

New Zealand submission to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation:

Views on the composition, modalities and procedures of technical expert teams involved in international consultation and analysis

March 2012

1. In making this submission New Zealand is responding to the invitation to Parties to provide views on the composition, modalities and procedures of the team of technical experts referred to in paragraph 1 of Annex IV of Decision [-/CP.17] Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, paragraph 61. New Zealand is very pleased with the outcome at COP17 on international consultation and analysis and looks forward to making further progress during 2012 on the more technical elements necessary to underpin that process. Further, given that the international consultation and analysis (ICA) process is under the auspices of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) we consider it appropriate that the SBI take up the issues regarding the composition, modalities and procedures of technical expert teams.
2. The current review processes that operate under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol regarding the national greenhouse gas inventory reports and national communications from Annex I Parties provide rich experience and existing practice regarding composition, modalities and procedures of teams of technical experts. We can, and should draw from this experience and practice in respect of the composition, modalities and procedures of the teams of technical experts needed for the ICA process.
3. In summary, the existing review processes are coordinated by the secretariat with expert review teams assembled from experts nominated by Parties to the UNFCCC Roster of Experts. To ensure that the review process for greenhouse gas inventories is comprehensive and rigorous the experts need to have undertaken UNFCCC training, with competence demonstrated through a set of examinations. Each team has experts from both Annex I and non-Annex I countries, and the teams are led by co-lead reviewers, one from an Annex I and one from a non-Annex I Party. Secretariat costs are met from the core budget. UNFCCC procedures for participation in UNFCCC activities are applied for funding experts from non-Annex I Parties and Annex I parties with economies in transition. Experts from other Parties included in Annex I are funded by their governments.
4. Reviews take place either as a centralised review in Bonn, or in-country. Although desk reviews are an available option, in practice they have proven not to work very well and this option is rarely used. However, desk reviews are successfully used in the first part of the annual review of information from Annex I Party registries under the Kyoto Protocol. Importantly, whatever the type of setting for the reviews of Annex I Parties (desk, centralised, or in-country), there is a standardised approach (set out in guidelines) that each review team must follow.
5. New Zealand favours the inclusion of the option of in-country visits as part of the analysis process. There are multiple benefits from in-country visits compared to a centralised or desk based analysis. Benefits include increased opportunities for capacity building for all of the experts involved (both those from the country involved and those that are part of the analysis team), and an increase in the efficiency of the process (allowing for a more timely exchange of information). Because of the huge benefits of the face-to-face interaction that an in-country visit provides, we would like to see the procedures allow for an in-country visit, particularly following submission of the first biennial report.

6. We understand that the current system of annual reviews of Annex I national greenhouse gas inventory reports is resource intensive from the perspective of the UNFCCC secretariat, and in particular assembling expert review teams is challenging. In order for a similar approach to be used for technical expert teams involved in the ICA process, secretariat resources would need to be increased, and the pool of available and qualified experts would need to be expanded. However, at the same time as drawing from the current system of annual reviews for the modalities and procedures of the technical expert teams, we should also look at ways to streamline processes to ensure efficiency of the use of resources, both financial and human.

7. As well as needing to ensure the training and qualifications of technical experts involved in the technical expert teams, other elements of the expert review team process that should apply to technical expert teams involved in the ICA process are: coordination by the secretariat, use of the UNFCCC Roster of experts, an Agreement for [Review] Services, arrangements for handling confidential information, and having a balanced composition of teams. The co-lead reviewer practice is sound and also worth transferring to the technical expert teams involved in the ICA process. The co-lead reviewer practice helps with coordination of the team, provides a mechanism for resolving issues as they arise within the team, assists with consistency of approach, and helps ensure that reviews are performed in accordance with the review guidelines.

8. Instead of using the above described approach (that builds on current review modalities and practice) another model could be to have technical expert teams housed within the secretariat as permanent staff. Such an approach would also likely have implications for the review processes for Annex I Parties. The Annex I process is facing particular challenges regarding availability of experts and the continued need for additional review experts for the review process to be nominated to the UNFCCC roster of experts and to participate in the training courses.

9. As input to the necessary discussion and to help inform decisions on the composition, modalities and procedures of technical expert teams, New Zealand believes it would be helpful for the secretariat to analyse the costs and benefits of different models for the composition and training of the teams and the setting for the analysis process. The options considered should include the centralised technical analysis processes and in-country visits.

10. In order for the technical analysis process to operate smoothly it may be useful to develop some further guidance for the procedures to be followed by technical expert teams. Current practice with guidance on review procedures is referred to in paragraph 4 above. Such guidance for teams of technical experts should be based on the second sentence of paragraph 3(a) and paragraph 4 of Annex IV of decision -/CP.17 Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention. In our view such guidance does not need to be lengthy, but could specify the timeline for preparation and finalisation of the report, as well as providing general guidance on expectations of expert team members and what should be analysed during the process. New Zealand believes it would be helpful for the secretariat, as an input to SBI36, to prepare a draft an outline with elements of such guidance, based on the relevant paragraphs of Annex IV of decision -/ CP.17 referred to above.

11. New Zealand looks forward to engaging on these issues with other Parties.