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Technical Exchange on IPCC Compliant MRV and Forest Monitoring of Ethiopian Delegates to the FAO Rome, Italy

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From 22 to 28 January 2023, an exchange visit on IPCC compliant MRV and forest monitoring took place at the premises of FAO HQ, Rome.

The goal of the technical exchange was to strengthen existing collaboration in the field of greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting and forest monitoring between the Ethiopian Forest Development (EFD) and Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) with that of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) experts on topics related to Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) to improve capacity for transitioning to the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) as well as for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (REDD).

As an introduction, Mr. Zhimin Wu, Director of NFO, and H.E., Mr. Kebede Yimam, Director General of Ethiopian Forestry Development (EFD), delivered powerful opening remarks. Tiina Vahanen, Deputy Director of the FAO Forestry Division, gave an excellent introduction to the Technical Exchange, which was followed by Julian Fox, Team Leader of the National Forest Monitoring team, who gave a valuable presentation on FAO support to MRV for REDD+.

First day: Monday 23 January 2023

Theme: MRV and Transparency

“The ETF under the Paris Agreement: The Evolution of the MRV” was briefly presented by FAO colleagues from the Climate Change Division. Mr. Benti Dugassa, Director of Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), then presented reflections on National MRV and National GHG reporting, Institutional Arrangements (a general overview of institutions and data flow), CBIT status, and the main challenges in GHG inventory.

Updates on REDD+ efforts in Ethiopia were presented by Yitebitu Moges (PhD), the National REDD+ Coordinator, which was followed by a presentation on “REDD+ reporting ART-TREES and implications for Ethiopia, Opportunities for LEAF Submission” by the National Forest Monitoring (NFM) Team of FAO HQ.

Second day: Tuesday 24 January 2023

Theme: Geospatial tools to support forest monitoring & forest degradation

Showcases on FAO’s tools & initiatives to support land monitoring – e.g. Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM), System for earth observation, data access, processing and analysis for land monitoring (SEPAL) – were presented by senior experts of the National Forest Monitoring (NFM) Team of FAO HQ.

Adoption and Use of Sepal in National MRV Unit as a User feedback and experience sharing was presented by Mr. Heiru Sebrala, Director, Forest Resources Assessment and Monitoring Directorate, Ethiopian Forestry Development (EFD).

The FAO HQ NFM Team showed a forest degradation emissions laboratory, which collected country experience on tracking mitigation results as well as proposed techniques to assessing and monitoring forest degradation in Ethiopia.

Third day: Wednesday 25 January 2023

Theme: Transparency and open data and related tools + MRV project updates

CBIT forest and potential support to Ethiopia in 2023/24 were presented by NFM Team of FAO HQ. Moreover, transparency and open data platforms – the FAO Microdata Platform was demonstrated by The Food and Agriculture Microdata Catalogue team and National Forest Monitoring Team of FAO HQ.

The National Forest Monitoring (NFM) Team of FAO HQ briefly demonstrated OpenForis/Arena advances in relation to/integration with sector-wide "forest information systems" and OpenForis (OF) Collect Mobile created for the next Ethiopian NFI.

FAO Ethiopia, EFD focal points, SilvaCarbon, SIG-GIS, and the FAO HQ NFM Team presented MRV project implementation progress and further planning for 2023, MRV project technical support and plans for 2023, and NFI implementation (final clarifications on plot design, field preparations, etc.).

Fourth day: Thursday 26 January 2023

Theme: Monitoring for forest fires and gain

Forest fire monitoring: case studies were clarified by the Forestry Division's Climate Change Team and the FAO Headquarters' NFM Team, and a debate on application in Ethiopia was held. SilvaCarbon, SIG-GIS, and the FAO HQ NFM Team all discussed how to assess forest increase in Ethiopia. A recently launched FAO initiative, Earth Map, was demonstrated by NFM Team of FAO HQ.

Fifth day: Friday 27 January 2023

Closing discussions

During the last day all the themes of the four days were summarized by Julian Fox and Tavani Rebecca followed by a discussion on the way forward.

Way forward

Thematic areas for future collaboration were identified such as:

- 'Training by doing' type of capacity building approach in solving challenges.
- Stakeholder engagement/participation was found to be most important in order to achieve 'One Map' Policy thereby to get IPCC compliant Activity Data (AD) for all land sectors.

The following stakeholders were identified as most appropriate: Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS), Space Science and Geospatial Institute (SSGI), Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources (WGCFNR) and AFOLU sector line-ministries. Bringing together these key institutions and strengthening the national Technical Working Group (TWG) for generating AD was considered mandatory.

- As soon as possible operationalizing the second NFI.
- Technical assistance (TA) in LULC and forest monitoring.
- Accelerating the start of the second NFI through on time procurement of tools, hiring consultants etc.

Challenges

- Monitoring the 'slow' A/R Restoration processes
- Georeferencing the restoration sites
- Assessing forest degradation
- Accessing high-resolution imageries like PlanetScope
- Web based interactive maps (Forest explorer)
- Delay of the second NFI such as procurement of tools, hiring consultants etc.
- Acquiring IPCC compliant AD
- Inter-institutional coordination and collaboration

Lessons learned

The exchange was very fruitful and allowed exploration of further cooperation between Ethiopia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on these topics. Interesting discussions were held on very promising digital innovation tools such as the Remote sensing tools (SEPAL, CEO, Earth map, CODED, CCDC, Collect & Collect Mobile...) for tracking the challenges mentioned above.

Experiences from other countries regarding assessment and monitoring of forest degradation represented useful lessons for Ethiopia, such as the Earth Map interactive web-based explorer developed for Northern Macedonia.

A collection of various tools developed for land monitoring and tracking progress are plausible opportunities for future application in Ethiopia.



Photo: Partial view of Ethiopian delegates participating in the technical exchange at the FAO, HQ, Rome



Photo: Presentation of Ethiopia's experience to the FAO team