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Methodological issues under the Convention

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

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

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document describes activities relating to greenhouse gas inventory reviews conducted during the period November 2008 to October 2009, and activities planned for 2010. It provides information on the Parties subject to review, the training and participation of experts in the review process, the meeting of inventory lead reviewers, the progress of the development of the CRF Reporter software in relation to reporting of activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol and the progress in updating the roster of experts.

* Exact dates within the sessional period are subject to confirmation.

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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 meetings of lead reviewers participating in the technical review of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties), for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). The COP also requested the secretariat to include in this report information on its inventory review training programme, in particular on examination procedures and on selection of trainees and instructors.

2. In addition, the SBSTA, at its twenty-fourth session, requested the secretariat to continue to prepare annual reports on inventory review activities, pursuant to decision 12/CP.9, for consideration by the SBSTA, and to include in these reports information on progress in updating the roster of experts.¹

B. Scope of the note

3. This document provides information on the activities relating to GHG inventory reviews conducted from November 2008 to October 2009 and on planned activities for 2010. It also provides information on the training and participation of experts in the review process, the meeting of inventory lead reviewers, the progress of the development of the CRF Reporter software in relation to reporting of activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol and the progress in updating the roster of experts.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

4. The SBSTA will be invited to take note of the information contained in this document.

II. Review activities

5. The UNFCCC review guidelines adopted in 1999 (decision 6/CP.5) and revised in 2002 (decision 19/CP.8) help to ensure that the COP is provided with objective, consistent, transparent, thorough and comprehensive information and technical assessments of GHG inventories from Annex I Parties, that these inventories are consistent with the agreed reporting guidelines, and that the quality of these inventories improves over time. In addition, the review guidelines help to ensure that the COP is provided with a technical assessment of the implementation of the commitments of Annex I Parties under Article 4, paragraph 1 (a), and Article 12, paragraph 1 (a), of the Convention.

6. The technical review of national GHG inventories from Annex I Parties started in 2000, in accordance with decision 6/CP.5. Following completion of the trial period established in that decision, annual reviews of the individual inventory of each Annex I Party became mandatory in 2003.

7. The GHG inventory review activities are funded from the core budget. Some other related activities, such as development of the GHG information system, the training of review experts and the organization of lead reviewers' meetings have until 2009 been funded through voluntary contributions to supplementary funds.

¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2006/5, paragraph 95.

A. Individual inventory reviews

8. In accordance with decision 19/CP.8, the secretariat coordinates the review of national GHG inventories of Annex I Parties. The inventory review process is conducted in three stages: initial check; synthesis and assessment (parts I and II); and individual review. The initial check stage provides an immediate quality assurance aimed at verifying completeness of the inventory submission and correctness of its 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.

9. During the individual review, an international team of experts, nominated by Parties, conducts a technical review of each inventory. As at 19 October 2009, individual inventory reviews were conducted for all 41 Annex I Parties, as follows:

- (a) In-country reviews: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation, and Slovakia;
- (b) Centralized reviews: Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, European Community, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

10. In 2008 five in-country reviews and 8 centralized reviews covering the remaining 36 Parties were conducted. Of the five in-country review reports, two were completed on time, or within one week of the due dates established in the inventory review guidelines. Two reports were delayed by two months and one is still pending. Of the 36 centralized review reports, five were completed on time, or within one week of the due dates established in the inventory review guidelines. Seventeen reports were delayed by two months and the remaining 14 were delayed by more than two months. The delay in the publication of the reports was mainly because experts participating in these reviews, owing to other commitments, had difficulties in finalizing the review reports within the established deadlines. For the reviews conducted in 2009 it is too early to draw any conclusions as the review reports are in preparation.

11. After each stage of the review process, the Party under review has an opportunity to comment on the different draft reports (status report, synthesis and assessment parts I and II, and individual review report) and the timelines for providing comments are established in the review guidelines as contained in the annex to decision 19/CP.8. However, Parties do not always respond to the invitation to provide comments or then provide their comments late. This could have an impact on the quality of the review process, the deadlines for the stages in the review process and the publication of the final reports.

12. For 2010 the secretariat is planning to have eight submissions from Parties reviewed through in-country reviews and those from the other Parties through centralized reviews. Reviews of all Parties are being planned for the end of August and during September 2010.

B. Roster of experts

13. Currently, the roster contains 577 GHG inventory experts, 339 from Annex I Parties and 238 from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties). From September 2008 to October 2009, 79 new experts were nominated to the roster, 37 from Annex I Parties and 42 from non-Annex I Parties.

14. A limited number of experts listed in the roster participate currently in the review process. One of the reasons for this is that only some Parties regularly update the list of experts nominated by them; many of the experts still on the roster had already moved on to other positions and are no longer available to participate in the review process. Another reason is that some experts nominated to the roster have not yet taken the mandatory training courses, or have not passed the relevant examination. This means that the roster from which the secretariat could select eligible experts lists approximately 165 experts who could participate in the reviews.

15. The secretariat has developed an online form, available at the UNFCCC web site,² to facilitate the nomination of experts to the roster and the updating of the list of nominees by a Party. The secretariat also periodically invites Parties to update the roster and to nominate new experts.

C. Expert review teams

16. During individual inventory reviews, international teams of inventory experts examine the data, methodologies and procedures used in planning, preparing and managing the national inventory. The secretariat selects experts for these teams based on nominations by Parties to the roster of experts. Invitations to experts to participate in the review are copied to the national focal point.

17. 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; land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF); and waste. However, for reviews of Parties with smaller economies, an expert may be requested to cover two sectors. Each team is led by two lead reviewers, one from a non-Annex I Party and one from an Annex I Party.

18. For centralized reviews, the secretariat usually invites two review experts to cover a sector, except in the case of the energy sector where three experts are invited as this is the largest sector in the inventories. Owing to the lack of available review experts, only in three of the centralized reviews conducted in 2009 there were three energy sector experts. Another sector, for which the review is complex and demanding, is the LULUCF sector. The review could benefit from having three experts on this sector, but the experts available from the roster do not allow for this. In 2009 for the first time three LULUCF experts participated in one of the centralized review teams. Lack of experts or a limited number of experts could influence the quality and the level of detail of the review of these complex sectors. As for the in-country reviews, all eight reviews had complete teams of six review experts.

19. In selecting members of expert review teams (ERTs), the secretariat seeks to ensure an overall balance in the number of experts from Annex I Parties and non-Annex I Parties, and a geographical balance within these two groups. In 2009, a total of 128 individuals from 52 different Parties served as inventory experts on review teams. Of these experts, 18 were from Annex I Parties with economies in transition, 69 were from other Annex I Parties, and 41 were from non-Annex I Parties. Due to the lack of experts or their availability to participate in the review some experts had to participate in more than one review (nine experts from non-Annex I Parties and eight from Annex I Parties participated in two reviews). This puts additional pressure on the experts and may influence the quality and level of detail of the review.

20. The table provides a breakdown of participation of experts by nominating Party in 2009. It shows that experts from the following Annex I Parties were not involved in the review process in 2009: Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Turkey. However, some of these Parties have participated in the review process in recent years, including Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and Spain. There are several reasons for experts not participating in the

² <http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/roster_of_experts/application/msword/roster_nomination_2006new.doc>.

reviews: (a) some Parties did not nominate experts at all, for example Liechtenstein and Monaco; and (b) some Parties have nominated experts only recently and these experts did not take the training courses and pass the relevant examinations, for example Estonia and Poland. The table also shows that many Parties continue to support the review process by providing two experts, and some Parties, such as Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Ukraine, and the United States of America, even more experts.

Inventory review experts in 2009 by nominating Party

Annex I Parties that are not countries with economies in transition	Annex I Parties that are countries with economies in transition	Non-Annex I Parties		
Australia ^a	Japan ^a	Belarus ^a	Algeria	Indonesia
Austria ^a	Luxembourg	Bulgaria ^a	Argentina ^a	Kazakhstan
Belgium ^a	Netherlands ^a	Croatia	Benin	Malawi ^a
Canada ^a	New Zealand ^a	Czech Republic ^a	Brazil ^a	Mongolia
Denmark ^a	Norway ^a	Lithuania	Chile	Peru ^a
European Community	Sweden ^a	Russian Federation ^a	China ^a	Philippines ^a
Finland ^a	Switzerland	Slovakia	Cuba	Republic of Korea
France	United Kingdom of	Slovenia	Egypt ^a	Republic of Moldova ^a
Germany ^a	Great Britain and	Ukraine ^a	Ethiopia	South Africa ^a
Iceland	Northern Ireland ^a		Georgia	Thailand
Ireland ^a	United States of		Ghana ^a	Uruguay ^a
Italy ^a	America ^a		India ^a	Zimbabwe ^a

^a Parties from which two or more experts participated in reviews in 2009.

21. From 2000, when the individual reviews were first conducted during the trial period, to 2009, 255³ individual experts from 87 different Parties (38 from Annex I Parties and 49 from non-Annex I Parties) have participated in GHG review activities. In 2009, 24 new experts who had taken the training courses and successfully passed the examination were involved in the reviews.

22. The limited number of experts available for the reviews makes it difficult to ensure proper geographic balance in the review teams and sufficient number of experts in the teams for the review of inventory of the complex sectors, such as energy and LULUCF. To that end, despite the dedication and commitment of many non-Annex I experts, it was not possible to ensure a proper balance in the review teams between Annex I Party experts and non-Annex I Party experts owing to insufficient number of non-Annex I Party experts on the roster.

D. Other inventory review procedures

23. In accordance with decision 12/CP.9, the secretariat developed and put in place procedures to implement the code of practice for the treatment of confidential information during the inventory review. 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 to such information by experts.

24. During in-country reviews, Parties often provide the review teams with access to confidential information. This is possible as the reviews are conducted in the countries and thus the Parties' own procedures on how to share confidential information with the review teams could be followed.

25. Decision 12/CP.9 further requires that all members of expert review teams sign an agreement for expert review services, which specifies the responsibilities, expected time commitment, and appropriate conduct for expert review team members, in particular with respect to the protection of confidential

³ There were 12 observers who participated in the reviews between 2000 and 2008 and are not included in these totals.

inventory information. All experts participating in the inventory reviews from 2004 onwards have signed this agreement, and this practice will be continued in future.

E. Meeting of inventory lead reviewers

26. The UNFCCC review guidelines require that expert teams should be led by two experts with substantial inventory review experience. For each team, one lead reviewer should be from a non-Annex I Party and the other from an Annex I Party. Lead reviewers (LRs) have a special role in guiding the review teams to ensure the consistency, quality and objectivity of the reviews. Recognizing this role, the COP, by its decision 12/CP.9, requested the secretariat to organize meetings of LRs to promote a common approach by ERTs 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 review process.

27. During recent years, LRs have established themselves as an important group under the Convention with a critical role in the review process, ensuring the consistency, quality and objectivity of the reviews in accordance with the requirements in the review guidelines. The annual meetings of the LRs helped in fulfilling this role. The most recent, sixth meeting of inventory LRs took place in Bonn, Germany, on 16–17 March, 2009. Originally 65 experts, 33 experts from Annex I Parties and 32 experts from non-Annex I Parties, were invited to the meeting. The meeting was attended by 38 experts, 21 from Annex I Parties and 17 from non-Annex I Parties. In addition, a representative of the European Community attended the meeting as an observer. The secretariat has tentatively scheduled the seventh meeting of LRs for March 2010.

28. The meeting addressed both procedural and technical issues relating to the annual review of greenhouse gas inventories of Annex I Parties under the Convention and similar reviews under the Kyoto Protocol. The issues related to reviews under the Convention are cited below.

29. The LRs acknowledged the need for prioritization and time management, in particular during the centralized reviews, and recommended that in centralized reviews priority be given to reviewing the implementation by the Party of recommendations from the previous review and any recalculations that were undertaken, and that LRs give priority to maintaining the quality of reviews, including in-depth consideration of the changes in the inventory since the previous submission. At a minimum, the ERT should ensure during the review that the quality of the GHG inventory has been maintained by the Party over time.

30. The LRs acknowledged that each ERT consistently applied the “Guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC review guidelines) and the relevant procedures. The LRs noted that consistent application of the UNFCCC review guidelines is essential, but must take into account the different national circumstances of Parties and the fact that there will always be a need for the ERT to use its own judgment. To this end, the secretariat could maintain a list of frequently asked questions on key issues raised in expert reviews for each annual review.

31. The LRs noted that the review tools and the review report template prepared by the secretariat helped to facilitate a consistent approach in all reviews. The LRs reiterated the conclusions at their fifth meeting which recognized that strengthening the capacity of expert reviewers by increasing the number of experts available and training, and involving more secretariat staff in future reviews is required to enhance consistency.

32. The LRs welcomed the update by the secretariat of modules in the training programme under the Convention. The draft updated training programmes for 2010–2011 under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol prepared by the secretariat for consideration by the SBSTA and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at their thirtieth sessions were welcomed by the LRs. These programmes outline the

ongoing training activities, including possible new activities, such as regional training seminars, and the development of new training courses for experienced reviewers and for the review of higher-tier methods and models.

33. The draft training programmes were considered and the LRs noted that the implementation of these programmes would enhance the expertise of the reviewers and, hence, contribute to the quality and consistency of the review process. The LRs supported the implementation of the draft training programme subject to a decision by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP).

34. Given the increased complexity of the review process, the LRs noted that there is a need for better integration of the new reviewers into the work of the ERTs. The LRs requested that the secretariat take this into account when planning ERTs, and that LRs take this into account when allocating tasks within the team.

35. The LRs further noted the need for additional review experts, in particular those from non-Annex I Parties, to be nominated to the roster of experts and trained. They expressed concern that there are still some Annex I Parties that have nominated only one expert to the roster of experts. Therefore, the LRs requested that the secretariat explore further options to identify new review experts, in particular from non-Annex I Parties.

36. The LRs requested that the secretariat inform national climate change focal points of the need to support the review experts that they nominate for the review process, including by taking into account the requirements of this process, such as the time needed for preparation and the time needed during and after the review week in the lead-up to the finalization of the annual review report.

37. Managing the implementation and support of the updated training programmes would require strengthening the capacity of the secretariat by creating a new post with responsibility for the training programme. The LRs noted that all activities under the training programmes are subject to supplementary funding, which is currently insufficient, and that further progress in expert training is required to maintain the rigour of the expert review process under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

38. The LRs expressed support for the work undertaken and planned by the secretariat to further develop the review tools. They expressed support for the secretariat's ongoing work of preparing a key category analysis at an aggregation level that is largely consistent with the level currently reported by Parties. The LRs requested that the secretariat explore the development of a review tool to track issues and recommendations from the previous expert reviews.

39. The LRs reiterated the need for consultation amongst LRs on complex matters and questions raised during ongoing reviews, as outlined in the conclusions of the SBSTA at its twenty ninth session,⁴ and emphasized the role of the secretariat in facilitating such consultations. In this context, LRs expressed support for the proposal of the secretariat to explore options for a virtual team room, subject to the availability of funding.

40. For the review of GHG inventories, the LRs reiterated that both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol require reporting Parties to continuously improve their GHG inventories and systems as part of the established QA/QC process and to work continuously on the implementation of the recommendations for improvements arising from the inventory review.

⁴ FCCC/SBSTA/2008/13, paragraph 65.

41. The full text of the conclusions of the LRs' meeting is available on the UNFCCC website.⁵

III. Training of experts

42. Decision 12/CP.9 called for the secretariat to establish a training programme under the Convention, comprising both technical and skill-building courses, for new ERT members. Development of the basic course, covering the general and cross-cutting issues and all inventory sectors except LULUCF, was completed in 2004, and since then only experts who have successfully passed the examination can participate in an inventory review. The course for the LULUCF sector was completed in 2005. The basic course is offered with an instructor once a year, resources permitting, or as a non-instructed online course throughout the year.

43. The basic training course developed in 2003–2005 was outdated owing to recent developments in the GHG inventories and experience gained in the review process. Following the request by the SBSTA at its twenty-seventh session,⁶ the secretariat updated the training programme, taking into account, for example, the IPCC *Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry*, and update the self tests incorporated in the online training and the final exams. The updated training courses were offered online in 2009.

44. The SBSTA, at its twenty-fifth session, requested the secretariat to continue to offer the training programme online, to make instructors available for the online training programme, and to organize a seminar relating to the programme, subject to the availability of resources. The secretariat had two rounds of instructed courses in 2009 as major contributions to supplementary funding had been provided by Australia, Japan, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The first took place between 15 May to 1 July and the second between 17 August to 16 October. Both rounds of instructed courses were offered online with an instructor available to respond to questions from the trainees and ended with a three-day seminar held in Bonn. During the seminar the trainees participated in a mock review and took their examinations on the last day of the seminar. 160 invitations were sent to Parties to nominate experts for the two courses. 50 experts participated in the first instructed course. Of these, 32 experts participated in the final seminar and 20 experts passed the examinations. In the second round, 42 experts participated in the online course and 27 participated in the final seminar. The results of the examination are not available yet.

45. In addition to the instructed course, the secretariat makes the inventory training courses available for inventory experts year-round and provides access for new trainees upon request by a Party. In 2009, 16 experts completed the non-instructed online course and made relevant arrangements to take the examinations under the supervision of the secretariat, without incurring additional costs.

46. The SBSTA, at its thirtieth session, decided to recommend a draft decision on the training programme for GHG inventory review experts for the technical review of GHG inventories of Annex I Parties, for adoption by the COP at its fifteenth session.⁷

47. The training activities are of crucial importance for ensuring the required quality and consistency of the review process. This is particularly true for experts from non-Annex I Parties, as they usually do not work on inventories on a daily basis. In addition, experts participating in the training activities and the reviews will be able to use the experience gained to improve the quality of their own national inventories.

⁵ <http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/review_process/application/pdf/sixth_meeting_of_inventory_lead_reviewers.pdf>.

⁶ FCCC/SBSTA/2007/16, paragraph 63.

⁷ FCCC/SBSTA/2009/L.7/Add.1. For the final text see document FCCC/SBSTA/2009/3/Add.1.

IV. Inventory submissions from Parties

48. The annual inventory submission under the Convention comprises the national inventory report (NIR) and the common reporting format (CRF) tables. The submission due date is 15 April. The majority of Parties submit their inventories on time, or within six weeks of the submission due date. The only exception in 2009 was Luxembourg which submitted its NIR at the limit of the six-week “grace” period from the submission date of 15 April. Late submissions by Parties can delay the review process and the GHG data of such Parties may not be included in reports prepared by the secretariat.

49. In 2009, all 41 Annex I Parties submitted a GHG inventory using the CRF Reporter software. This significantly facilitated the review process and the provision of information on emission trends by the secretariat for various UNFCCC documents prepared for the subsidiary bodies and the COP.

50. In accordance with the UNFCCC reporting guidelines⁸ Parties can submit their NIRs in one of the official languages of the United Nations. The UNFCCC reporting guidelines also encourage Parties to submit, where relevant, an English translation of the NIR. NIRs submitted in a language other than English limits the transparency of Parties’ reporting and puts additional burden on the secretariat to find review experts with knowledge of that language, in addition to English, which is the working language of the secretariat. With the limited number of review experts, especially those with sufficient knowledge of languages other than English, selecting a team capable of working in that other language is a huge challenge. The review becomes limited if the entire review team is not knowledgeable in the language used in the submission as it cannot review the information submitted in depth. This is especially true for centralized and desk reviews but also for in-country reviews.

V. Greenhouse gas information system

51. The SBSTA, at its twenty-seventh session, requested the secretariat,⁹ subject to the availability of supplementary funding, to develop a module to the CRF Reporter software for the tables for reporting activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol. It further requested the secretariat to release the module by 1 April 2009, at the latest, after the testing of a trial version of the module in cooperation with the reporting Parties, in order to facilitate the submission of the tables by Parties in 2010, and to report thereon to the SBSTA at its thirty-first session.

52. The trial version of this software was released in March 2009 with a request to Parties for comments on the new functions. Nine Parties provided such comments. Any issues raised by these Parties were addressed in the final release version of the CRF Reporter which was provided to Parties in August 2009.

53. The amount of data contained in the CRF Reporter is ever increasing. It now contains full time series for all Parties, from 1990, or other base year, onwards. In addition, depending on the reporting of land areas and the election of activities under Article 3, paragraph 4, of the Kyoto Protocol, the additional reporting in CRF Reporter under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol, could quickly lead to large amounts of additional data being maintained in the CRF Reporter database. Therefore it became necessary to change the underlying CRF Reporter database. This complex task was completed after the release of the trial version of the CRF Reporter software and prior to the release of the final version.

⁸ “Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual inventories”.

⁹ FCCC/SBSTA/2007/1, paragraph 102.

54. The delay in developing a module to the CRF Reporter software for the tables for reporting activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol, is due mainly to insufficient supplementary funding aggravated by the need for a change in the underlying database of the CRF Reporter software, as described in paragraph 53 above.

55. 2009 was the first year when there were no discrepancies noted between the submitted CRF tables and the electronic file (CRF XML) that is used for importing the information submitted by Parties into the secretariat's information system. This is a strong indication of the improved quality of Parties' reporting, confidence in the CRF Reporter software and the quality of the software itself.

56. The secretariat is planning a release with minor changes to the CRF Reporter software in December 2009. This will not affect in a negative way the timely preparation and submission by Parties of their GHG inventory in 2010.
