UNITED NATIONS

UNFCCC Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.
GENERAL

FCCC/SBSTA/2004/3
4 May 2004

Original: ENGLISH

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE
Twentieth session
Bonn, 16–25 June 2004

Item 3 (d) of the provisional agenda
Methodological issues
Issues relating to greenhouse gas inventories

Annual report of technical review activities of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat[1]

Summary

This document describes activities of the secretariat relating to greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory review during the period January 2003 to March 2004 and activities planned for the remainder of 2004. It covers work undertaken by the secretariat to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of the review process, in accordance with the review guidelines, and thus to help ensure the reliability of information on GHG emissions and trends provided to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies.

[1] Due to the need to incorporate recent developments, this document is issued later than originally anticipated.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 12/CP.9, requested the secretariat to prepare an annual report on inventory review activities, including any recommendation resulting from the lead reviewers' meetings, for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). The COP also requested the secretariat to include information on its inventory review training programme in this report, in particular on examination procedures and on selection of trainees and instructors. It further requested the secretariat to archive review information and to include a description of information collected in its annual report on inventory review activities.

B. Scope of the note

2. This document provides information of the activities of the secretariat relating to greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory review during the period January 2003 to March 2004 and activities planned for the remainder of 2004. It covers the work undertaken by the secretariat to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of the review process, in accordance with the review guidelines, and thus to help ensure the reliability of information on GHG emissions and trends provided to the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

II. Review activities

3. The technical review of national GHG inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) started in 2000, in accordance with decision 3/CP.5. Following completion of the trial period set up in that decision, annual review of the individual inventory of each Annex I Party became mandatory in 2003. UNFCCC review guidelines adopted in 1999 (decision 3/CP.5) and revised in 2002 (decision 19/CP.8) help to ensure that reviews are conducted consistently in a technical sound manner.

4. In addition to the GHG inventory review activities funded from the core budget, some others are supported by voluntary contributions to supplementary funds. In particular, the secretariat recognizes the generous contributions of Australia, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, which have supported the activities discussed here, mainly those relating to the development of the GHG information system, the training of review experts and organization of workshops and meetings.

A. Individual inventory reviews

5. In accordance with decision 19/CP.8, the secretariat coordinates the review of national GHG inventories of Annex I Parties. In 2003, the secretariat organized a review for each country that provided a complete inventory submission (i.e. containing the common reporting format and a national inventory report) within six weeks of the submission due date. The secretariat was also able to organize reviews for a few countries that submitted inventories late.

6. The inventory review process is conducted in three stages: initial check, synthesis and assessment, and individual review. The initial check stage provides an immediate quality assurance check to verify that the inventory submission is complete and in the correct format. Part I of the synthesis and assessment compiles and compares basic inventory information, such as emission trends, activity data and implied emission factors, across Parties and over time; part II provides a 'preliminary assessment' of the inventory of individual Parties, and identifies any potential inventory problems, which are then explored during the individual review stage.

7. During the individual review, an international team of experts, nominated by Parties, conducts a technical review of each inventory. This stage is conducted as a centralized review, in which five to eight inventories are reviewed by an expert review team convened at the secretariat offices; a desk review, in which three to five inventories are reviewed by experts working in their home country; or an in-country review, in which a single inventory is reviewed by an expert review team working in the Party under review. Desk reviews are conducted only for those Parties which have been subject to an in-country review during the two previous years.

8. In 2003, individual inventory reviews were conducted for 27 Annex I Parties, as follows:

- **In-country reviews**: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Ireland, Japan, Romania, Spain
- **Centralized reviews**: Austria, Denmark, European Community, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States
- **Desk review**:[1] Hungary, Latvia, Norway.

B. Expert review teams

9. During individual inventory reviews, international teams of inventory experts examine the data, methodologies and procedures used in preparing the national inventory. The secretariat selects experts for these teams from nominations by Parties to the roster of experts. Invitations to participate in the review are copied to the national focal point. In general, each team comprises a 'generalist' who covers cross-cutting inventory issues and one or two experts for each inventory sector – energy, industrial processes, agriculture, waste, and land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). However, for review of smaller Parties, experts may be requested to cover two sectors.

10. In selecting members of expert review teams, the secretariat seeks to ensure an overall balance in the number of Annex I and non-Annex I Party experts participating in the reviews, and a geographical balance among experts within these two groups. In 2003, a total of 95 individuals from 59 Parties (see table 1) served as inventory experts on review teams. Of these experts, 15 were from Annex I Parties with economies in transition (EIT countries), 39 were from other Annex I Parties, and 41 were from non-Annex I Parties. Three experts from non-Annex I Parties and one expert from an EIT country participated in two reviews each. In addition, one expert from an international organization, the International Energy Agency, participated. In accordance with United Nations rules, the secretariat provided funding for travel costs and subsistence allowance for experts from non-Annex I Parties and EIT countries.

11. The individual reviews conducted in 2003 followed the 51 organized during the trial period (2000–2002). About 150 individual experts from 73 Parties, grouped in 31 expert review teams, have participated in GHG review activities since 2000.

12. In 2003 the secretariat invited 16 new experts, who had not previously participated in inventory reviews and who underwent the pilot review training course in Geneva, to participate as members of expert review teams. In 2004 the secretariat will again seek the participation of experts from Parties which have not previously participated in the review process, in order to further increase the number and the geographical representation of non-Annex I Party experts in the inventory reviews (see chapter III on inventory review training).

[1] These three Parties were subject to an in-country review in 2002.

Table 1: Parties providing inventory review experts in 2003

Annex I Parties		Annex I Parties with economies in transition	Non-Annex I Parties	
Australia[a]	Spain	Bulgaria	Argentina	Mauritius
Austria[a]	Sweden	Croatia	Bolivia	Mexico[a]
Canada[a]	Switzerland[a]	Czech Republic	Brazil[a]	Republic of Moldova[a]
European Community	United Kingdom[a]	Latvia	Burundi	Mongolia
Finland[a]	United States[a]	Lithuania	Chile[a]	Nigeria[a]
Germany[a]		Poland[a]	China[a]	Peru[a]
Greece		Romania	Cuba	Thailand
Ireland		Russia[a]	Gambia	Togo
Italy[a]		Slovakia[a]	Ghana[a]	Trinidad and Tobago
Japan[a]		Slovenia	India	Tunisia
Netherlands[a]		Ukraine	Indonesia	Uganda
New Zealand[a]			Iran	United Republic of Tanzania
Norway[a]			Kazakhstan	Uruguay
Portugal			Lebanon	Zambia
			Mali	

[a] Parties from which two or more experts were used in 2003.

C. Support for the inventory review process

13. In addition to organizing inventory reviews and expert review teams, the secretariat has developed tools and procedures to make the review process more effective and efficient, as described below.

Software tools

(a) The *locator* is a tool developed to enable users to query specific inventory data. It allows GHG data to be searched by different parameters, such as source, gas and year, for a single Party or across all Parties, and for a single year or for multiple years. It is used in the preparation of the synthesis and assessment report, and made available to members of expert review teams to enable them to conduct their own analyses of inventory data;

(b) The *outlier detection tool* was recently developed by the secretariat to identify unusual values (statistical outliers) in GHG data sets. It is generally used to compare emission growth rates for specific sources for an individual Party across time, or to compare relative data, such as implied emission factors, across Parties for a particular year. The outlier detection tool is used in the preparation of part II of the synthesis and assessment report. The results of the analysis are provided to both the Party concerned, and the expert review team for that Party;

Procedures and documents

(c) The *review handbook* is a reference manual developed to assist experts during the inventory review process. It contains general information on the UNFCCC review guidelines and procedures, as well as detailed guidance for considering general and sector-specific aspects of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) methodologies and good practice guidance. The handbook is provided to all expert reviewers;

(d) *Confidentiality procedures* have been developed to implement the code of practice for the treatment of confidential information during the inventory review[2] in 2004 and beyond. These procedures cover submission, processing and handling by the secretariat of any information designated as confidential by an Annex I Party, and the granting of access by expert reviewers to this information. These procedures are available on the secretariat web site;

(e) Decision 12/CP.9 requires that as of 2004, all members of expert review teams must sign an *agreement for expert review services.* The secretariat has prepared this agreement on the basis of the elements adopted by the same decision. The agreement specifies the responsibilities, expected time commitment, and appropriate conduct for expert review team members, in particular with respect to the protection of confidential inventory information. The agreement, which will be sent to the review experts, will be published separately as document FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.6 and will be available on the secretariat web site;

Archive of review information

(f) *Review transcripts* are forms, based on the categories in the common reporting format, for experts to record issues considered and addressed during the individual review of each Party. Completion and compilation of these transcripts will enable the secretariat and expert reviewers to track problems, changes and improvements in a Party's inventory over time. As of 2004, the format of the review transcript will be modified so that the transcript can be integrated with part II of the synthesis and assessment report that is sent to the Party under review. This will allow the Party to easily respond to issues raised in this report;

(g) *Information tracking system*: The secretariat has developed a database to archive and track information relating to the submission and review of inventory information of Annex I Parties. This system stores information on inventory submissions by Parties, the dates and results of each stage of the review process, including any comments received by Parties, and contact information for inventory experts and national inventory focal points. In accordance with decision 12/CP.9, the secretariat will also maintain information on experts' participation in review activities and training, and whether experts are authorized to access confidential information in the review. This information will be used by the secretariat to facilitate the selection and organization of inventory expert review teams.

[2] See decision 12/CP.9 contained in document FCCC/CP/2003/6/Add.1.

D. Meetings of inventory lead reviewers

14. Under the UNFCCC review guidelines (FCCC/CP/2002/8), expert teams for review of GHG inventories are to be led by two experts with substantial inventory review experience. For each team, one lead reviewer is to be from a non-Annex I Party, and one from an Annex I Party. These lead reviewers have a special role in guiding the review teams to ensure the quality, consistency and objectivity of the reviews. Recognizing the special role of lead reviewers, the COP requested the secretariat to organize meetings of lead reviewers to promote a common approach by expert review teams to methodological and procedural issues encountered in the inventory reviews, and to make recommendations to the secretariat on ways to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the inventory reviews.

15. The secretariat has conducted two meetings of inventory lead reviewers. The first, held in Bonn, Germany, in June 2003, was attended by 30 experts, evenly split between Annex I and non-Annex I Parties, with experience in the UNFCCC review process as well as the development of the IPCC methodologies and good practice. Twenty four of the experts who attended served as lead reviewers during 2003.

16. The second meeting of inventory lead reviewers was held in Wellington, New Zealand, in February 2004. Of the 29 participants who attended the meeting,[3] 28 will serve as lead reviewers in 2004.

17. During both meetings, the secretariat presented information on the review schedules, and updated information on the tools developed to facilitate the review, mentioned in paragraph 13 above. These developments were welcomed by the lead reviewers, who supported the continued use of these tools in the review process. The secretariat also reported on the development and planned deployment of the new software for the common reporting format (CRF). Lead reviewers approved of the secretariat's plan for deployment, and recommended that the secretariat provide opportunities for Annex I Parties to familiarize themselves with the new software.

18. Lead reviewers also considered the appropriate use of certain review process tools, such as international data sets, the secretariat's key source assessment and the outlier detection tool, and their outputs. Participants developed guidance for review teams on the appropriate use of these tools to facilitate the review, in particular recommending that potential discrepancies identified by these tools do not necessarily indicate an inventory problem per se, but only a potential issue that may deserve further consideration by expert review teams.

19. Lead reviewers also discussed a number of technical issues that have arisen in the review of GHG inventories, including reporting of country-specific emission sources not covered by the IPCC methodologies, the use of non-calendar-year data in inventory preparation and the use of gross calorific values in the energy sector. Lead reviewers concluded that these issues should not be considered departures from the IPCC good practice guidance, provided that the principles of good practice guidance are applied correctly and are consistent with national circumstances. Lead reviewers also considered and agreed upon ways to facilitate a common approach by different expert review teams to identifying departures from good practice guidance.

20. Lead reviewers recommended that their collective guidance (as reflected in the conclusions of the meetings) on the technical issues and on the appropriate use of review tools should be applied by expert review teams to facilitate a common approach in conducting review activities. To this end, lead reviewers requested the secretariat to incorporate this guidance into the review handbook.

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[3] Three invited experts were not able to attend.

21. The lead reviewers also endorsed the secretariat's proposal, in response to a request in decision 20/CP.9, to gain experience in the calculation of adjustments in the 2004 review process. To this end, the secretariat will facilitate the calculation of adjustments by three review teams in 2004 – two in-country review teams and one centralized review team – following the technical guidance adopted by the COP. The review teams will be selected in consultation with Parties concerned to ensure that only Parties who volunteer to do so will be part of this exercise. Any adjustment applied in this test will be discussed with the Party and will not be part of the review report.

22. Lead reviewers endorsed the plans by the secretariat to implement the review training programme in 2004 and approved the secretariat's proposal to implement in 2004 internal procedures for the protection of confidential inventory information, both of which are required by decision 12/CP.9.

23. The full texts of the conclusions of both meetings are available on the secretariat web site.[4]

E. Preliminary results of the review activities

24. Since its inception, the technical review of GHG inventories has led to substantial improvements in the quality of inventories of Annex I Parties. This improvement can be seen in the increase in the number of inventory submissions and in the completeness of those submissions. Parties are providing more detailed descriptions in their national inventory reports of the methodologies, emissions factors and activity data used in producing emissions estimates. Review of these inventories shows that most countries have also made important methodological improvements, such as further implementation of the IPCC good practice guidance, including use of higher tier methods and country-specific data. Nevertheless, Parties still need to make greater efforts to fully implement the requirements of the IPCC good practice guidance and of the UNFCCC reporting guidelines.

25. Inventory improvements are due both to national level factors and to the establishment of a more rigorous reporting and review process under the Convention:

(a) National inventory experts have become more experienced and have more practice in the preparation of inventories;

(b) Annual preparation of inventories has led to development of better institutional structures and procedures;

(c) Attention to inventories at the international level has helped to focus attention and resources on inventories at the national level;

(d) Revised guidelines for GHG inventories have encouraged more detailed reporting and use of the IPCC good practice guidance;

(e) Recommendations from the technical review process have identified areas for improvement.

26. Because of the technical complexity and extensive data requirements of preparing a national GHG inventory, improvements take time. Some Parties have only recently submitted their first inventory and some others have not yet done so. Even those countries with well-developed inventory systems are still making improvements. The GHG review process will continue to be instrumental in promoting the further improvement of national GHG inventories.

[4] http://unfccc.int/program/mis/ghg/index.html

27. The secretariat is undertaking work to better quantify and demonstrate the improvements in Annex I Parties' GHG inventories, as well as to identify remaining problems to be solved, in order to make this information available in the annual report on GHG emissions and trends. A more complete assessment of the improvements in inventories (and remaining problems) will be conducted for the report assessing the implementation of the inventory review guidelines in 2006, requested by decision 12/CP.9.

III. Inventory review training

A. Basic course

28. Decision 12/CP.9 calls for the secretariat to establish a training programme, comprising both technical and skill-building courses, for new members of expert review teams for implementation in 2004 and beyond. The basic course for the review of GHG inventories was developed in 2003 and 2004, based on the experience of a pilot training seminar held in Geneva in December 2002 and on guidance provided by the COP in its decision 12/CP.9. Five individual modules were developed, covering:

(a) General and cross-cutting aspects of the UNFCCC review guidelines and procedures and the IPCC good practice guidance

(b) Energy sector and fugitive emissions

(c) Industrial processes

(d) Agriculture

(e) Waste.

29. The basic training course was developed by six expert consultants with substantial knowledge and experience of the GHG review process. Three were from Annex I Parties and three were from non-Annex I Parties. Several of these experts will also serve as instructors for the basic course in 2004.

30. These courses will be offered online for 30 new experts (i.e. those who have not previously participated in inventory review activities) during the period May–June 2004.[5] For experts who have difficulty accessing the course via the Internet, the training materials will also be made available on CD-ROM. Each trainee will be required to take the general module and a specific sectoral module, based on the trainee's inventory experience. Each module provides important background information and references for the sector, instruction on general procedures for review, exercises on key topics and specific sources, and practical case studies that simulate an actual review. All modules are monitored by an instructor, who will also interact with trainees electronically through the course bulletin board to give guidance and answer questions. Following implementation of the online course, the modules will be made available throughout the year for all expert reviewers, without an interaction with an instructor.[6]

31. In selecting experts for the training course, the secretariat has given priority to experts from non-Annex I Parties and, in particular, sought experts from countries that have not previously been involved in the review process. Sixteen of the invited experts are from non-Annex I Parties and 12 of these are from Parties that have not previously participated in the review process. Four experts from EIT countries will be invited. Additionally, 10 positions were made available for experts from other Annex I Parties. All trainees must have basic knowledge and experience in the preparation of GHG inventories.

[5] In 2004 only, the general module will be offered to a few LULUCF experts who have not previously participated in a review. These experts will be required to take the full LULUCF training course in 2005.

[6] Parties interested in viewing the online review training courses may contact the Methods, Inventories and Science (MIS) programme of the secretariat (email: GHGtraining@unfccc.int).

32. Following completion of the online course, the secretariat will conduct a training seminar to provide additional hands-on experience with inventory review materials. During the three-day seminar, trainees will conduct a review of two inventories for their sector under the supervision of an instructor and the secretariat. The seminar will conclude with the mandatory course examination for all trainees, under the supervision of the secretariat.[7] This examination will cover general and sector-specific aspects of inventory review. For each sector, each trainee will take the same examination, and the grading scale will be determined and communicated to the trainees in advance. All trainees will be privately notified of their performance in the examination. Trainees who successfully complete the course will be invited to participate in a centralized or in-country review in 2004 or 2005.

B. Other courses

33. The secretariat is also preparing an e-learning course on the review of the LULUCF sector of Annex I Party GHG inventories, as requested by decision 12/CP.9. The course is aimed to train experts to review this sector in accordance with the *IPCC Good Practice Guidance on Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry*. It will be prepared and implemented by experts who were involved in the development of this report, under the guidance of the secretariat. The secretariat expects to make the course available online for 50 experts in early 2005 and to hold a final seminar and examination after the completion of the online course, as described in paragraph 32. Only those experts who successfully complete the training course will participate in the review of LULUCF from 2005 and beyond. It will be offered as part of the basic course starting in 2006.

34. The secretariat is also currently developing the course *Improving communication and building consensus in expert review teams*, which covers cross-cultural communication and conflict avoidance. This course provides tools to improve the work of expert review teams and facilitate teamwork. The secretariat plans to offer this course concurrently with the basic GHG inventories review training course in 2004 and make it available to all experts who will participate in reviews in 2004.

35. The secretariat is also planning to develop training courses[8] on national systems for estimation of GHG emissions of Annex I Parties and on adjustments under Article 5, paragraph 2, of the Kyoto Protocol in 2004, and, if resources are available, to implement them in 2005.

IV. Provision of greenhouse gas inventory information for the Conference of the Parties

A. Greenhouse gas information system

36. The foundation for the UNFCCC inventory review process is the GHG information system (GHGIS), which comprises a database and related software tools developed by the secretariat to process, store, analyse and facilitate the publication of GHG inventory information provided by Parties. The GHGIS is vital to producing authoritative GHG information for the COP and ensuring that the large number of annual inventories can be processed in a cost-effective, timely and rigorous manner.

[7] As indicated in decision 12/CP.9, it may, in exceptional circumstances, be possible to make other arrangements for examination, provided that the secretariat does not incur additional costs and that the examination is conducted under the direct supervision of the secretariat.

[8] Existing and future funding for training courses relating to the Kyoto Protocol, coming from specific contributions by Parties for this purpose, will be kept separate from that provided for training under the Convention.

37. The GHGIS integrates several linked tools/procedures to process inventory data submitted by Parties. These tools are also used to generate data tables and analyse GHG information, and as such are also essential to the GHG review process:

(a) The *import program* is used to transfer into the secretariat's database national inventory data submitted by Annex I Parties. The importation process begins around 15 April each year when Annex I Party inventory submissions are due;

(b) The *consistency check program* is run after data importation and identifies possible inconsistent data in national GHG submissions. Any inconsistencies identified are reported to the Party to allow correction and resubmission of the inventory;

(c) The *crawler software* enables data to be mined and presented. It is used in the production of data tables for the synthesis and assessment reports, for documents prepared for the COP, and to respond to other UNFCCC or external data requests;

(d) The *GHG online database* provides a user-friendly on-line interface (http://ghg.unfccc.int) to allow searching and retrieval of inventory information via the Internet. The online database is publicly accessible through the secretariat web site, and contains inventory information for more than 140 Parties.

38. The major task for the development of a more reliable GHG information system is the development of a new common reporting software (CRF reporter). The secretariat initiated the development of this software in 2003, as requested by decision 18/CP.8. Because the CRF reporter contains extensive features to validate the data entered, the substitution of the current (Excel-based) software by a more appropriate one (i.e. a database platform) will help to reduce reporting and processing errors by Parties and the secretariat. Use of this software by Parties for reporting inventories in 2005 and beyond is expected to greatly improve the consistency of the GHG data submitted by Parties, and thus also the consistency of the GHG inventory data published by the secretariat. Subject to the availability of resources, the secretariat will provide hands-on training in the use of this software for Annex I Party inventory compilers.

39. In accordance with decision 13/CP.9, the secretariat also plans to develop an independent module for reporting the tables of the LULUCF sector in the common reporting format, prepared based on the *IPCC Good Practice Guidance on Land use, Land-use Change and Forestry*. A provisional version of this module in Excel-based format will be provided for reporting in 2005 only. The secretariat plans to integrate the LULUCF module in the new CRF reporter, following the one-year testing period established by decision 13/CP.9, taking into consideration any modification to the tables by the SBSTA.

40. In 2004 and 2005, the secretariat plans to further enhance the GHGIS to better integrate GHG information from Annex I and non-Annex I Parties in a common database and to accommodate the evolving requirements for inventory reporting and the needs of the Parties for data analyses and graphic capabilities. In particular, the system will evolve to accommodate the new electronic reporting format for Annex I Parties, the new reporting guidelines for the LULUCF sector and improved data dissemination through the UNFCCC web site.

B. Annual report of emissions and trends of greenhouse gases

41. A principle output of the GHGIS is the annual report to the COP on GHG emissions and trends of Annex I Parties, required by decision 19/CP.8. This document is published electronically on the UNFCCC web site. A summary of the document, which includes trends of GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks and an assessment of the adherence of the reported inventory information to the

reporting guidelines, is published for the consideration of the COP and subsidiary bodies during the second sessional period each year. Because this report uses up-to-date inventory information submitted by Annex I Parties – information which is also subject to inventory review – it represents the most credible and comprehensive source of GHG information available to the COP.

42. Because the preparation of this report is a lengthy, complex and data-intensive process, inconsistencies have occasionally arisen in the data published. Further, the report to date has not fully conveyed the substantive improvements in Annex I Party inventory quality that have resulted from the technical review process. In addition to the deployment of the new CRF reporter discussed in paragraph 38, the secretariat also plans the following to improve the quality of the annual report on emission trends, and enhance its usefulness to the COP:

(a) As of 2004, only inventory submissions that have been received within six weeks of the due date for submission will be included in the preparation of the report on emission trends. For those Parties that submit their inventories after the cut-off date, the inventory information to be included in the annual report will be the last information submitted before such a date. Use of this cut-off date, which is consistent with both the inventory reporting and review guidelines, will ensure that the data have been subjected to standard quality control procedures through the importation and consistency check;

(b) If inconsistencies are identified between the data of a year within an annual submission (e.g. if only summary or trend tables are provided for certain years) and data from a previous submission, precedence will be given to the data from the most recent submission;

(c) The secretariat will also synthesize information on the continual improvement in GHG inventory reporting by Annex I Parties, and provide this in the annual report on emission trends.

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