REDD-plus for Results-based-payment and supporting Sustainable Development in Myanmar
Nyi Nyi Kyaw (Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar)

Keynote Speech

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It is my great honor and pleasure to be with all of you at this very important international seminar, REDD+ Start-up Year 2020. I would like to express my thanks to FFPRI and the organizers for inviting me to give this presentation. My presentation is about REDD+ for results-based payment and supporting sustainable development in Myanmar.

Introduction of Myanmar and its forests
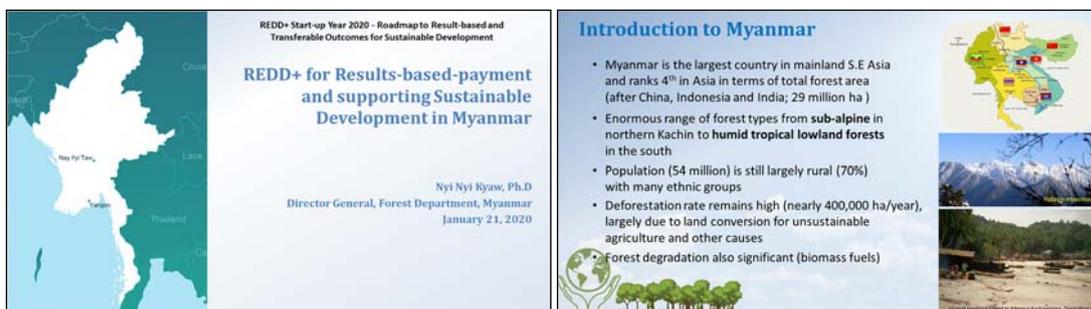
First, let me briefly introduce Myanmar. Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia and is the largest country in the region. We have about 29 million hectares of forest area, which is ranked as the fourth largest forest area in the Asia, after China, Indonesia, and India. We have a diverse range of forest types due to our geographic location. Even though Myanmar is located in a tropical region, we have sub-alpine forests in the north, at the foothills of the Himalayan region. We also have mangroves and marine ecosystems in the south, especially in the Tanintharyi Region, which is the last frontier of biodiversity hotspots in the region.

Our population is about 54 million, with 70% mainly living in rural areas. We have more than 100 ethnic groups living in Myanmar. Even though we have a lot of forests, our deforestation rate remains very high. Every year, we lose nearly 400,000 hectares of forests due to land conversion, especially for unsustainable agriculture and other changes of land use. Forest degradation is also very significant, especially due to the lack of electricity and energy sources, for which the people mainly use fuel sources from the forests for daily subsistence.
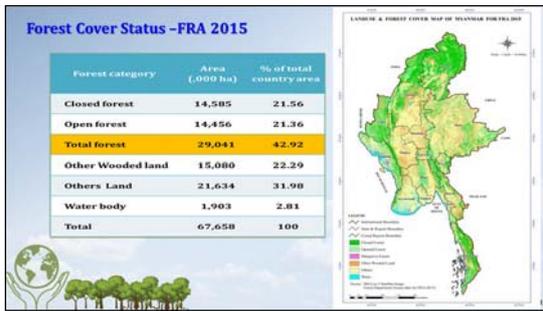
If you look at the forest cover status from FRA 2015 by FAO, in terms of area, we still have forests for about 42.92% of the total country area, but if you look at the two categories, closed forests account for 21.56%, mostly in the northern, western, and the southern areas, and open forests account for 21.36%.

In terms of permanent forest estate, we categorized three types.   The first are reserved forests which are mainly proposed for the timber protection.   They account for 17.77% of the total land area.   The second are protected public forests which are intended to produce forest products for local people, and also to conserve the watershed area.   They account for 7.57% of the total land area.   The third is the protected area system which is mainly for biological conservation.   We now have up to 45 designated protected areas consisting of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and marine-protected areas.   They account for 5.85%.   Our Myanmar Forest Policy[1] issued in 1995, designates up to 30% of the total country area to be reserved forests and protected public forests, and for the protected area system, it designates up to 10%.

This graph shows the forest cover in each and every state and region.   We have all together 15 states and regions across the country.   The region with the most forest cover is Kachin State in the north, while the

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[1] https://www.forestdepartment.gov.mm/sites/default/files/Law/Policy%20statement.pdf

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second is Shan State in the east.   The Sagaing Region and Rakhine State also have relatively high forest cover.

As I said before, the forest cover is changing year by year.   For example, in 1990, we had about 57.97% of the total country area covered by forests.   The forest cover is decreasing year by year.   According to FRA 2015, we now only have about 42.92%.   If you look at the annual deforestation rate, it was very high during the period of 2010-2015.   If you see the map of 2010 and 2015, the forest cover status in 2015 is very low compared to 2010.

Overview of the REDD+ Programme in Myanmar

In terms of the REDD+ development in Myanmar, we started our REDD+ initiative in 2012.   We developed our REDD+ Readiness Roadmap[2] with the assistance of UN-REDD in 2013.   We implemented the roadmap in 2015, and it will continue up to 2020.   We drafted our National REDD+ Strategy[3] with multi-stakeholder consultations, including seven line ministries and with CSOs, as well as sub-national consultations in all states and regions underway.   In addition, we received public comments in early 2018.   We submitted our first forest reference level to UNFCCC in early 2018.   The process was overseen by our National REDD+ Task Force[4], reporting to our National Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee[5] (NECCCCC), chaired by the Vice President of the Myanmar Government, and supported by three Technical Working Groups[6].

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[2] http://www.myanmar-redd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1442500360.pdf
[3] http://www.myanmar-redd.org/warsaw-framework/nsap
[4] http://www.myanmar-redd.org/redd-myanmar/management-structure/redd-taskforce
[5] http://www.myanmar-redd.org/redd-myanmar/management-structure/national-environmental-conservation-and-climate-change-central-committee-neccccc
[6] http://www.myanmar-redd.org/redd-myanmar/management-structure/technical-working-groups

Our vision for the REDD+ is that "Myanmar's forests play a leading role in contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation under the NDCs and, through the ecosystem services they provide, contribute to vibrant sustainable economic, particularly rural development, thus contributing to the achievement of many of the SDG targets in Myanmar."
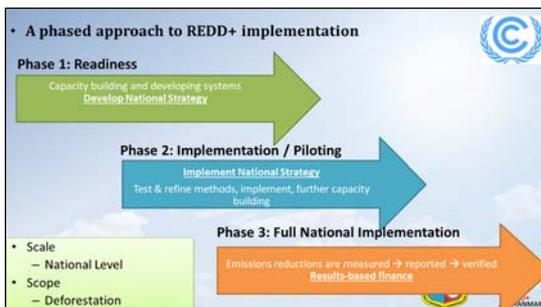
We have three phases for the REDD+ implementation. The first phase is readiness, which includes a lot of capacity building activities and developing systems, especially the development of the national strategy. Phase two is implementation and piloting, which includes the implementation of the national strategy, as well as the testing and refining of methods, implementation, and further capacity building, not only for the government agencies, but also for the local communities, CSOs, and of course the private sector. The third phase is full national implementation, which oversees that emission reduction are measured, reported, and verified. This is results-based financing. The scale is national-level implementation for REDD+ and the scope is mainly to reduce deforestation.

Myanmar's approach to REDD+

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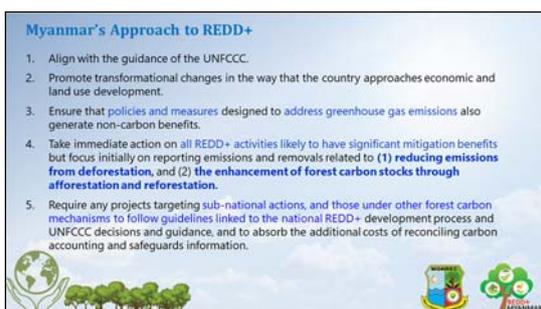
Myanmar's approach to REDD+, which is in line with the guidance of the UNFCCC, is to promote transformational changes in the way that the country approaches economic and land-use development.   It ensures that policies and measures, designed to address greenhouse gas emissions, also generate non-carbon benefits.   It takes immediate action on all REDD+ activities likely to have significant mitigation benefits, but focuses initially on reporting emissions and removals related to reducing emissions from deforestation, and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks through afforestation and reforestation.   It requires any projects targeting the sub-national actions, and those under other forest carbon mechanisms, to follow guidelines linked to the national REDD+ development process and UNFCCC decisions and guidance, and to absorb the additional costs of reconciling carbon accounting and safeguards information.

With the Warsaw Framework, we have four REDD+ design elements: a national strategy and action plan, a national forest monitoring system, a forest reference level, and a safeguards information system.   This should be implemented at a national scale.   We can start by implementing at the sub-national scale and transition to a national scale.

Progress of REDD+ Readiness

The progress we have made for the REDD+ Readiness for results-based payment includes the development of the National REDD+ Strategy.   We have conducted a series of consultation meetings and validation workshops, especially in 2019.   The strategy will be adopted formally very soon.   We have 44 policies and measures that we identified in the National REDD+ Strategy.   For the forest reference emissions level (FREL), the technical assessment process is completed, and the FREL has been posted on the UNFCCC

website[7].   Plans have been developed for further improvement and refinement of the FREL.

For the national forest monitoring system, design and sampling approaches have been already developed for the national forest inventory (NFI), with multi-stakeholder consultation carried out and technical approaches agreed on with key stakeholders.   Field training for NFI methodologies for field crews has been done in February 2019.   Field testing in six districts has also been done.   The implementation of a new NI was restarted this year.   For the safeguards information system, plans have been developed to produce Myanmar's first "Summary of Information (SoI)" in 2019, and is the under process of recruiting national consultants for the development of SoI, together with the UN Environment regional team.

REDD+ and NDC

In terms of REDD+ in line with NDC, the mitigation component of Myanmar's NDC encompasses two sectors: forestry and energy.   The forestry target is that Myanmar's reserved forests and protected public forests will amount to 30% of the total country area, and up to 10% for protected areas.   This was also mentioned in the 30-Year National Forest Master Plan.   For the energy targets, we will use at least 30% renewable sources for rural electrification, and distribute approximately 260,000 energy-efficient cook-stoves, especially for the dry zone areas where wood fuel consumption is very high.   The adaptation component identifies four priority areas: agricultural resilience, including forest protection; public health protection and water resource management; coastal zone protection, including mangroves; and energy and industrial sectors, and biodiversity preservation.

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[7] https://redd.unfccc.int/submissions.html?country=mmr

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In the forestry sector, we organized 30% of the total country area for permanent forest estate, and 10% for protected areas. Supporting actions include the 30-Year National Forest Master Plan, the UN-REDD Programme, and the European Union's Forest Law Enforcement Governance Trade[8] (FLEGT) program. For renewable energies, we are intending to have a 9.4 GW-installed capacity by 2030 according to the long-term Energy Master Plan[9] of the Myanmar Government, and the National Electrification Master Plan developed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Rural electrification will be through the use of at least 30% renewable sources. This is detailed in the Comprehensive Village Development Plan developed by the Myanmar Government. Industrial energy efficiency includes a 20% energy-saving by 2030 of the total forecasted electricity consumption. A partnership with the Global Environment Facility[10] to demonstrate possible economy-wide savings is the supporting action. Finally, we will distribute approximately 260,000 energy-saving cook-stoves for local communities, which is in line with our comprehensive plan for the dry zone greening program.

REDD+ and SDG

REDD+ is also related to main SDGs in Myanmar. I have mentioned several SDGs in line with our REDD+. For example, with SDG1, many of Myanmar's poor live in rural areas. The amount is about 26% of the total population. Their focus is mainly on forest produce to get an income. Through REDD+, their capacity to increase incomes from the forests will be developed. There are a number of SDGs in line with our REDD+ activities.

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[8] http://www.fao.org/europeanunion/eu-projects/eu-fao-forest-law-enforcement-governance-and-trade-flegt-programme/en/
[9] https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/2015-12-Myanmar_Energy_Master_Plan.pdf
[10] https://www.thegef.org/

Myanmar is well-advanced in developing a comprehensive policy framework in support of green development. We have recently adopted the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, which is mainly focused on environmental policy, climate policy, land-use policy, and waste management policy. Nature-based solutions will be a key part of our mitigation and adaptation strategy.

## Results, progress, and achievements

As for the results, progress, and achievements of REDD+, Myanmar has made dramatic advances from the incomplete and uncoordinated policy environment of a decade ago. Policy development is now much more inclusive. For example, we have our first-ever Land Use Policy[11], developed five years ago. We had multiple rounds of extensive public consultations and inputs to develop the policy. The current government has a new policy to ban logging for one year, and in parts of the Bogo-Yoma area where there is a lot of valuable teak species, for 10 years. We have also reduced annual allowable cuts to sustainable levels. In addition, we had the implementation of the 10-year Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme, which is mainly focused on reforestation in degraded forest areas. We also have the 10-year Re-introducing Natural Habitats (RNH), especially for the establishment of biodiversity corridors. We are also working together with the EU, especially for FLEGT. Despite starting on REDD+ readiness later than many countries, Myanmar is rapidly catching up, and is looking towards results-based payment by 2020.

Key lessons

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[11] http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/mya152783.pdf

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As for the key lessons for our REDD+ development, REDD+ can be a catalyst not only for more sustainable forest management, but also for increased democratization of governance structures and conflict resolution.   This is very important for us.   In our country, there are many political conflicts among ethnic groups.   That is why we still have political dialogue with ethnic armed organizations.   The REDD+ Readiness process in Myanmar has contributed to empowerment of many stakeholder groups, including those that have been historically marginalized, such as women and indigenous ethnic groups.   Addressing the indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation is, first and foremost, a policy issue.   The policy environment needs to support on-the-ground actions, especially in the rural areas.   Myanmar stands on the brink of major progress in reducing deforestation and forest degradation, but we need international support and cooperation. Even though we have started our REDD+ strategy and implementation, we do need capacity building and also support, especially technical support from the international community.
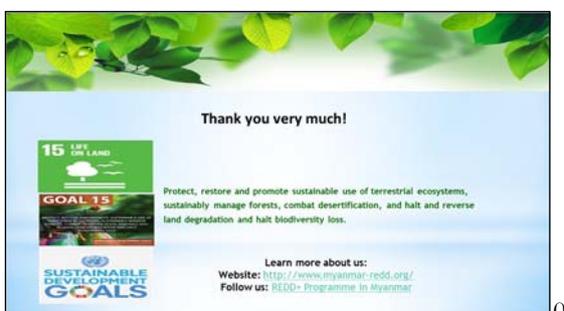
With that, I conclude my presentation.   Thank you very much.