3rd Meeting of the Myanmar REDD+ Task Force

Report by the Secretary of the National REDD+ Taskforce, and for onward transmission to the Director General (of the Forest Department), Minister (of MONREC), and National Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee (NECC)

Background

Decision 2/3 from the 2nd meeting of the Taskforce was that:

“The Taskforce Secretary will prepare regular 3-month progress reports, and the Taskforce Chair will report to the Director General (of the Forest Department) and Minister (of MONREC) on progress of REDD+ in order that this information can be presented at NECC meetings”.

This document represents the first such report.

As a mechanism under the UNFCCC, the process of REDD+ readiness is guided by Decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. There are 17 such decisions – for detailed information, see a booklet downloadable from the REDD+ Myanmar website: http://www.myanmar-redd.org/demo/resources/communications/communication-materials/cop-decision-booklet. Some of the key decisions include:

Decision 1/CP.16, which established that REDD+ should be implemented in phases, beginning with the development of national strategies or action plans [Phase 1], followed by the implementation of national policies and measures and national strategies or action plans that could involve further capacity-building, technology development and transfer and results-based demonstration activities [Phase 2] and evolving into results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified [Phase 3]."

Decision 9/CP.19, which confirmed that four elements need to be in place in order for a country to qualify for results-based payments (the "Warsaw Framework for REDD+"):  
(a) A national strategy or action plan;  
(b) A national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level or, if appropriate, as an interim measure, subnational forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels;  
(c) A robust and transparent national forest monitoring system for the monitoring and reporting; and  
(d) A system for providing information on how the seven safeguards are being addressed and respected and submit the summary of information on safeguards before they can receive results-based financing.

Myanmar prepared a “REDD+ Readiness Roadmap” in 2013, outlining a process leading to results-based payments. The Roadmap is now under implementation. The majority of international support to Myanmar for implementation of the Roadmap/Phase 1 of REDD+ is provided through the UN-REDD Programme, although numerous other development partners are also contributing.

Myanmar can be considered to be still in Phase 1, although the three phases are not mutually exclusive, and some activities that represent Phase 2 are already initiated. For example, the National Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme is a measure designed to increase removals of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, and implementation of the Programme therefore represents a Phase 2 activity.

Status and recent progress in establishing the four elements of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+
(a) National REDD+ Strategy

Following UNFCCC guidance, preparation of the Strategy began with an analysis of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and barriers to the “+” activities (conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks). The final report will be available on the REDD+ Myanmar website shortly, and will be printed in hard-copy.

For each priority driver and “+” activity, a problem/solution tree was prepared in consultation with experts, to identify draft “policies and measures” designed to address the drivers, especially indirect drivers. These policies and measures were consulted with six ministries with mandates relevant to the content of the policies and measures. These are now undergoing sub-national consultation with government and non-government stakeholders in each state/region. The sub-national consultation process began in November 2017 and will be completed in April.

On 28th February 2018, the draft strategy was posted on the REDD+ Myanmar website for public comment up to the end of April; it is available at: http://www.myanmar-redd.org/national-redd-strategy-myanmar-document-for-public-comment.

(b) Forest Reference Emission Level

On 8th January 2018, Myanmar submitted its initial Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL) to the UNFCCC and a process of Technical Assessment has begun. At the time of submission, the scope of the FREL was limited to deforestation only, but other activities will be included as the data permit. Three carbon pools of Above Ground Biomass (AGB), Below Ground Biomass (BGB) and Litter are included. The submission omitted soil and deadwood carbon pools due to limited information/data at national level. Only CO2 was included although there are also non-CO2 emissions from land use, land-use change and forestry. The proposed reference period was identified as 2005 to 2015. The submission is available at: http://redu.unfccc.int/submissions.html?country=mmr.

(c) National Forest Monitoring System

An action plan for NFMS was developed in 2015 and implemented from the same year; it is not yet available on the REDD+ Myanmar website. NFMS development encompasses the strengthening of the satellite based land monitoring system including the use of modern open source and open access based remote sensing capacities and techniques and the enhancement of field inventory capacities including the establishment of a new comprehensive National Forest Inventory (NFI).

Based on present MRV capacities (with some targeted improvements) Myanmar is able to monitor land use changes of key land cover classes and can calculate activity data with approach 2 according to Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines.

The data collection approach for the NFI is still in the piloting phase and the final decision on which carbon pools will be included in field measurements not yet fully decided. Since time, cost and capacity constraints apply for inventory and monitoring, a key category analysis will be carried out before the final decision is taken. Thus, for the time being the emission factor calculation is at the level of a combination of tier 1 and tier 2 according to IPCC guidelines.

(d) Safeguards Information System

A Safeguards Roadmap was developed in 2017 under the auspices of the Technical Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement and Safeguards; it is not yet available on the REDD+ Myanmar website. The
safeguards roadmap provides information on the proposed goals and scope of Myanmar’s safeguards approach, an overview of UNFCCC safeguards requirements, and a description of completed or ongoing initiatives in Myanmar that are relevant to its safeguards roadmap. It sets out the planned steps for developing a safeguards approach, including establishment of the SIS and producing the first summary of information.

The initial list of goals to be achieved through Myanmar’s safeguards approach, as identified in the Roadmap, comprises:

- Meet the REDD+ safeguards requirements of the UNFCCC
- Support the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as well as the sustainability of forest resources
- Support good governance and improved land and forest tenure
- Ensure that the application of the safeguards aligns with existing environmental and social laws, including EIA and SEA procedures
- Facilitate compliance with the safeguards frameworks of possible development partners (e.g. Green Climate Fund).

Phase 2 activities under implementation

Some policies and measures to reduce net emissions from forests are already under implementation. Most or all of these may have been designed primarily for some other purpose, but they nevertheless remain valid REDD+ policies and measures. These include actions to promote conservation of forests, particularly within the protected area system, and reforestation (and/or rehabilitation) programmes such as the Dry-Zone Greening Master Plan, and National Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme.

Since the NLD government took office, there have also been several policies and measures designed to reduce degradation of forests due to over-harvesting of timber. These include:

- A one-year logging moratorium, and a 10-year logging moratorium in Bago Region;
- A substantial reduction in “annual-allowable cuts” for both teak and other hardwoods – and a commitment to harvest well below the annual allowable cuts;
- Reform of the Myanmar Timber Enterprise;
- The passage of a new Forestry Law, with significantly increased penalties for all forest crimes, particularly illegal logging.

All of these will have had an impact in reducing emissions due to forest degradation.

Looking ahead to Phase 3

The Green Climate Fund recently launched a pilot programme of results-based payments for countries which have results to report for the period 2014-2018, and which meet the requirements of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ by 2022. The potential for Myanmar to take advantage of this pilot programme is currently being assessed.

International support

The majority of international support for Phase 1 has been mobilized through the UN-REDD Programme – a total of about USD 6.75 million. Other contributions have been made through projects funded by the Korean Forest Service, International Tropical Timber Organization, International Centre
for Integrated Mountain Development (GIZ funds) and the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute of Japan.

For Phase 2, a proposal is currently being prepared for submission to the Green Climate Fund for implementation of policies and measures to address fuelwood collection and charcoal production, with a focus on Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magwe, Mandalay, and Yangon Regions, and southern Rakhine State. There have also been initial consultations on possible Norwegian support for REDD+ implementation in Kayin and Mon States and Tanintharyi Region.