Joint Submission by the Center for Carbon Removal, Conservation International, Environmental Defense Fund, Forest Trends, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Nature Conservancy, Rainforest Alliance, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Woods Hole Research Center, regarding views on APA *Item 6: Matters relating to the global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement: (a) identification of the sources of input for the global stocktake; and (b) development of the modalities of the global stocktake*, in particular the role of the land sector and its potential for enhanced action, including Intact Forest Landscapes

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INTRODUCTION

To maximize collective progress towards achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals, the potential contributions from the land sector must be an integral part of the Global Stocktake process. The sources of input into this process should set the stage to create policy responses that ensure the strongest possible mitigation contribution of all sectors, including the land sector. They should create a foundation that leads to concrete recommendations on how current and future NDCs can be strengthened over time, and on how to incorporate the best-available science into the process (e.g., mitigation potential, accounting methodologies, etc.). Given that the land sector needs to play a critical role if we are to achieve the overall mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement, the focus of this submission is on the mitigation potential of the land sector, and on a discrete component of the sector—intact forest landscapes.

While acknowledging that the Global Stocktake process includes additional considerations and components beyond mitigation, we urge countries to fully include the mitigation potential of the land sector, including all forest landscapes, in the Global Stocktake agenda.[1] Many segments of the land sector, including agriculture, forestry, wetland management, and other land management practices (AFOLU), are

[1] https://www.cgdev.org/blog/tropical-forests-offer-24%E2%80%9330-percent-potential-climate-mitigation

already positioned to play a fundamental role in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.[2] **However, additional attention is required to fully include the entire land sector, especially areas of the land sector outside the managed landscape (i.e., where no remotely detected signs of human activity are yet evident). Changes on these unmanaged lands can have important implications for meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement, yet are largely excluded from consideration under current UNFCCC approaches.** Although it is of paramount importance to halt deforestation and forest degradation and to include these issues in the Global Stocktake, it is also important to turn an eye to the "+" in REDD+ and to facilitate collaboration to conserve existing forest carbon stocks.

Article 5 of the Paris Agreement explicitly states that all countries "should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1(d), of the Convention, including forests." In Article 4.1(d), all Parties under the Convention committed to pursuing actions in the land sector that "Promote sustainable management, and promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases ..., including biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems".

The latest science indicates that the land sector produces about a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, and—if properly managed—has the potential to significantly contribute to mitigation goals by conserving existing sinks and reservoirs and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while improving rural livelihoods and promoting countries' abilities to adapt to a changing climate.[3] Its relevance to the Global Stocktake process is evidenced by the fact that over 100 countries have already included the land sector in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)—and many of these countries have made the sector a key focus of their emission reduction targets.[4] However, the negotiations that led to the Paris Agreement did not fully clarify how Parties should collectively take into consideration their existing sinks and reservoirs in the land sector, of which Intact Forest Landscapes play a central role. Since understanding the role of these sinks and reservoirs is fundamental to assessing the overall progress under the Paris Agreement, it is appropriate and necessary to consider them in the Global Stocktake process.

The IPCC should play a crucial role in clarifying the potential contribution from the land sector, as well as the risks of increased land sector emissions due to future climate impacts, and it is important to note that relevant work is already underway. In particular, the IPCC Special Report addressing mitigation pathways compatible with 1.5°C in the context of sustainable development—expected to be approved by September 2018—can and should include an in-depth exploration of the potential contribution of the land sector towards the 1.5°C target. Also, the IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems—expected to be completed by September 2019—should provide useful inputs to the Global Stocktake.

Furthermore, the 2019 Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories

[2] http://blogs.edf.org/climatetalks/2015/06/18/ensuring-ambition-in-the-land-use-sector-through-the-paris-climate-agreement/

[3] IPCC WGIII, AR5, Chapter 11 Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU).

[4] http://www.climatefocus.com/sites/default/files/20151223%20Land%20Use%20and%20the%20Paris%20Agreement%20FIN.pdf

should offer further clarification of methodologies that can track and account for existing sinks and reservoirs in the land sector. Parties may use a range of approaches, in accordance with their national circumstances and respective capabilities. However, given that the diversity in approaches presents challenges for upholding IPCC principles, the discussions of the Global Stocktake process should carefully consider the potential integration of these approaches.[5] We urge Parties to contribute to the work of the IPCC's 6th Assessment Report (AR6) and its other Special Reports, and to use IPCC findings to inform the Global Stocktake.

THE VITAL ROLE OF INTACT FOREST LANDSCAPES

Forests are a crucial component of the land sector, and are a key element of the Paris Agreement. **To achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, it will be necessary to ensure that *all* existing forest stocks are conserved and enhanced—not just forests that are currently managed, or are under imminent threat of deforestation and degradation. We urge countries to ensure that the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue and the 2023 Global Stocktake process fully account for the potential contributions of the entire land sector—including Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL).**

The most widely used concept for mapping and monitoring intact forests defines Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) as "a seamless mosaic of forest and naturally treeless ecosystems within the zone of current forest extent, which exhibit no remotely detected signs of human activity or habitat fragmentation and is large enough to maintain all native biological diversity, including viable populations of wide-ranging species."[6]

As highly significant sinks and reservoirs of carbon, conservation of IFLs will be critical for stabilizing terrestrial carbon storage over the long-term.[7] In addition to their key mitigation role, IFLs also serve numerous complementary functions that justify their high conservation value—including harboring biodiversity, regulating hydrological regimes and providing other critical ecosystem functions, and supporting climate adaptation.[8] While the Intact Forest Landscapes concept has not been defined under the UNFCCC, the inclusion of these landscapes merits further consideration—at least in the context of the Global Stocktake and Facilitative Dialogue—based on its importance for global carbon cycle regulation and climate change mitigation. Under the Paris Agreement, Parties have built-in flexibility to determine the scope of their NDCs, and the Global Stocktake process lends itself to taking up concepts such as IFL that have not received full consideration to date in UNFCCC decisions.

To meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, global forest and climate policy needs to take a multi-decade perspective. Over these time-scales, anthropogenic emissions from currently intact forests are projected to increase due to increasing threats—including anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic climate impacts. The Paris Agreement provides an umbrella framework for ambitious action to include global forests, but further efforts are needed to recognize the key role that intact forests play in the long-term stability of the climate. Urgent action is needed—both in terms of bolstering the science to quantify current and

[5]http://www.landscapes.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/EDF-White-Paper_positioning_the_land-use_sector_contribute_post_2020_climate_mitigation.pdf

[6] Potapov et al. Sci. Adv. 2017:3: e1600821

[7] Pan. Y. *et al.* (2011) *Science* **333**: 988-993. Houghton (2013) *Carbon Management* (4)5.

[8] http://www.intactforests.org/

projected contributions from IFLs, and in fostering the political will to include IFLs in NDCs and in national carbon accounting and reporting under the UNFCCC. Also, additional financial incentives may be needed to develop effective policy frameworks and generate sufficient funding to secure IFLs as a key mitigation component within the land sector.

CONCLUSION

The UNFCCC has the opportunity to take an important step in 2017 to ensure that the Global Stocktake process that will be completed by 2023 fully captures the potential mitigation benefits of the entire land sector in the global carbon cycle and in the long-term sustainability of the climate regime. This could be facilitated by full inclusion of the land sector—including Intact Forest Landscapes—in the IPCC Assessment Report and Special Reports that highlight the impacts and mitigation potential of the land-use sector. The UNFCCC should recognize the synergies that can be achieved when the role of intact forests is considered within the land sector—through land-use planning, conservation, and resource management—and these synergies should be recognized and facilitated through the Global Stocktake process and the Facilitative Dialogue, as well as within the NDCs. These actions will enable and promote the creation of specific policy approaches related to IFLs through NDC formulation and implementation, and will help to clarify how the methodological guidance under the UNFCCC relates to IFLs. It is vital to ensure comprehensive inputs for this crucial global assessment of progress under the Paris Agreement. The land sector will be a key element for the success of the Global Stocktake as a means to encourage countries to collectively increase their ambition to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

As the agenda for the Global Stocktake is drafted, we respectfully suggest that the land sector, including Intact Forest Landscapes, be given due attention. To accomplish this, we suggest the following:

1. The role of the land sector should be fully included in the Global Stocktake discussions given its importance for mitigation, adaptation and other ecosystem functions, and the land-use sector should be prioritized for inclusion in future NDCs across all countries.
2. Within land sector discussions, the important role of *all* types of forest stocks should be highlighted, including REDD+ activities in developing countries, forest management in developed countries, and the unique climate change mitigation and adaptation role of Intact Forest Landscapes worldwide.
3. Countries should be encouraged and supported to take stock of the various ways that they can include the land sector and forests—including Intact Forest Landscapes—within their NDCs.
4. Countries should increase support for the "+" activities of the REDD+ framework—namely the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries, including Intact Forest Landscapes.
5. The Technical Expert Meetings for Mitigation should provide input related to the mitigation potential from forests and the land sector, including Intact Forest Landscapes.
6. We urge countries to fully include the land sector and forests in the Facilitative Dialogue— particularly given the Facilitative Dialogue's focus on mitigation.