

Conclusions and recommendations

Twelfth meeting of greenhouse gas inventory lead reviewers

Bonn, Germany
2–4 March 2015

1. The 12th meeting of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory lead reviewers (LRs) was held in Bonn, Germany, from 2 to 3 March 2015. A total of 37 experts from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) and 45 experts from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) were invited to the meeting. Of the 62 experts who attended, 29 were from non-Annex I Parties and 33 were from Annex I Parties; in addition, two members of the Bureau of the Compliance Committee attended the meeting as observers. The secretariat held a refresher seminar for LRs and experienced reviewers on 4 March 2015, after the meeting, which was attended by 61 experts (28 from non-Annex I Parties and 33 from Annex I Parties). The focus of the refresher seminar was on the transition to the “Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories” (annex to decision 24/CP.19) (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines), the “Guidelines for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas inventories, biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part III: UNFCCC guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” (annex to decision 13/CP.20) (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *2013 Revised Supplementary Methods and Good Practice Guidance Arising from the Kyoto Protocol* and the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands*.

2. In accordance with decisions 13/CP.20, 22/CMP.1 and 24/CMP.1, the meeting facilitated the work of LRs in fulfilling their task to ensure consistency of reviews across Parties and provided suggestions on how to improve the quality and efficiency of the reviews. These conclusions and recommendations will be reported to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), in accordance with the annexes to decisions 13/CP.20 and 22/CMP.1, in order to provide the SBSTA with inputs for providing further guidance to the secretariat on the selection of experts and the coordination of the expert review teams (ERTs) and the expert review process. In addition, decision 13/CP.20 invites guidance from LRs on such matters as review tools, materials and templates, as well as suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews.

I. Coordination and planning of the 2015–2016 review cycle

3. The LRs agreed that the 2015 review cycle will be particularly challenging for Parties, reviewers, LRs and the secretariat owing to the late delivery of the CRF Reporter, the fact that there are new reporting guidelines implementing the *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* (hereinafter referred to as the 2006 IPCC Guidelines) and new review guidelines under the Convention, and the fact that draft decisions on reporting, review, accounting and adjustments for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol have not been adopted.

4. The LRs took note that the reviews of the ‘true-up’¹ period reports for the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol will take place at the latest in February 2016, in accordance with decision 3/CMP.10. If the 2014 GHG inventory review cycle is completed by 10 August 2015, then the deadline for the submission of the true-up period reports will be 2 January 2016. The ERTs shall provide draft review reports within eight weeks from 2 January 2016, in accordance with the annex to decision 22/CMP.1. If the conclusion of the 2014 GHG inventory review cycle is delayed, then these dates will be delayed by the same amount of time.

5. The LRs noted that the report to facilitate the calculation of the assigned amount for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and the supplementary information under Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Kyoto Protocol cannot be reviewed because decisions on reporting, review, accounting and adjustments for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol have not been adopted.

6. The LRs recognized the importance of ensuring the timeliness of reviews under the Convention, in accordance with decision 13/CP.20. They noted the secretariat’s plan to deliver a functional CRF Reporter by the end of April 2015 and that this will result in a delay in the submission of the annual inventories, possibly up to February 2016.² They also noted that this may result in delaying the 2015 review process. The LRs further noted that according to paragraph 14 of decision 13/CP.20, Parties were urged to submit the information as soon as practically possible.

7. Owing to the time needed to organize review teams, the LRs noted that, depending on the submission date, it may be difficult for the secretariat to organize reviews in 2015. The secretariat informed the LRs that a review in November or December 2015 was unlikely to be practical and that three months are needed from the date of submission to the review week in order to arrange the review. The LRs requested the secretariat to communicate its plans to Parties on a regular basis.

8. In order to manage the 2015 review cycle, the LRs requested the secretariat to send questionnaires to experts and Parties, as follows:

(a) In March 2015, all reviewers should be asked about their availability for the period from August to November 2015 and about the types of review in which they are willing to participate;

(b) After the delivery of a functioning CRF Reporter, all Annex I Parties should be asked when they expect to submit their 2015 annual inventory submissions. The questionnaire should indicate the secretariat’s plans for reviews in 2015.

9. The LRs noted that there is no guidance from the SBSTA covering the issues addressed in paragraphs 5–8 above and that these issues may need further clarification from the SBSTA.

¹ “Additional period for fulfilling commitments” as defined in section XIII of the annex to decision 27/CMP.1.

² Decision 24/CP.19 (paragraph 5) requested the secretariat to make available to Annex I Parties, by June 2014 at the latest, the upgraded CRF Reporter, in order to enable them to submit their GHG inventories due by 15 April 2015. Since the CRF Reporter was not available by June 2014, in accordance with decision 24/CP.19, decision 6/CMP.9 and the reiteration in decision 13/CP.20, Parties may submit their common reporting format tables after 15 April 2015, but with a delay no longer than the corresponding delay in the availability of the CRF Reporter after June 2014. If a functioning version of the CRF Reporter is made available by the end of April 2015 as planned, the submission deadline will be delayed by 10 months after April 2015 (i.e. to February 2016).

10. The LRs agreed that desk reviews should be supported by having experienced LRs available during the review period and that the secretariat should organize teleconferences for the reviewers to discuss their reviews and any issues arising therefrom. The LRs noted that two consecutive annual submissions should not be subject to a desk review, in accordance with paragraph 63 of the annex to decision 13/CP.20.

11. The LRs agreed that the counting of the frequency of desk reviews and in-country reviews (paragraph 63 of the annex to decision 13/CP.20) continues and does not restart at the beginning of 2015.

II. Training and availability of review experts

12. The LRs welcomed the information on training activities undertaken by the secretariat in 2014 and on ongoing and planned training activities in 2015 provided by the secretariat, including the organization of online courses under the new “Training programme for review experts for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” (annex to decision 14/CP.20) (hereinafter referred to as the new training programme). The LRs urged the secretariat to make these courses available online as early as possible, but no later than September 2015.

13. The LRs strongly encouraged LRs and experienced reviewers to undertake the basic course of the new training programme and the relevant examinations.

14. In order to continue increasing the number of review experts who can actively participate in reviews with the support of their Parties, the LRs stressed the importance of nominating experts with experience in GHG inventories and robust sectoral technical expertise to the UNFCCC roster of experts, and encouraged Parties to continue nominating experts and regularly updating the roster. The LRs also encouraged Parties to ensure that experts are fully available for the complete review process and required training activities.

III. Guidance on the development of review tools, materials and templates

15. The LRs noted the development of the data warehouse, including existing review tools and the production of aggregate GHG information. In order to streamline the aggregate GHG information, the LRs recommended deleting tables with limited relevance. They also recommended that the secretariat circulate a questionnaire to experienced reviewers and compile the results, in order to support an informed discussion and possible recommendations on this issue at the 13th meeting of LRs. The LRs emphasized the need for experience in the use of the new guidelines before being able to adequately consider the standardized set of data comparisons.

16. The LRs noted that the secretariat is redesigning the review tools in line with the recommendations resulting from the 11th meeting of the LRs. The functionality of the tools remains unchanged while they are being integrated into the new data warehouse. The LRs recommended that a group of LRs be involved in the testing of the updated tools, and that, for any future development of the review tools, the LRs be involved in the prioritization, scheduling and design of these improvements. The user manuals should include an example for a single country.

17. The LRs recommended that the Locator tool be made publicly available.

18. The LRs noted that a questionnaire sent to reviewers on the inventory virtual team room (i-VTR) found that it still had problems; hence, they recommended that improvements to its usability and user-friendliness be made, while ensuring that its use is more efficient than

that of existing approaches. The LRs also recommended that the secretariat develop a communication tool in accordance with the annex to decision 13/CP.20.

A. Annual review report template

19. The LRs welcomed the draft new annual review report (ARR) template produced by the secretariat to reflect the updated UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines (decision 13/CP.20) by, in particular, including standardized tables whenever possible, not repeating information in those tables in the text, and not extensively duplicating information already publicly available. The LRs believe that the new ARR template is a good improvement and will be clearer, improve the quality assurance (QA) process and speed up the review process.

20. The LRs welcomed the opportunity to provide comments on the draft new ARR template and encouraged all LRs to review it and submit comments to the secretariat by the end of March 2015. They requested the secretariat to produce a final version of the ARR template by the end of June 2015.

21. The LRs noted that the draft new ARR template presented during the meeting reflects only elements of review under the Convention and that the new ARR template will need to be further modified to reflect any agreement on reporting and review under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

22. The LRs agreed that ERTs should be careful in considering recommendations made in the 2014 review cycle to ensure that those recommendations are still relevant given the new UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines, the new UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines and the use of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines.

23. With regard to issues identified in three successive reviews, in accordance with paragraph 83 of the annex to decision 13/CP.20, the LRs agreed that the ERTs should consider recommendations and reiterations of recommendations contained in the 2014 ARR that are still relevant after the revision of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines and the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines in the counting of reiterations of these findings for inclusion in a prominent paragraph in the ARR.

IV. Improvements to the quality, efficiency and consistency of reviews, in accordance with decision 13/CP.20

24. The LRs requested the secretariat to continue practices that have contributed to improvements in the reviews during the 2014 review cycle, in particular to:

- (a) Consult with Parties to agree on review dates;
- (b) Organize ERTs as early as possible;
- (c) Ensure that at least one LR does not have sectoral responsibilities;
- (d) Ensure that ERTs have a sufficient number of experienced experts (centralized/in-country reviews);
- (e) Provide materials, templates and review tools early.

25. The LRs noted the new, shorter, 20-week deadline for the finalization of the ARRs. In order to meet this deadline, the LRs agreed that:

- (a) Clear guidance to the ERT should be provided well in advance of the review week;

- (b) Early preparations by the ERT will be needed, including preparing preliminary questions for the Party and compiling potential key issues related to completeness, accuracy and status of implementation of previous recommendations no later than two weeks prior to the review;
- (c) ERTs should be aware that they are making a commitment to finalizing the report after the review week and to devoting the necessary time, especially in the two to four weeks after the review week, to accomplish this.

26. The LRs noted that it will be particularly important for LRs, ERTs and the secretariat to identify and document possible consistency issues arising from the use of the new UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines and UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, as well as in relation to the conduct of desk reviews, for consideration at future meetings of LRs.

27. The LRs were concerned about the time spent on the QA process in previous reviews. They noted the secretariat's planned QA procedures for the technical review of the GHG inventories of Annex I Parties and recommended that the secretariat document the procedures and update existing QA and quality control checks in accordance with the plan. The LRs also noted that the new ARR template may reduce the time needed for QA and encouraged the secretariat to make further efforts to reduce the time needed for QA.

28. The LRs further noted that the ERTs, LRs, Parties and the secretariat all have a role to play in ensuring the overall quality of the published ARRs.

V. Statistics and follow-up to the 11th meeting of the lead reviewers

29. The LRs noted improvement in the timeliness of the publication of the review reports in the 2014 review cycle compared with in previous cycles. Some of this improvement is due to improved preparation before the review week. They noted that as at 31 December 2014 four reports had been published, and that as at 2 March 2015 there were 13 published review reports (33 per cent of all 2014 ARRs), and stressed the need for ERTs and the secretariat to respond quickly in the weeks following the review (see also paras. 14, 25 and 27 above and 33 below).

30. The LRs noted that, compared with the 2013 review cycle, in which 172 experts participated in the review activities, the number of experts participating in the review cycle decreased to 161 in 2014, reflecting the reduced number of reviews and in-country reviews. However, the LRs also noted that the number of reviewers per Party increased.

31. The LRs further noted that the 30 new experts that participated in the reviews in 2014 constituted one fifth of all participating experts.

32. The LRs expressed their appreciation for the support of the secretariat during the review process, which contributed to improvements in the process.

33. The LRs emphasized the importance of support for reviewers, both during the review week and before and after the review week and encouraged Parties to provide sufficient support to reviewers for the entire review cycle.

34. The LRs also encouraged the continuation of sending questionnaires to Parties (including to the inventory focal points) and review experts on the performance of the review process, in order to help guide future improvements.