

Information note on the forty-second session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

Note by the Chair

8 May 2015

I. Introduction

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) will hold its forty-second session in Bonn, Germany, from 1 to 11 June 2015. The session will open on Monday, 1 June, at 10 a.m. to adopt its agenda and to launch all issues, followed by meetings of the negotiation groups, and will hold its closing plenary meeting on Thursday, 11 June, at 10 a.m. in order to adopt all conclusions.¹

2. It gives me great pleasure to address you as the current SBSTA Chair, to outline my approach and vision for the forthcoming two SBSTA sessions in the run-up to the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris, France, and to highlight a few issues of particular interest to the SBSTA.

3. Following the SBSTA session held in Lima, Peru, which generated decisions in important areas such as review guidelines for Annex I Parties, technology transfer, loss and damage, the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), land use, land-use change and forestry, and methodologies for financial reporting, 2015 will be another challenging year for the whole UNFCCC process in terms of scarcity of time, workload and the complexity of negotiations that need to be carefully managed.

4. As time in Paris will be very short and space must be made for governments to complete their negotiations on the Paris agreement, an intense effort will be required at SBSTA 42 so that work on as many items as possible can be completed. I intend for SBSTA 43 to exclusively focus on key issues that are directly related to the Paris outcome, and for any other unresolved issues to be addressed at SBSTA 44. Progress in the subsidiary bodies may facilitate progress in the Ad Hoc Working Body on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), and every effort should be made to seek, find and build consensus in order to make progress in the matter of climate change policies and their implementation.

II. Approach to the session

5. Based on the mandate given to the SBSTA to provide scientific and technological advice to the COP and to function as a science–policy interface, it will be our task this year, following the publication of significant scientific findings in the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, to consider the report on the structured expert dialogue and conclude the 2013–2015 review. To allow the ADP to be effectively informed by the outcomes of that review, as per decision 1/CP.17, paragraph 6, the SBSTA and SBI Chairs would like to encourage Parties to work towards an expeditious conclusion of the 2013–2015 review at SBSTA and SBI 42 with a view to forwarding a draft decision for consideration and adoption at COP 21.

6. My particular focus for SBSTA 42 will include key issues on which SBSTA 41 was not able to conclude work, such as the following:

- (a) Item 4 of the provisional agenda, “Methodological guidance for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries”, the finalization of which is important for the successful implementation of the Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus in developing countries;

¹ Delegates should note that as per the conclusions of the forty-first session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, Saturday, 6 June, will only be half-working day.

(b) Sub-item 7(a), “Impact of the implementation of response measures: Forum and work programme”, the finalization of which is important in fulfilling the mandate in decision 8/CP.17 and advancing work on issues related to the impact of the implementation of response measures;

(c) Sub-item 9(a), “Methodological issues under the Kyoto Protocol: Implications of the implementation of decisions 2/CMP.7 to 4/CMP.7 and 1/CMP.8 on the previous decisions on methodological issues related to the Kyoto Protocol including those relating to Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Kyoto Protocol”, which needs to be finalized so that Parties included in Annex I can submit their initial report and the annual reporting and review requirements for 2015–2016 can start to be fulfilled and so that, therefore, the second commitment period can become effective;

(d) Sub-item 9(c), “Methodological issues under the Kyoto Protocol: Clarification of the text in section G (Article 3, paragraph 7 ter) of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, in particular the information to be used to determine the ‘average annual emissions for the first three years of the preceding commitment period’”, the finalization of which is imperative for the successful completion of methodological guidance related to the Doha Amendment.

(e) Item 10, “Market and non-market mechanisms under the Convention”: as the ADP is considering similar issues, the SBSTA can provide an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how Parties may wish to use these mechanisms to further support implementation under the Convention. Therefore, the SBSTA will give the opportunity for a technical exchange of views on these matters.

7. As confirmed by many delegates, sound time and process management at SBSTA 41 allowed the maximization of available negotiation time and gave space to other bodies and priorities. SBSTA 42 will continue implementing these successful practices, as follows:

(a) The SBSTA opening plenary will start punctually at 10 a.m. and finish by 1 p.m. to maximize negotiation time and allow group coordination to take place. Plenary time will be used to adopt the agenda and to launch all issues;

(b) Once the agenda has been adopted and all work has been launched, the floor will be opened for three-minute statements highlighting key points from the negotiating groups; other statements can be made time permitting. All statements, whether delivered orally or not, will be posted on the UNFCCC website.² I would like to encourage Parties to allow three civil society representatives to intervene at the opening and closing plenaries immediately after the negotiating groups. Early submission of statements is encouraged;

(c) I will be requesting facilitators to actively implement and monitor time management when opening and closing their groups, with support from the secretariat;

(d) Cut-off deadlines for the completion of work in the various negotiation groups will be 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 June, and 12 p.m. (noon) on the same day for document processing. These deadlines will allow all limited distribution documents to be made available in English in advance of the closing plenary;

(e) The SBSTA 42 closing plenary will start punctually at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 11 June, to allow for a timely closure of the session;

(f) Organizational information will be provided on the SBSTA 42 web page.³

8. Observer engagement is an important ingredient in the advancement and implementation of the objective of the Convention.⁴ Pilot activities based on exchanges with observers during previous SBSTA sessions have been launched by the previous SBSTA Chair to enhance observer engagement, as described below:

² <<http://unfccc.int/8855.php>>.

³ As footnote 2 above.

- (a) An “Observer corner” has been created on the SBSTA web page⁵ to provide links to observer organization home pages where Parties might be able to find information of interest to them;
- (b) The above-mentioned “Observer corner” also contains a link to the “Virtual platform”,⁶ through which observer organizations can supply information on their concrete suggestions for contributing to the work of the SBSTA and Parties can access such information while considering the future role of the SBSTA. This input from observers is not bound by submission mandates, but aims to advance the work of the SBSTA.
- (c) A meeting of “Observer friends of the Chair” was held in Lima, during SBSTA 41, to informally gather ideas that may contribute to advancing the work of the SBSTA, in particular on agenda items for which it has been difficult to get a consensus decision;⁷
- (d) Early observer statements will be made accessible via the SBSTA 42 web page.⁸

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned pilot activities, though praised by Parties and observer organizations alike, have only generated a limited response. I would thus like to encourage observer organizations to provide information through these channels before considering new activities.

III. Concluding remarks

9. In my role of SBSTA Chair, I would like to reach out to the Parties – groups and individual countries – in order to better understand the nature and the context of challenges and identify possible ways forward. I will consult groups of Parties informally on all aforementioned issues in the days prior to the forthcoming session to get direct feedback and to gather any additional ideas and suggestions on how the SBSTA can best fulfill its mandated role.

⁴ Positive examples of observer engagement under the SBSTA include the practices of the Technology Executive Committee and the Adaptation Committee, which promote transparency with webcasts and the inclusion of observers in thematic dialogues and task forces.

⁵ As footnote 2 above.

⁶ As footnote 2 above.

⁷ More information on forthcoming meetings with observer organizations will be provided by the secretariat.

⁸ Observers can send their statements to cool@unfccc.int.