Report on Multi-Country Side Event at COP-23 (Session 2: Items for Information)

Background

On November 16, at COP-23 in Bonn (hosted by Fiji), the Myanmar delegation participated in a multi-country side event on “How REDD+ can contribute to achieving SDGs and delivering NDC goals: Experiences from three contrasting countries in Asia/Pacific”. The purpose of the side event was to provide a platform for the three countries to highlight how they have approached the challenge of aligning their NDCs with the SDG’s, and positioned REDD+ within this broad environment/development context.

Each country prepared a video and a presentation outlining their approach to this challenge. A panel discussion followed, in which senior officials from each country answered questions from participants.

PEB Decision 3/7 “endorsed the proposal for a multi-country event, including participation by Myanmar, to be hosted by the UNDP pavilion at COP23. The participation of Director General of Forest Department and UN-REDD National Programme Director to COP 23 will be funded by UN-REDD Programme”. No report was requested by the PEB, so this document is for information only.

Results of the event

The event was hosted by UNDP and held at the UNDP Pavilion. Around 40-50 participants attended, which represented full capacity for the small venue.

Due to changes in government procedures for authorization to travel to international events, neither the Director General, nor the UN-REDD NPD received approval to attend. This required re-arrangement of plans for participation by the Myanmar delegation. The presentation was given by Daw Khin Hnin Myint, UN-REDD NPC, and the Director General of the Environmental Conservation Department, U Hla Maung Thein, participated as a panel member.

Questions to the panelists included:

What did you find most interesting about the presentations by the other countries?

U Hla Maung Thein’s comments focused on the fact that despite the large differences between Myanmar and PNG, the challenges we face are actually very similar - in both countries a large part of the population is transitioning from subsistence agriculture to a market economy, and in both countries forest loss results in greater exposure to disasters. While the generic solutions are also similar – generating new forms of income generation, promoting sustainable agriculture, etc., it is the specifics that are likely to differ across countries.

What are the biggest challenges in engaging stakeholders on REDD+ in your country?

U Hla Maung Thein observed that there is a need to raise awareness about REDD+, and in the case of the many ethnic groups in the country, this means you need to communicate with them in their own languages. In the case of the private sector, many of them do not understand how their business activities are related to forests and climate, so it is difficult to engage with them on this issue. Many of them
perhaps fear that we are trying to blame them, or fail to see the opportunities for their business in working on climate issues. For example, many domestic palm oil companies do not have staff working on sustainability issues, so it is difficult to communicate with them. He noted that Myanmar is addressing this by engaging first with industry associations such as the Myanmar Rubber Planters’ Association and the Myanmar Federation of Mining Associations, as well as working with some of the larger corporations that are very active on philanthropic work.

He also touched on the challenge in ensuring coordination with other Ministries, and the role of the National REDD+ Taskforce in addressing this. Finally, noting that over 70% of the population still relies on biomass as their primary energy source, and almost 80% of that is wood fuel, and that many industries also use wood as an energy source, it is essential to reduce demand for fuelwood and charcoal, for example, through promoting adoption of alternative fuels such as LPG.