

How Existing UNFCCC Guidance on REDD+ Meets ICAO's Emission Unit Criteria

Peter Graham and Anthony Mansell

The 192 Parties to the International Civil Aviation Organization have agreed to a set of Emission Unit Criteria (EUC) to measure programs for eligibility in the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA).¹ This paper demonstrates how emission reduction units generated from forest programs under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) "Warsaw Framework for REDD+" meet these criteria.²

Background:

The UNFCCC recognizes the critical importance of protecting the world's forests, which, if cut down, would release more carbon than is currently in the world's atmosphere.³ Halting tropical deforestation and allowing forests and other carbon rich ecosystems to regrow can provide 30% or more of the emissions reductions and sequestration needed to limit warming to below 2°C.⁴ Scientists warn that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C or even 2 °C will be impossible to achieve if the world does not change how it uses its land-based resources, particularly tropical forests.⁵

The UNFCCC's 2015 Paris Agreement specifically encourages Parties to implement and support the Warsaw Framework for REDD+.⁶ The 2016 ICAO Assembly Resolution establishing CORSIA instructs the Council, in developing the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) to support CORSIA, and with the technical contribution of the Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP), to consider relevant developments in the UNFCCC. It is therefore proper to consider how REDD+ programs implemented under the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework meet the CAEP/10-recommended CORSIA criteria.

The following table details how the Warsaw Framework fulfils each criterion.

¹ ICAO Secretariat. (2017). Emissions Units and Registries. Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection tenth session (CAEP/10) Retrieved from: https://www.icao.int/Meetings/CORSIAHQ17/Documents/5-1_Explanation_Emissions%20Units%20and%20Registries_V02.pdf

² The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines "REDD+" as "reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries." The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ was adopted by 197 nations at the 19th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2013. UNFCCC COP 19. (2013). Report of the Conference of the Parties on its nineteenth session. Retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10.pdf>.

³ The atmosphere contains ~720 gigatonnes of carbon (Falkowski, P. et al. 2000. The Global Carbon Cycle: A Test of Our Knowledge of Earth as a System. Science 290:291- 296.); Forests contain 861 +/- 66 gigatonnes of carbon (Pan, Y. et al. 2011. A Large and Persistent Carbon Sink in the World's Forests. Science 333:988-993.)

⁴ Griscom, B. W. et al. (2017). Natural climate solutions. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 10.1073/pnas.1710465114. pp.11645-11650. Retrieved from: <http://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/114/44/11645.full.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ UNFCCC COP 21 (2015). Adoption of the Paris Agreement, Article 5, p 6. Retrieved from: https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf_at_Article_5.

| CAEP/10 Recommendations: Eligibility Criteria for Offsetting Units ⁷ | How REDD+ programs implemented under the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework meet the Eligibility Criteria for Offsetting Units |
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| Are additional | <p>Under the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+, Parties prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies which address the drivers of deforestation and potential obstacles to forest conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of carbon stocks. These national REDD+ strategies are based on an assessment of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and the associated action plans, programs and measures are designed to reduce the drivers below business as usual (BAU). Additionality is quantified when comparing outcomes from REDD+ activities against a historically-based or projected baseline known as a forest reference emissions level or forest reference level (FREL/FRL) that quantifies the impact of historical and BAU drivers, following the UNFCCC guidance and technical assessment process. Other programs have separate processes for establishing reference levels, which are described in the next section. Net emissions reductions or increases in removals measured, reported and verified relative to the FREL/FRL, consistent with the UNFCCC decisions, are additional to what would have otherwise occurred as defined by the national or subnational FREL/FRL.</p> |
| Are based on realistic and credible baselines | <p>REDD+ implementation is measured in the form of emissions and removals (in tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) against a FREL/FRL. Preparing a national and/or subnational FREL/FRL is one of the required elements under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+.</p> <p>To ensure the FRELs/FRLs are realistic and credible, the Warsaw Framework requires FRELs/FRLs to undergo a technical assessment by experts under the UNFCCC to assess the degree to which the information meets the guidance and to provide technical recommendations for adjustments or future improvements. The technical assessment process is public, transparent and involves multiple exchanges of information.⁸</p> <p>Specific initiatives assisting with the financing and implementation of REDD+, such as the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), may have additional requirements for preparing FREL/FRLs and operationalizing the Warsaw Framework. For example, the FCPF provides capacity-building and</p> |

⁷ ICAO Secretariat. (2017). *Emissions Units and Registries*. Retrieved from: https://www.icao.int/Meetings/CORSIAHQ17/Documents/5-1_Explanation_Emissions%20Units%20and%20Registries_V02.pdf.

⁸ UNFCCC COP 19. (2013). *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its nineteenth session*. Decision 13, annex p. 36. Retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10a01.pdf#page=24>.

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| | <p>technical assistance—including a multi-module REDD+ Decision Support Toolbox—to help countries at national or subnational scales in preparing FRELs/FRLs premised on realistic and credible baselines.⁹ The FCPF Carbon Fund also requires that a historical downward trend in deforestation be projected in the FREL/FRL to avoid paying for increased deforestation, except in limited circumstances.¹⁰</p> |
| <p>Are quantified, monitored, reported and verified</p> | <p>The Warsaw Framework requires national governments to establish robust national forest monitoring systems for measuring, reporting and verifying forest-related emissions and removals at the national and/or subnational levels. These must be consistent with UNFCCC decisions and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change methodological guidelines. The Framework establishes the requirement that these systems provide “...data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, and are suitable for measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes...”¹¹</p> |
| <p>Have a clear and transparent chain of custody</p> | <p>While individual REDD+ programs have established their own chain of custody procedures, UNFCCC decisions provide an additional layer of assurance by mandating that REDD+ programs report information to the REDD+ National Focal Point to the Lima REDD+ Information Hub, which provides a registry for REDD+ results, including information on associated results-based payments. As with all eligible carbon offset credits originating in any sector, the approved greenhouse gas program will be required to assign an identification number for tracking the unit through its transfer or use.</p> |
| <p>Represent permanent emissions reductions</p> | <p>The Emission Units Criteria calls for carbon offset credits to represent permanent reductions, avoidance or sequestration. Producing permanent reductions in any economic sector involves an equivalent output with fewer emissions than in the baseline scenario. If there is risk of reversal, the EUC specifies that measures must be in place to monitor, mitigate and compensate. A potential risk of reversals may be present in <i>any</i> sector; however, REDD+ programs have years of guidance, including under the UNFCCC Cancun Safeguards,¹² and experience to address potential risk of reversals. In best practice measures to address the potential risk of reversals, REDD+ programs under the FCPF and Verified Carbon Standard establish diversified buffer reserves (i.e., reserves of reductions which are not transferred but which can be accessed to compensate for any reversals). Consequently, REDD+ programs can achieve greater CO₂ benefits than other programs which do not establish such buffers.</p> |

⁹ Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. (2015). *Technical Training Material*. Retrieved from: <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/technical-training-material>.

¹⁰ Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (2016).

¹¹ UNFCCC COP 19. (2013). *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its nineteenth session*. Decision 11, p 31. Retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10a01.pdf#page=24>.

¹² UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I

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| | <p>In addition, the scale of implementation and national strategies for addressing the drivers of deforestation under REDD+ programs promote the long-term sustainability and permanence of REDD+ emission reductions. Ongoing monitoring, reporting and accounting for emissions and removals relative to increasingly stringent targets (i.e., net zero or net negative emissions) and periodic updating of FREL/FRLs also support the permanence of REDD+ emission reductions by incorporating earlier emission reductions into the FREL/FRL for the subsequent period.</p> |
| <p>Safeguard against a potential increase in emissions elsewhere</p> | <p>The UNFCCC Warsaw Framework safeguards against leakage by requiring the establishment of a national forest monitoring system and the preparation of national REDD+ strategies and action plans that address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure and forest governance issues, as well as reversals. The scale of implementation, at national or subnational level, also guards against leakage within a country by encompassing the largest land area under the same accounting framework.</p> <p>All REDD+ programs should ensure that the number of emission reductions generated within their area of implementation are not greater than the actual amount accounted for by the relevant official government entity.</p> |
| <p>Are only counted once towards a mitigation obligation; and</p> | <p>UNFCCC decisions require that REDD+ results be recorded in the Lima REDD+ Information Hub, thus providing a mechanism to ensure that all REDD+ results, including those transferred to CORSIA can be identified and tracked against national progress under the Paris Agreement.</p> |
| <p>Do no net harm</p> | <p>The Cancun Safeguards for REDD+ adopted at UNFCCC COP 16 require programs to comply with stringent requirements to ensure that REDD+ activities do not adversely affect the environment or local communities.¹³ Under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, countries are required to publicly disclose information on how the Cancun Safeguards have been addressed and respected throughout the implementation of activities. These safeguards go beyond the principle of "do no net harm" to include multiple social and environmental benefits.</p> <p>Individual REDD+ programs often apply additional specifications to meet institutional safeguard requirements. For example, the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards developed by the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance, are available to help guide the implementation of Warsaw Framework safeguard requirements as well as other social and environmental best practices, in line with national circumstances.¹⁴</p> |

¹³ UNFCCC COP 16. (2011). *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its sixteenth session*. Retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf#page=12>.

¹⁴ REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards. Retrieved from: <http://www.redd-standards.org/>.