

TAP Review of the R-Package submitted by Dominican Republic

Independent TAP-Expert Review on the Self-Assessment Process of Dominican Republic's R-Package – February 2019

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1. Objectives

This document has the following objectives:

- To present the TAP Review for the Self-Assessment Process of Dominican Republic's R-Package, undertaken through a participatory multi-stakeholder consultation. The review assesses REDD+ readiness progress and remaining challenges to be addressed when transitioning from Readiness to implementation of performance based REDD+ activities.
- To assist PC on its decision to endorse the R-Package, which is a prerequisite for approval of Dominican Republic's Emissions Reduction Program Document (ER-PD).

2. Methodological Approach

This section presents the scope of the work performed for the TAP review, as per the following Terms of Reference required activities:

- To review of Dominican Republic's progress and the self-assessment report, based on guidelines in the R-Package Assessment Framework
- Review Dominican Republic's documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment and the reported outcome.
- Review key outputs and documents that underpin, and are referenced in, the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD strategy and ESMF, reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures. Provide constructive and targeted feedback, as required to align the processes used for self-assessment and reported outcome, comparing with the R-Package Assessment Framework guidance

Also, to review completeness of the R-Package, including:

- i. A summary of the readiness preparation process;
- ii. The results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment;
- iii. Documentation pertinent to the nine subcomponents, prepared during the readiness preparation process; and
- iv. Review of parallel on-going ER Program documents.

As a main deliverable, this Report, according to the TOR, must address:

- Self-assessment process and documentation submitted by Dominican Republic, and
- Progress on REDD+ readiness with emphasis on strengths and weaknesses of each subcomponent as per the TAP perception (without judging the content of the self assessment report).

To carry out the required tasks, the assessment will be presented in 3 main sections:

- Section 1: Review self-assessment process and documentation, based on Dominican Republic's R-Readiness package
- Section 2: Review progress on REDD+ readiness based on the submitted reports and background documents and information
- Section 3: Summary Assessment and Recommendations

The TAP review does not have the intention of second-guessing the country's self assessment, which is based on a comprehensive multi-stakeholder process guided by FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The review rather focuses on the due process and self-assessment approach, and provides feedback to the FCPF Participants Committee (PC).

The Ministry of Environment and National Resources of Dominican Republic has prepared an R-Package Report. The main body of the report presents the Summary of the Readiness Process, and the country's progress and approach with reference to the 4 REDD Readiness components. The following box presents Dominican Republic's R-Package Report's outline:

Box 1 - Outline of Dominican Republic's R-Package Report

- I. Introduction
- II. REDD+ preparation process in Dominican Republic
 - Component 1: Readiness Organization and Consultation
 - Subcomponent 1a: National REDD+ Management Arrangements
 - Subcomponent 1b: Consultation, Participation, and Outreach
 - Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation
 - Subcomponent: 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance
 - Subcomponent: 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options
 - Subcomponent 2c. Implementation Framework implementation
 - Subcomponent: 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts
 - Component 3: Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels
 - Component 4: Monitoring Systems for Forests, and Safeguards
 - Subcomponent: 4a. National Forest Monitoring System
 - Subcomponent: 4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards
- III. Methodology and process for the multi-stakeholder self-assessment
- IV. Self-Assessment Results
- V. Annexes

3. TAP Review

a. Section 1: Review of Self-Assessment Process and Documentation

Background

This section addresses the process followed by Dominican Republic to conduct its self-assessment, based on the documentation provided in the R-PP. It presents the TAP Review of institutional arrangements for preparing and carrying out the assessment; the documentation prepared and used for the assessment; the process for selecting and conveying stakeholders, and the process for capturing the participants' points of view and how these will be considered in future REDD+ decisions making in Dominican Republic.

Before reviewing the specific Readiness self-assessment process, it is worth acknowledging that Dominican Republic has long engaged in a comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultation process that has characterized Dominican Republic's REDD+ process. Since 2010, Dominican Republic (DR) started dialogues with various social public and private groups around conservation and sustainable forest management as part of a REDD+ development strategy. In the period 2011-2012, a set of 10 workshops with over 200 participants took place in Santo Domingo and Azua, involving all relevant stakeholders including institutions, private companies, community organizations, producers, and agriculture practitioners. Complementary socialization workshops ensued as part of the strategic social and environmental assessment (SESA), and some included the Women's Ministry, to ensure the right level of participation of women and young family members.

The Self-Assessment comes as a new consultation process about the whole set of REDD+ activities, which have already been incorporated during consultations for developing each of the key R-Package pieces (ie, National REDD+ Strategy, SESA, Reference Level, Safeguards, and MRV). Also, the self-assessment comes after a process of identification and development of potential strategic options to reduce GHG emissions, considering that DR has started in parallel the development of its ER Program. The Self-Assessment workshop was oriented to detect deficiencies and flaws in the REDD+ development process, and to get recommendations and orientations for the upcoming future REDD+ ER Program phases.

Process and methodology

The process followed the recommendations included in the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, with respect to the selection of participants, preparation of event, facilitation of the assessment process, outcome synthesis and dissemination and validation.

The workshop was conducted in 2 days (October 4 and 5, 2018), including representatives from all key sectors (public and private sector, academia and research groups, producers and civil

society). Participants also included the REDD+ Technical Advisory Group, the Land use and Forestry Committee, the Safeguards Committee, and the Legal Committee. Many of the participants had already taken part of previous participative and consultative events, so they had a clear track of DR’s REDD+ development process.

There was a total of 56 participants, with a majority from government (55%), followed by Civil Society (23%), private sector and producers (16%), and the academia (6%).

For an easier understanding of the whole set of documents and underpinning information, MARN prepared the questions according to the 34 evaluation criteria included in the 4 REDD+ readiness components, and distributed them to all self-assessment participants. The questions were adapted to the national context.

The methodology at the actual workshops consisted on a presentation on the achieved progress regarding each of the components and sub-components. The sessions involved 4 working groups, with facilitators from the MARN’s REDD+ Technical and Management Unit, to complement information required by the participants. Participants were to express their own perception of the progress to date regarding each of the criteria, according to corresponding specific questions, previously prepared, so that they could indicate the topics on which work was pending, or progress was required.

Next, each group would work on the progress rating, which corresponds to a color code, as per the figure below.

No progress shown as yet	More development needed Good progress but needs to be	progress but needs to be developed further	Considerable progress made
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After the results of the Self-assessment were compiled and incorporated in the R-Package document, the report was sent to all participants for review and validation of results.

Results

The self-assessment shows no RED ratings, with a 29,4% of GREEN ratings, indicating good progress regarding the REDD+ strategy development. Most work still to be done was recommended with relation to the collaboration amongst government institutions, and to the dissemination and provision of technical assistance on REDD+ oriented strategies in the field. Also, it was recommended that the transparency and accountability of institutional REDD+ arrangements could be strengthened. The need to improve funding, and for the allocation of forest management related resources for REDD+ activities was also recommended. Better communications and outreach were demanded by the participants. Better involvement of local producers was recommended. Participants raised the need for land tenure legislation or policies.

Table 1 – Average ratings from the Self-Assessment process (source: R-PP)

Component	Subcomponent	#	Criteria	Progress Rating
Component 1: Organization and consultation for the preparation period	1a: National management mechanisms of the REDD + program	1	Accountability and Transparency	
		2	Operating mandate and budget	
		3	Mechanisms for multisectoral coordination and intersectoral collaboration	
		4	Capacity for Technical supervision	
		5	Capacity for Financial Administration	
		6	Mechanisms for knowledge exchange and compensation for claims	
	1b: consultation, participation y social diffusion	7	Participation and intervention of the principal stakeholders	
		8	Consultation processes	
		9	Knowledge exchange and access to information	
		10	Execution and public disclosure of the results for the consultations.	
Component 2: formulation of a REDD+ Strategy	2a. Evaluation on Land-use, and causes for changes in land-use, forest sector laws, politics and administration.	11	Evaluation and Analysis	
		12	Establishing Priority Factors that cause direct and indirect barriers to the increase in reserves of carbon in forests	
		13	Relationship between causes/barriers and activities related to REDD+	
		14	Action Plans made to analyze Access and Rights associated with Natural Resources, land rights and administration	
		15	Implications laws and policies have on forests	
	2b. Options for REDD+ Strategies	16	Evaluation and Analysis	
		17	Establishing Priority Factors that cause direct and indirect barriers to the increase in reserves of carbon in forests	
		18	Relationship between causes/barriers and activities related to REDD+	
	2c. Execution Framework	19	Adoption e implementation for legislations/ rules	
		20	Guidelines for implementation	
		21	Bnefit-sharing mechanisms	
		22	National registry of REDD + and activities of the REDD + monitoring system	
	2d: Impactos sociales y ambientales	23	Adoption e implementation for legislations/ rules	
		24	Guidelines for implementation	
		25	Benefit-sharing mechanisms	
Component 3 reference levels for emissions.	26	Showing adequate methodology		
	27	Historical data, adjusted to national circumstances		
	28	Technical viability with a methodological focus, congruent to the overall direction of CMNUCC/ Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Climate Change		
Component 4: Monitoring Systems for Forests, and Safeguards	4a. national forest monitoring system	29	Documentation of the tracking approach	
		30	Demonstration of early system execution	
		31	Mechanisms and institutional capacities	
	4b. Information system for multiple benefits, other Impacts, management and safeguards	32	Identification of relevant aspects not related to carbon and social and environmental issues	
		33	Monitoring, reporting and information exchange	
		34	Mechanisms and institutional capacities	

- **TAP Assessment.** *The participative Self-Assessment Process in Dominican Republic followed the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The R-Package Report, which includes sections on the Self Assessment Process, includes all required information. However, the TAP Review would have been easier, had the ratings on the assessment criteria been supported with specific feedback from the consulted working groups; rather it had a compiled report summarizing all comments received per criteria. So it was difficult to determine the different perceptions from the different interest groups.*
- *For future reference, it will be interesting to register the different views from the different types of stakeholders, in particular when entering the implementation phase. Other*

element to address in the future is the relatively weak participation from the producers and private sector. The larger representation resulted from government, NGOs, and academia (84%). This organizational setting could be assessed as a weakness of the process. So, for the next ER phase, one of the TAP recommendations is to incorporate the participation of private sector and local communities in a much stronger way. This is particularly important for next phase, as the benefit distribution mechanism should be based on actual land tenant participation, which should be managed at the local level.

b. Section 2: Review of Progress on REDD+ Readiness

This section evaluates the progress on REDD+ readiness, as per the four Readiness Components that are: (i) Readiness Arrangements and Organization; (ii) National REDD+ Strategy Preparation; (iii) Reference Emissions Level; and (iv) Monitoring System and Safeguards. The evaluation is based on the criteria used by Dominican Republic in its self-assessment, following the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. In this section the TAP evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each subcomponent.

The review was based on the REDD+ R-Package Document prepared by MARN for FCPF. Also, on reviewing the Draft ERPD.

Component 1: Readiness, Organization and Consultation

Sub-Component 1a: National REDD+ Management Arrangements (Criteria 1-6)

Institutional Arrangements (Criteria 1-5: Yellow). Dominican Republic started dialogue with REDD stakeholders back in 2010, as part of the Regional Program on Reducing Emissions from Forest Degradation and Degradation for Central America and Dominican Republic (REDD/CCAD-GIZ). Then after, DR has continued the process of REDD+ development through a comprehensive consultative and participatory process, which has engaged representatives from the private sector, producers, local communities, women groups, academia and research, civil society and the national and regional institutions. As a result of the REDD+ Readiness Program, the institutional capacity has been strengthened, and a solid institutional structure to manage all REDD+ programs and decisions has been established. Decisions are taken at the REDD+ Board of Directors (CD-REDD+), formed by high level representatives from the Ministry of Environment and National Resources; the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development; and the Ministry of Agriculture. This Board ensures that all REDD+ policies complement and are consistent with the country's development policies and programs. Underneath the Board, there is the REDD+ Technical Advisory Committee (CTA-REDD+), with advisory and support functions. The committee is formed by representatives from all relevant public institutions (ie, Ministries of Environment, of Agriculture, of Economy and Planning and Development, and of Women), from the academia, private forestry and agriculture sector, civil society, producers, and from the academia. CTA-REDD+ is aided by three other Committees that provide technical support in their

own fields of expertise: (i) Land use and forestry committee; (ii) Safeguards Committee; and (iii) Legal Committee. In addition, to prepare key REDD+ activities and initiatives, such as the R-Package, the National REDD+ Strategy, or the ER Program, the Management Technical Unit (UTG by its acronym in English) was created. This unit promotes and coordinates policies, plans, programs and projects related to the planning and implementation of REDD+ in the country. The unit has both administrative and technical functions.

As per Funds Management, MARN has managed over USD7 million (USD6 million from FCPF, USD845,000 from GIZ, USD 202,769 from USAID, USD85,000 from ONU-REDD, and USD435,000 from Government allocated resources). The government has recently contracted a study to determine the financial gap to implement the identified and prioritized REDD+ activities in the first 5 years (2020-2024), and has found that USD222 million are required. If invested, these resources will produce about USD1650 million, resulting from added value in the field, from REDD+ related production activities related to agroforestry-oriented crops such as coffee, cacao, and to silvopastoral cattle management. About USD115 million would be directly invested in transformative production activities in the field, mostly taken place over the first five years of program implementation.

Self-Assessment. The self-assessment concluded that with relation to the Institutional Arrangement and Coordination there is progress but still there is room for improvement. The interaction between government agencies seems to need better integration. Particularly perceived as in need of improvement is the funding capacity, and the transparency and accountability for budget management. The government has clarified that there is an ongoing study on the financial gap and financing plan, to make all REDD+ priority activities a reality.

- *TAP Conclusion. A good consultative REDD+ development process has been taking place, under a strong leadership by MARN. Information on Institutional and organizational setup for REDD+ is clear and the overall coordination seems to be working both at national and subnational levels involving all relevant executive authorities under the coordination of the environment, agriculture, and economy ministries. Regarding the perception of lack of funds and better financial management, it seems that the government has been transparent in identifying the financial gap, potential benefits, and it is showing will to look for funding alternatives, including rearranging domestic investment to achieve development and REDD+ goals synergies. This standard has been met, and the rating could be upgraded.*

Feedback and grievance redress mechanism (criterion 6: yellow). Dominican Republic's MARN has been developing its feedback, grievance and redress mechanism, based on the existing MARN's Green Line. The system is oriented to allow people to denounce or bring attention to grievances, or claims regarding REDD+ implementation. The system complements the existing judiciary and other legal action mechanisms. The proposed mechanism will be finalizing its design in the first quarter of 2019, and will be subsequently evaluated by CTA-REDD+ by March 2019.

Self Assessment. The rating given to the Complaints and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (CGRM) is yellow, as there is progress but the mechanism is still to be set. There is a working green line, where complaints and grievances can be manifested, but there seems to be a lack of resources to provide adequate attention, and feedback. Participants are claiming for more transparency and information dissemination, which will help enhance the system's accountability

- *TAP Conclusion. CRGM is still pending. For the future ER phases, the system should be ready to provide specific feedback on any information requests or concerns about the REDD+ strategy and ER Program. Concur with the rating.*

Sub-Component 1b: Consultation, Participation and Outreach (Criteria 7-10)

Participation of key stakeholders (criterion 7: yellow), and Consultation Process (criterion 8: yellow). As presented above, Dominican Republic has been participative and all relevant stakeholders have been involved in the different development stages, as part of the preparation of the REDD+ National Strategy and ER Program. The objective is to ensure a broad participation of citizens and stakeholders, with special attention to including different sectors, as well as a good representation of society (ie, local communities, women's organizations, trade unions, producer associations, agricultural cooperatives, environmental organizations, academia and research, and the civil society).

The process of consultation and participation started in 2010, when Dominican Republic (DR) started dialogues with various social public and private groups around conservation and sustainable forest management as part of a REDD+ development strategy. In the period 2011-2012, a set of 10 workshops with over 200 participants took place in Santo Domingo, Santiago, and Azua, involving institutions, private companies, community organizations, producers, and agriculture practitioners, giving birth to the National REDD Working Group. The 2013-2018 period continued with additional comprehensive workshops, mostly regional (Santo Domingo, Nagua, Monte Plata), as part of the early dialogue and Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) process, which helped draft the first National REDD+ Strategy, already incorporating strategies to tackle deforestation and forest degradation drivers. In 2017, 7 CTA-REDD+ Meetings and 3 complementary socialization workshops took place, led by the Ministries of Environment and National Resources, of Agriculture and the Women's Ministry, to ensure the REDD+ national strategy adequately integrated the gender dimension. In 2018, meetings of the legal, safeguards, and deforestation and degradation committees took place. Also, technical meetings to deal with the reference level and national forest inventory. All in all, the consultative process has allowed a wide and deep participation of local communities, farmers, women groups, NGOs, academia, government officers, plus civil society.

Information sharing and accessibility of information and implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes (criteria 9, 10: yellow). Information packages have been produced at all levels, and with due regard to culturally appropriated formats, according to the guidelines established by FCPF. A complaints and grievances redress mechanism is being developed, so that stakeholders receive specific REDD+ related attention to their concerns and potential claims. The

National REDD+ Communication Strategy is being developed, and will be oriented to (i) forest dependent communities; (ii) decision makers; (iii) private sector; (iv) civil society; (v) local and central government. A website is also being created, to accommodate all relevant REDD+ documents including ENREDD+’ consultations. In the meanwhile there exists a document repository website, hosting final documents on the REDD+ process such as the land use change maps, land tenure legal assessment, SESA proceedings and workshops, forest national inventory, and safeguards’ assessments and consultations.

Self Assessment. In general, in the self assessment process, the rating for the entire consultation, participation and outreach sub-component indicated some progress but still needing further improvement. There is concern about the lack of involvement of new groups of participants and of directly affected communities, as it is perceived that the government always involves and invites the same leaders and people to participate. Better participation of local groups is demanded as well as more inclusion of women groups, farmers and the young. Also, further communication and dissemination is required, so that feedback to concerns and suggestions can be provided after consultations. The government is relying on the future complaints and grievance redress mechanism (CGRM) to enable a valid channel for providing feedback and ensuring response to all stakeholders.

- *TAP Conclusion. Concur with the rating. As indicated in the previous section of the report, public consultation seems to be strong. All interest groups have been involved, and particular emphasis has been placed on those stakeholders representing minorities. The self assessment process has been done in accordance to guidelines. Nonetheless, the TAP recommendation is to further strengthen the feedback part of the consultation process. It will help gain additional support and participation, if the comments and suggestions could be better registered, and traced back. Also, it is important to ensure that the carbon right holders are actively participating in the consultation processes, and to leave due record of it.*

Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation

Sub-component 2a: Assessment of Land Use, Land-use change drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Government (criteria 11-15)

Legal Framework and Governance (criterion 11: yellow; criterion 14: yellow; criterion 15: green). In Dominican Republic there is a comprehensive legal framework consistent with the REDD+ National Strategy. Also, the national development plan 2010-2030 is focused to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It looks for reducing carbon emissions through forest conservation and management, agroforestry developments, and renewal energy and energy efficiency. There is a newly enacted Law on Payment for Environmental Services which aims at formalizing already happening PES arrangements. Studies on land tenure law and legal provisions for tenure formalization and titling have been contracted and are available at the REDD+ website. There are

many legal and customary mechanisms for land tenure in Dominican Republic, and although a large part of the land does not have formal title, the tenants may still claim rights on their occupied or usufruct lands, and participate of carbon emission reduction rights. The report, though, does not specify how this participation can be done.

Land use change drivers and REDD+ (criteria 12-13: green). Land use change drivers are mainly (i) agriculture and extensive cattle ranching; (ii) unsound forest management; (iii) forest timbering and extraction of non timber forest products; (iv) forest fires; (v) urban expansion including unplanned tourism areas; and (vi) forest diseases and plagues. This status reflects the main deforestation driver, which is the agricultural activity. The main causes of ecosystem degradation are the over exploitation of natural resources, the unsustainable management of agriculture, and the impact of external events such as fires. Other main drivers are logging for firewood, urban growth, plagues and diseases. The ER Program is being designed to address identified drivers, according to their contribution to deforestation and degradation.

Self Assessment. The rating from the Self-Assessment process for this sub-component acknowledges good progress, with the exception of the assessment and analysis, and on action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure and governance, where some progress is reported. Analysis has been done to identify degradation and deforestation drivers. Stakeholders have agreed that there is still work to be done with respect to land rights, use, and management of natural resources, due to lack of legislation to formalize land tenure under practical and rapid mechanisms.

- *TAP Conclusion. Concur with self-assessment ratings. Land tenure and rights on natural resources are the key elements of a sound REDD+ strategy, and the basis for a right benefit sharing mechanism under the ER Program. So, this is an element of the REDD+ Strategy that deserves special attention for approval of the ER phase. This, because benefits need to be distributed to the land tenant that have decided to protect or enhance forests, in view of the REDD+ investment incentives. This is a topic that is still being discussed with regards to the ER Program, where the rights of land tenants are materialized through participation in government funded agroforestry productive activities or other REDD+ activities that will lead to the production of carbon revenues. Consented participation from these land right holders will be the basis to claim their part in the benefit distribution, resulting from potential carbon offset sales. This topic could be better explained in the R-Readiness report, in line with the discussion under the ER Program.*

Sub-component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options (*criteria 16-17: green; criterion 18: yellow*)

Dominican Republic has set a REDD+ strategic framework oriented to enhance and protect ecosystems, to benefit from the environmental services to be attained through better forests and natural resources, and to positively impact people's quality of life, productivity and competitiveness. This is partly done with the direct participation of producers that will modify their traditional productive models to incorporate agroforestry, and to limit the expansion of the agriculture frontier. The strategy guarantees full and effective participation of relevant

stakeholders in the definition and implementation of the REDD+ Strategy. The REDD+ strategy framework is oriented to address the main deforestation and forest degradation drivers, through (i) policies and the enactment of laws and regulations to prevent the expansion of the agriculture and cattle ranching frontier in forested areas; (ii) enhancement of mechanisms to prevent and control forest fires; (iii) promote natural resource management models that contribute to protect and increase forest cover; (iv) strengthen sanitary management of forests; and (v) strengthen the legal framework for protecting natural resources and promoting their sustainable management. The R-package includes a cause-effect graph showing how each of the deforestation and degradation drivers is attended with a strategic REDD+ response.

A list of 22 strategic interventions were identified to counter or mitigate the deforestation and degradation drivers, and to counter barriers for forest sustainable management and enhancement. The set of measures includes:

- a. Laws and regulations, such as the enactment of the Forest Law, and the executive ruling to implement the newly enacted Law on Payment for Environmental Services. With respect to land tenure, DR is working towards mechanisms to recognize land right holder rights, and to develop and implement adequate benefit distribution mechanisms.
- b. Policies to prevent expansion of agricultural frontier. Policies will include adequate zoning to protect and enhance hydric basins, and zoning for agriculture and cattle ranching management with due regard to protecting forests.
- c. Promotion of sustainable management of natural resources and forest cover increase. The government will strengthen and develop agroforestry programs such as the Quisqueya Verde national plan, involving agroforestry prone crops such as cacao, coffee, and silvopastoril cattle management practices. Forest surveillance will be promoted to deter potential deforestation traditional practices, and some fragile and strategic forest ecosystems will be recovered and connected. Engagement of local communities in the protection of forests, prevention of forest fires and diseases, and the development of conservation incentives will be priority activities included in the REDD+ strategy.

The set of strategic activities already includes on-going programs that are or have been aligned with the REDD+ strategy and ER Program.

Self Assessment. The self-assessment indicates that there is good progress with respect to the selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options, and about their feasibility assessment. Nonetheless the self-assessment participants asked for better access to the consultation results. The national level of reference had not been produced by the time the self-assessment was made, and was made according to the international guidelines as requested by participants. The participants noted that the financial assessment and the reversion risk assessment were lacking, to which points the government clarified that a study about cost benefit and financial gap of the REDD+ strategic options is currently underway. There is some progress and still work to be done with relation to the implication of strategy options on existing sectoral policies. It recognizes progress with respect to agricultural policies, but participants asked for the involvement of other productive sectors (transport, mining).

- *TAP Conclusion. Concur with the rating. The Self-Assessment process was clear in what refers to reflect the cause-effect approach to develop the REDD+ Strategy, directly addressing the main drivers. It also refers to the overall stakeholder endorsement, and political acceptance, which is essential to make the strategy viable in the field. There are still some information gaps that could be filled, as the assessment about land tenure and potential carbon rights or rights for environmental performance payments. These topics should be addressed as they are key for determining ER implementation and for determining reversal risks. Also, the information about cost and benefits that is being produced, will be relevant to determine feasibility, risks, and opportunities.*

Sub-component 2c: Implementation Framework (criteria 19-20: green; criteria 21- 22: yellow)

To implement the REDD+ ER Program, DR has contracted a consultancy about carbon property, including the analysis of the carbon rights legal basis, and the legal capacity for transferring title. Said study will determine the mechanisms to issue, register, and transfer carbon offset rights. Dominican Republic counts with a legal framework that allows REDD+ implementation, without affecting the rights of communities or people living or depending on forestlands. Dominican Republic has not yet finalized the design of its Benefit Distribution mechanism, but has set out the criteria that need to be followed by such mechanism when completed. These criteria include justice and equity considerations, transparency, cost effectiveness, solidarity, and continuous improvement. Carbon offset proceeds are to be used to reimburse and potentiate on-going programs that are contributing to REDD+ objectives. Beneficiaries include communities, large private land-owners, producer associations, and the government of Dominican Republic. Also, in the making is the System for the Transaction and Data Management, that will include an information platform to keep all REDD+ projects and carbon offset transactions data. This system will rely on the MRV program, also being developed. The designated national authority is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

Self Assessment. This sub-component indicated good progress for what relates to the Adoption and implementation of regulation/legislation, and for the Guidelines for Implementation. On-going programs such as SANP and Cuisqueya Verde are recognized as indicators of progress. Participants point out that there are still sectors left out, such as tourism. Also, participants recognized the ongoing studies. The benefit sharing mechanism and the National REDD+ registry and monitoring and follow-up activities were rated as showing some progress but in need of additional work. The benefit distribution mechanism was recognized as an on-going work, and on the registry system it was only mentioned that TOR were ready for the consultancy.

- *TAP Conclusion. The rating should be yellow with regards to subcomponent 19 and 20. Dominican Republic has not yet defined the framework for implementation, as the definition of a mechanism to define and transfer title of carbon rights is in the making, as there are the benefit distribution mechanism, and the national REDD+ transaction and data management system. The rating of good progress seems a bit too high, considering that these key pieces of the implementation framework are still being developed. As said*

above, clarity about the legal nature and relationship between benefit distribution and transfer of carbon rights is crucial to enter into the ER Program. Also, as indicated in the FCPF Framework, a National geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry is needed before entering into transactions regarding the ER Program. The Draft ERPD has indicated that in the interim, the World Bank's system will be used; this is an effective measure which should be updated in the R-Package.

Sub-component 2d: Social and Environmental Impacts (criteria 23-24: green; criterion 25: yellow)

In line with the UNFCCC's Cancun Agreements, and as part of the process of R-Readiness, Dominican Republic has carried out a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment – SESA, which has helped set the basis to define the Environmental and Social Management Framework -ESMF in accordance with the World Bank's social and environmental safeguard policies. SESA involved the participation of all relevant stakeholders: Public Sector, Indigenous Peoples, Rural Women, Agricultural Cooperatives, Community and producer associations, Universities and Research Centers, NGOs, the Forestry Sector, Coffee and Cacao associations. Potential impacts for each strategic guideline, activity and restoration technique was assessed, considering the all of the REDD+ safeguard policies. SESA workshops also identified weaknesses that need to be addressed in the country in order to comply with the social and environmental safeguard requirements. Land tenure regulation was identified as one of such weaknesses. Also, the lack of a sectoral forestry law and the potential for conflict regarding rights and obligations was identified as a challenge that needs to be addressed in the future. There was an environmental and social screening, within the World Bank safeguards framework, to identify safeguards policies that would be activated or triggered with the strategic REDD+ activities. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was prepared as the main tool to avoid or mitigate potential environmental and social impact risks associated to the REDD+ strategy. The ESMF is still being designed and is being currently assessed by the Technical Management Unit (UTG) and by the Ministry of Environment. Also, a couple of workshops were to take place in January 2019 to assess and validate the ESMF. The Safeguards Information System is also under development.

Self-Assessment. This sub-component indicates good progress with regards to the analysis of environmental and social safeguards issues, and about the REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts. However, the comments acknowledged that there is still work to do regarding the Safeguards Information System, and REDD+ strategy design to mitigate impacts. The self-assessment participants considered that Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) showed some progress but needed additional development. This as the ESMF is still a work in progress.

- *TAP Conclusion. Concur with the self-assessment rating. The extensive, comprehensive, and participatory approach to identifying and defining the social and environmental safeguards for the REDD+ Strategy is recognized. There is a SESA already implemented. Both subcomponents 23 and 24 standards have been met. Nonetheless, the Environmental and Social Management Framework is still being finalized. Also, it is not*

stated how the SESA recommendations helped shape or adjust the REDD+ strategic activities so that environmental and social risks could be mitigated or managed.

Component 3: Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels (criterion 26: green; criteria 27-28: yellow)

According to the R-Package, Dominican Republic contracted studies in 2017-2018 to develop the NREL, and Forest REL, as well as the historic land use change maps for the periods 2005, 2010, and 2015. The study establishes the national reference emission levels, and determines potential emission reductions, according to IPCC guidelines. Also, the country has advanced into the second phase of the National Forest Inventory. The report mentions the use of Terrapulse as a complementary tool to assess deforestation, degradation and forest carbon stocks.

Self Assessment. The rating for the Demonstration of methodology with respect to REL or RL is of good progress, and the participants in the self-assessment acknowledged the forest reference levels were being developed according to an international standard methodology. As per the use of historical data adapted to national circumstances, and the technical feasibility of the methodological approach consistent with UNCCC/IPCC guidelines, there was reported some progress in need of additional work. The visual analysis of forest cover was recognized, but at the same time some participants warned against the use of the maps produced, as they were not calibrated against field work, and did not reflect reality. The government clarified that the data were being revised.

- *TAP Conclusion. As with most of the REDD Readiness Components and Sub-components, participants seem to recognize and acknowledge progress. The Reference Level has been established and there are good estimates potential carbon emission reductions from the ER Program, showing relevant and commendable progress in this regard. This component is ready for ER approval. Rating should be upgraded to green.*

Component 4: Monitoring Systems for Forests, and Safeguards

Sub-component 4a: National Forest Monitoring System (criterion 29: green; criteria 30-31: yellow)

There is a National Forest Monitoring Unit already operational. It is working since 2013, and is staffed with permanent government officers. The national forest inventory is entering its second phase, starting from the 1109 sampling units already designed and stratified, according to 7 forest types. The new phase will allow to quantify and characterize the forest stocks in the country and will provide the basis for MRV implementation. Also, the report refers to an on-going study on the land use changes for the periods 2005, 2010, and 2015, using *Landsat*, and classifying transitions in land cover types. As to the date of TAP review of this report, these maps have already been produced, as reported in the draft ERPD.

Self Assessment. Good progress has been reflected in the documentation about the monitoring approach, which has been made available to stakeholders and technical reviewers. A high-resolution map has already been produced, and there is good progress recognized with respect to the national forest inventory. As per the demonstration of early system implementation, and the institutional arrangements and capacities, participants considered that there was some progress, but in need of additional work. A team of trained personnel is working on the forest inventory, but the system is the phase of consolidation and strengthening. The participants recommended that data were made publicly available, through a public information platform.

TAP Conclusion. In general, this is sub component with very good progress. Subcomponent standard 30 has also been met. Similar to the Reference Emissions Level process, monitoring is perceived as progressing and in need of constant enhancing capacity. The maps are being produced, as they are requirements for the ER Program. The report could expand on the needs for resources and capacities, training, software and budget.

Sub-component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance and Safeguards (criterion 32: green; criteria 33-34: yellow)

Dominican Republic's REDD+ strategy and ER Program activities provide environmental, social, and economic co-benefits that are important for the country and stakeholders. Productive agroforestry developments include high yield cash crops aimed at preventing agriculture of the agriculture frontier, but also aimed at enhancing income generation for local producers, in many cases women heads of households. Richer forest lands will help enhance environmental services related to water provision, and to the productivity of non-forest agriculture activities. Also, employment will be generated as new community teams will be hired to participate at reforestation and forest management activities. Environmental co-benefits also include rehabilitation of degraded lands, and soil enhancement and protection. The Safeguard Information System is being developed by an on-going consultancy work. Criteria for its development have been stated in the report, as well as its functionality as an information platform tool. The new FCPF funded phase will strengthen capacities at the Ministry of Agriculture, to better monitor performance of the cattle ranching agroforestry (silvopastoral) and traditional systems. Also, there will be resources committed to enhance the MRV system, including training and the IT platform system development. Additional workshops and dialogues will be structured around the complaints and claims redress mechanism, safeguards (ESMF), benefit distribution, gender inclusion, green jobs, ENREDD+, NREL, REDD+ governance, forest management, and dissemination.

Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment rating from stakeholders is Green for the identification of relevant non-carbon aspects and social and environmental issues, where good progress was reported. Yellow was rated for the two remaining indicators, on the Monitoring, reporting and information sharing, and on Institutional arrangements and capacities. This rating is due to the still pending Safeguard Information System.

- *TAP Conclusion. Concur with rating. A conceptual approach for setting the Safeguard Information System has already been designed, integrating information about resources, effects, landscapes and ecosystems, and activities. Also, the Annual Operative Plan for FCPF's second phase has a comprehensive list of activities dealing with all pending key topics related to the ER Program and REDD+ Strategy, and dealing with topics that need reinforcing and widened institutional strengthening. Pending work has been identified and related work has already been planned*

4. Summary assessment and recommendations

a. Overall R-Readiness Progress

Based on the documents consulted, the TAP Reviewer considers that the Self-Assessment Report, together with the R-Package information confirms that Dominican Republic's progress on REDD+ readiness is enough to move to the next ER phase. Dominican Republic started its REDD+ strategy building process in 2010, and has progressively strengthened the participation of different stakeholders at all levels. Progress has also been achieved at the technical level, especially on the identification and estimation of forests' related carbon, deforestation and degradation drivers, national reference levels, and on the system of monitoring.

b. Self Assessment Process

As indicated above, the Self-Assessment process in Dominican Republic has been done in agreement with FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, it has incorporated the participation of all stakeholders' representation, and has even made participatory consultations possible at the National, and Subnational Levels. Further, it has involved the participation of civil society, producer associations, civil society, academy and research centers, farmers and women groups.

Dominican Republic's REDD+ vision is aimed at enhancing carbon stocks through agroforestry productive development practices including cash crops such as coffee and cacao, complemented by fruits, and silvopastoral cattle management. Under this approach, REDD+ is mainly focused to landscapes, involving a variety of regional stakeholders, mostly through development programs already started by the government, where carbon proceeds will allow to recover investments already targeting beneficiaries, and allowing the government to expand existing programs and start new ones in areas where deforestation is higher. The current land tenure condition in the country, has made it difficult to develop projects based on individual or single-family participation. Rather, the program is oriented to producer associations, cooperatives, and regional government sponsored development programs. Therefore, the consultation processes including the self-assessment have rightly targeted all relevant stakeholders to reflect the views of all interest groups starting with the local beneficiaries.

The information and document preparation for the Self-Assessment events clearly convey the on-going participatory process of REDD+ in Dominican Republic. The documentation integrated all required R-Package elements, with links to complementary and underpinning information. Additional documents such as the REDD+ Strategy, or the ER Program Document were also consulted.

c. Overall Assessment and Recommendations

The self assessment ratings show a good level of acknowledgement of Dominican Republic's progress in REDD+ readiness, as indicated by the Yellow and Green scores. Dominican Republic has placed important efforts to disseminate the national REDD+ Strategy at the central and local level, allowing public participation in its development process.

Local implementation of REDD+ seems to be a commonly accepted goal, which requires further capacity building and dissemination of information, especially regarding benefits distribution, as ER investments will most probably take place through productive and livelihood activities, through producer associations and cooperatives, as opposed to the traditional individual payment for environmental services. Nonetheless, the benefit distribution mechanism, still pending, will be crucial to ensure a legally feasible way of compensating land right holders participating in REDD+ activities, and to enable transfer of carbon rights.

Identification of co-benefits, and further work on the risks and economic feasibility of REDD+ activities at the local level will be important to incentivize forest conservation and restoration in certain areas. An on-going study on the financial gaps and cost benefit of the REDD+ ER Program will be important to determine feasibility, risks and opportunities-

Finally, it seems the legal and institutional process still represents a challenge that should be addressed before the ER Program gets approved, in particular the gaps regarding land tenure, carbon rights and benefits distribution. Other areas to quickly address during the next phase are the development of the Environmental and Social Management Framework, and the Safeguard Information System. Important progress already achieved as part of the ER Program, on topics such as the Reference Level and Estimation of GHG Emission Reduction Potential, or the production of Land Use change maps, need updating in the R Package to ensure consistency amongst both documents.

5. References

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