Independent Technical Review of UN-REDD Document: DRC R-PP Version 2 - 19 February 2010

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This review is based on reading Version 1 (January 11) and Version 2 (February 19) versions of the R-PP Document and knowledge gained though presentations made by members of the National Coordination during the joint FCPF-UNREDD appraisal mission of February 9-12, 2010 and follows guidance provided in the UN-REDD Programme TORs for "NPD Independent Technical Expert Review" (June 2009).

This review emphasizes analysis of evidence of compliance with UN-REDD Programme's *Rules of Procedure* and *Operational Guidance* (March 2009) for: (i) Government ownership, coherence with national strategies, policies and development planning processes; (ii) Government co-financing or coherence with baseline funding; (iii) consistency with UN-REDD operational guidance, in particular for engagement with Indigenous Peoples and Other forest Dependent Communities; (iv) level of consultation, participation and engagement; (v)programme effectiveness and cost efficiency; (vi) management of risks and likelihood of success; as well as, (vii) consistency with the UNREDD Framework Document (June 2008); and (viii) compliance with UNREDD operational guidance and formats. The emphasis of this review is on items i-vii above.

I. Government Ownership:

The Government of DRC has demonstrated a sustained commitment to developing an inclusive programme to address their needs for capacity building at many levels that began soon after approval of their Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) document by the WB-FCPF Participants Committee in July 2008. They are strongly motivated to qualify for funding under this programme and appear sincerely committed to implementing the measures necessary to do so. I have followed this process, off and on since its inception, either through direct observation and review during several visits to DRC in 2008 and 2009 or through correspondence with country-based colleagues. The preparation process of the current proposal took place over approximately a year's time from January 2009 – February 2010. Throughout this process Government has demonstrated strong ownership through aggressively seeking technical and financial support to the process from IGO and NGO partners, and through formal actions such as the enactment of the National Decree on REDD of 26 November 2009 that establishes the national coordination structure and mechanisms for putting in place a national process for reducing deforestation and degradation that includes components for inter-ministerial coordination among 14 ministries, departments or institutions as well as a national committee with significant representation of civil society (see diagram in section 1.a). Preparation has included the organization of a number of provincial workshops to promote and explain the process to local authorities and the proposal includes the stated intention and budget provisions to replicate the national structure for programme management at provincial level during programme implementation when financial resources to do so become available. The Government has sponsored a number of workshops and discussions over the past month, mostly in Kinshasa but some in provincial cities that have engaged representatives from a number of technical, academic and scientific institutions and civil society, including local NGOs representing interest of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent peoples.

II. Coherence with National Policies and Development Planning Processes:

The proposal takes note and cross references systematic efforts to integrate the activities of the RPP process with other relevant programmes such as the (US$ 65m) World Bank financed forest reform programme and the (US$15m) Belgian Cooperation programme for cadastral reform to name two examples. Poverty reduction is explicitly recognized as one of the crosscutting issues to be addressed in the national REDD Strategy. Close coordination and joint missions between the World Bank and the UN-REDD agencies including the participation of major International NGO and civil society actors such as WWF has helped to ensure the coherence of the RPP process with other planning activities in relevant sectors. Land Use, Forest Policy and Governance are specific ally highlighted as topics for special concentration during programme implementation (section 2a).

III. Government co-financing or coherence with baseline funding

Preparation of the proposal has involved a significant commitment of “in-kind” financing in terms of government and civil society/NGO staff time and commitment. The proposal outlines ambitious needs for co-financing and parallel financing which demonstrates a desire and commitment to direct a significant fraction of potential donor and ODA funding to activities to be undertaken within the programme’s proposed implementation framework. The implementation budget reflects a (perhaps optimistic) commitment of “other” donor financing in a ratio of greater than 2:1 against the requested UNREDD commitment. There is an issue of absorptive capacity at present due to the rather weak operational capacity of government, in particular at provincial and local levels. It is therefore likely that a larger fraction of the anticipated “matching” donor support will go toward international technical assistance to help build the implementation capacities that will ultimately be needed. Building capacity within civil society to bring necessary training and related “services” to rural society may be a cost effective way to overcome the bottleneck of limited government capacity. This approach is reflected in the intention of including a number of NGO led site-based demonstration projects as a key component of the national programme. These activities are to be funded separately, outside of the formal RPP process and budgetary framework.

IV. Level of Consultation, Participation and Engagement

The preparation process has benefitted by an active civil society and a national network of local NGOs, civil society organizations and community-based organizations, including representatives of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent peoples that, since inception, have sought to be involved in and informed about the RPP preparation process, with generally good effect. The process has benefited from International NGO initiatives (several funded by the Government of Norway) of organizations such as the Rainforest Foundation and WWF that have explicitly focused on either promoting broader civil society participation in the RPP development process (RFN) or building operational capacity of local NGOs representing constituencies such as indigenous peoples, women, forest workers or farmers

(WWF). A summary of the consultation process, given in section 1b of the proposal, summarizes both national and provincial level outreach measures undertaken over the past year.

V. Programme Effectiveness and Cost Efficiency

The proposed allocation of resources to the various components seems appropriate and prudent given the enormous needs for overall capacity building balanced against the limited ability of existing institutions to absorb significant funds and to spend them effectively. It is the opinion of this reviewer that some components such as the development and implementation of a national participation plan could benefit from broader engagement and "use" of civil society organizations to promote direct engagement with grassroots rural stakeholders. To accomplish this, however would require investment in a "training of trainers" type approach to build CSO capacity to then have a multiplier effect in reaching rural stakeholders. Some of the more technical aspects of programme implementation such as, for instance, national level baseline establishment and monitoring of forest carbon stocks and stock changes are inescapably expensive to implement given the high level of technology and technical expertise needed to implement them at a national scale. It is hoped, however, that as the programme goes forward in implementation there will be increasing focus and reliance on training of local people to contribute to the monitoring requirements needed to meet international "MRV" standards. One side benefit of that would be the greater fraction of "transaction" costs that are "captured" or retained locally through salaries and other compensation. That would be a boon to local populations as well as helping to keep overall costs of monitoring within reasonable bounds.

VI. Management of Risks and Likelihood of Success

One of the key factors of programme success will be the extent that governance reforms and resolution of issues such as clear assignment of usufruct rights, sharing of revenues, and locally based land use planning initiatives can be implemented in ways that local people realize tangible and significant benefits from practices that contribute to reduced carbon emissions and increased removals and sequestration. In the long run preservation of "forest-carbon stocks" and the other "co-benefits" such as biodiversity, clean water, healthy soils and local climate stability will depend on the extent that benefits accrue to local forest dependent people in a manner that THEY perceive as more valuable than the alternative development pathway of forest conversion for, frequently, short term gains. The ability to provide sustainable sources of supply for the commodities – firewood, charcoal, bushmeat that are currently accessed as "free goods" from natural forests and the collection of which contributes to deforestation and degradation will be a key factor in maintaining any gains made under this programme. In this sense, the extent to which revenues from reduced emission compensation schemes can be "ploughed back" into sustainable revenue generating activities that benefit local residents – and that rely on the persistence of healthy forest ecosystems, a "win-win" situation can be created. In the instances where forest loss is inevitable such as where valuable mineral deposits are found, legal requirements for "offsets" that benefit local tree growers or effective forest stewards elsewhere may provide a reliable mechanism for "sharing the wealth" from such windfalls while improving the balance of the national forest carbon accounts. One of the best ways to ensure the minimization of risks in the short term is to ensure that a reliable and effective programme monitoring system is put in place and use to provide real time feedback on problems (and benefits) as they occur and accrue. To that end the emphasis put in the proposal on monitoring of climatic and "non-climatic" impacts of the project is laudable and every effort should be made to make the monitoring system work effectively with real time feedback on both problems and achievements and, as appropriate, with independent verification through (frequent) periodic review.

Consistency with the UN-REDD Framework Document

The overall structure of the document, its four implementation components and the range of capacity building and analytical works proposed cover well the range of actions recommended in the UN-REDD Framework document. The - at least verbal - commitment to environmental and social assessment and to adherence to environmental and social safeguards is fully consistent with the UN Framework. One aspect of the Framework that does not come through well in the document is, "how to mobilize resources in the intermediate range between up from investments and pay-for performance "credits" once a project has been implemented? The answer to that, I believe will be in the performance of the "demonstration projects" to be carried out in parallel with this national planning process and the UNREDD investments that are committed to that (and thus fulfilling the second objective of the Bali Action Plan – to learn by doing). I do find the "timidity" with which the UN Agencies and the World Bank approach anything that will actually generate short term revenues under this RPP process both ironic and regrettable. Nonetheless the project as described is "consistent with the UN-REDD Framework document" in all significant aspects.

Compliance with UN-REDD Operational Guidance and Formats

The overall intention of the proposed programme is to be consistent with UN-REDD programme guidance in terms of consultation, participation, respect for the principal of "prior informed consent" and other provisions of the UNDRIP. If the programme, including environmental and social assessments, development of a robust participation plan etc. is carried though as described, all UN–REDD operational guidance conditions should be met. The commitment of having an independent monitor – such as the NGO Global Witness as has been suggested during review and preparation of the proposal should be carried through, linked with regular reporting that is, in turn linked to programme disbursements. UN Staff associated with project identification and preparation appear to have exercised appropriate due diligence in encouraging the country to comply with the appropriate guidance. And, so far, the National Coordination Unit seems to have taken all reasonable steps to do so during the proposal preparation phase. One hopes that experience gained there will carry over to the implementation phase. Effective monitoring and prompt and transparent reporting of independent findings during implementation will be critical to making that happen.

End – GKC – 24 February 2010