product.

Next steps for TFD

Via a continuing series of multi-stakeholder dialogues, TFD will further develop the common messages articulated during the DC dialogue. With the goal of crafting a broadly acceptable and effective message to climate negotiators, TFD will convene several more opportunities for stakeholders to give input into this process. The currently scheduled events include:

1. 24-25 June in Gland, Switzerland - 2nd international stakeholder dialogue to focus on common messages. Hosted by IUCN
2. 17 September in Washington DC - Forest Leaders summit to confirm global leadership level support for common messages. Hosted by the World Bank.
3. 10 October in Barcelona, Spain (during the World Conservation Forum) - a media event to launch a forest sector leadership statement on SFM and Climate
4. TFD event at COP 14 in Poznan, Poland

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The work of The Forests Dialogue is implemented by a Secretariat hosted at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in the United States (F&ES). TFD is an autonomous network of individuals, governed by a Steering Committee comprising representatives of major forest stakeholder groups. The statements, reports, and findings of TFD do not necessarily represent the views of the F&ES Faculty or Yale University.