

Question: *How is REDD-plus in the Philippines?*

Answer: The Philippines has issued a document on national REDD-plus strategy (REDD-plus includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) to facilitate the REDD development. It was made jointly by civil society and indigenous people, but it has now been adopted by the government.

The report prioritizes engagement of local resource users, notably indigenous peoples and local communities, which is key to ownership and affective planning and management of the REDD-plus.

There are currently three small REDD pilot projects in three regions. But we need to increase this. We want the forest to be seen not just as a carbon sink, but valued from an ecosystem perspective, whether it is for food, medicine resources or water.

We are trying to do projects that really recognize such differing functions of forests.

The Philippines has recently become part of the UN-REDD. Collaborative programs gave half of million dollars for the preparedness on REDD. But this is nothing compared to what Indonesia received. Indonesia is still a champion in terms of countries (receiving) pledged money to support the REDD partnership.

But, the (Philippines) government has not set up a mechanism on financial sharing because we are still new in the REDD process.

Could you explain role of indigenous people in REDD?

The Philippines has only 300,000 kilometers of land area and only about 25 percent of that is forest. Deforestation was rampant during the dictatorship of Fidel Marcos, when the government gave massive concessions to log the forest, when the Philippines lost forest area.

Most remaining forests are now found in indigenous territory. The Philippines has a national law on rights of indigenous people, adopted by parliament in 1997. It gives ownership rights of forests to indigenous people.

That's why we have strong policy that could push the government to involve indigenous people in the process to implement REDD. It is a different case with Indonesia.

This is why I can speak very strongly on the need to respect the rights of indigenous people in international forums, including on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC), because it is consistent with our national law.

The national REDD strategy clearly says the governance of REDD should involve indigenous people and local communities, and incentives should be shared with them. We come to provide

government advice on that.

What is the Philippines' standpoint on the REDD negotiation?

My country assigned me to lead the negotiation on the REDD-plus issues. I am the only one given such task from indigenous people. The Philippines' delegates have a very strong voice to put safeguards in the text of negotiations, in order to ensure social and environmental safeguards, as well as governance in the forest.

The language of the REDD text says a country should respect rights of indigenous people and local communities, guarantee full and effective participation in making decisions on implementation of the REDD and ensure that natural forests are not converted into other projects, such as for mining and plantations.

All safeguards should ensure good governance in forest management because a lot of forest money that came to the country in the past was never used for forests or for benefits of indigenous people and local communities.

The other text the REDD should address regards the drivers of deforestation and issues of land tenure.

How can we look at the land tenure system in the country if the state claims ownership of forests, such as in Indonesia, and does not recognize by national law indigenous people's rights to forests and resources coming from forests.

Indigenous people have their own customary law saying this is our forest, we are the customary community, like in Indonesia, and the government should respect this.

The Philippines delegation will work to ensure the language and continue at the text negotiations of the REDD-plus.