

Conclusions and recommendations

Fourteenth meeting of greenhouse gas inventory lead reviewers

8–9 March 2017, Bonn (Germany)

1. The 14th meeting of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory lead reviewers (LRs) was held in Bonn, Germany, on 8 and 9 March 2017. A total of 37 experts from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) and 49 experts from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) were invited to the meeting. Of the 67 experts who attended, 31 were from non-Annex I Parties and 36 were from Annex I Parties. The secretariat held a refresher seminar for LRs and experienced reviewers on the morning of 8 March 2017, before the lead reviewers meeting, which was attended by 64 experts (30 from non-Annex I Parties and 34 from Annex I Parties). The refresher seminar focused on: experiences from desk reviews (DRs) and in-country reviews (ICRs) of GHG inventories in 2016; improving the drafting of findings and recommendations in review reports; efficient simultaneous use of the review issues tracking system (RITS) and the review report template; and reviewing the information on land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol (KP-LULUCF) in the second commitment period.
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 the consistency of reviews across all 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 conjunction with decision 4/CMP.11. Such reports 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 LRs to provide guidance on such matters as review tools, materials and templates,¹ as well as to provide suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews.²

I. Coordination and planning of the 2017 review cycle

3. The LRs noted that the 2016 review cycle involved an exceptional number of experts and resources and an exceptional number of reports prepared, including two annual reports and one initial review report for most Kyoto Protocol Parties. This resulted in the use of some of the financial resources initially planned for the 2017 review cycle. The fact that some resources have already been used creates constraints for the secretariat's ability to organize the 2017 review cycle fully in accordance with the relevant mandates (decisions 13/CP.20, 22/CMP.1 and 4/CMP.11). The LRs noted with concern that there are insufficient resources from the core budget of the secretariat to organize the 2017 review cycle fully in accordance with relevant mandates.
4. The LRs noted the plans of the secretariat for GHG inventory reviews for 2017, taking into consideration the challenges indicated in paragraph 3 above and the need to follow relevant mandates referred to in that paragraph. The LRs noted that the secretariat plans to organize the 2017 review cycle fully in accordance with the relevant mandates, depending on the availability of supplementary resources. In addition, the LRs also understood the need for and noted the alternative plans by the secretariat, such as reviewing only submissions by half of the Parties in the 2017 review cycle, if the supplementary resources are not made available. In all cases, annual submissions by all Parties will undergo an initial assessment (resulting in both status and assessment reports by the secretariat).

¹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 48.

² Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 44.

5. The LRs noted the need for Parties in a position to do so to provide support in terms of supplementary funding for projects related to Annex I GHG inventory reviews by the end of April 2017 at the latest, to facilitate the efficient organization of the 2017 review cycle, and in order to review all submissions made by Annex I Parties.
6. The LRs also requested the secretariat to inform Annex I Parties as early as possible, but no later than 31 May 2017, on the plans for the 2017 review cycle, including which Parties will be invited to host an in-country review.
7. The LRs noted that an update of the CRF Reporter was available in 2016 for the 2017 reporting cycle, which will facilitate timely reporting by Parties and will facilitate the timely organization of the 2017 review cycle. The LRs also noted the presentation by the secretariat during the 14th meeting on how it plans to further enhance the CRF Reporter, in terms of user friendliness with a view to further facilitate the compilation of GHG inventories, subject to the availability of funds.
8. The LRs noted with concern that there are insufficient resources from the core budget of the secretariat to organize the 2017 review cycle fully in accordance with the relevant mandates as well as to continue and strengthen the implementation of the training programme (see para. 18 below). The LRs requested the secretariat to prioritize the available resources for activities related to the review of the GHG inventories of Annex I Parties from the core budget and supplementary funding for these two core activities.

Specific issues regarding desk reviews

9. The LRs noted the importance of the continuous collection of experiences on the organization of DRs in order to provide information to the SBSTA for the consideration of such experiences at its forty-eighth session (April–May 2018). In accordance with paragraph 15 of decision 13/CP.20, the LRs considered the experiences of DRs during the 2016 review cycle and noted positive experiences, but also noted some of the difficulties in organizing such reviews, such as the availability of experts and achieving geographical balance in ERTs. The LRs also noted that DRs may be most effective when the GHG inventories are sufficiently advanced and there are no major problems or gaps. The LRs also noted that the scope of DRs, as contained in decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 76, is limited compared with centralized reviews and ICRs.
10. The LRs discussed different approaches to perform DRs, by considering the experience from the 2015 and 2016 review cycles, that may benefit the organization and operationalization of DRs, including: the duration and focus of the DRs; the application of IT tools to ensure successful implementation of the reviews; the annual review report (ARR) template for DRs; and the composition of the ERTs. The LRs invited the secretariat to consider the outputs of these discussions in the organization of reviews for the 2017 review cycle and consider the DR option further at the next meeting of LRs, taking into consideration the additional experience gained in 2017.
11. The LRs noted the need for Parties to encourage and facilitate the participation of experts that they nominated to take part in DRs, noting that without greater support from Parties to experts it will be very hard for the secretariat to organize DRs.

II. Training and availability of review experts

12. The LRs welcomed the information on training activities undertaken by the secretariat in 2016 and planned training activities in 2017. The LRs noted that the update and launch of the “Training programme for members of expert review teams participating in annual reviews under Article 8 of the Kyoto Protocol” (annex to decision 5/CMP.11) (hereinafter referred to as the updated Kyoto Protocol training programme) was made available online in time for the first review under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol as requested by decision 5/CMP.11. The LRs also welcomed the organization of the refresher seminar held prior to the 14th meeting of LRs on: experiences from reviews of GHG inventories in 2016; improving the

drafting of findings and recommendations in the review reports and the use of the RITS; and the review of KP-LULUCF activities in the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

13. The LRs noted that not all experienced LULUCF experts who participated in reviews in 2016 have met the mandatory requirement, for both new and experienced LULUCF reviewers, to pass the examination of the “Review of activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol” of the updated Kyoto Protocol training programme. The LRs invited all such LULUCF experts and new LRs to fulfil this mandatory requirement, as early as possible, if they have not yet done so, with a view to taking part in the reviews and contributing to the quality of the review process under the Kyoto Protocol.
14. The LRs noted the importance of “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 GHG inventory reviewers training programme), which has the objective of facilitating review experts to possess appropriate technical knowledge and skills for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to GHG inventories.
15. The LRs recognized the importance of the training courses and their examinations among ERT members, in particular experienced review experts, and reiterated their strong encouragement that experienced review experts, in particular LULUCF experts and LRs, undertake at their earliest convenience, the relevant courses and examinations of the GHG inventory reviewers training programme and the updated Kyoto Protocol training programme and use the opportunities for experienced review experts planned by the secretariat before the 2017 GHG inventory review cycle starts.
16. The LRs welcomed the information presented by the secretariat on the implementation of the GHG inventory reviewers training programme and noted that the secretariat has received positive feedback from the Parties and experts on this programme, including on the scope and focus of its courses, and the final examinations. The LRs noted that it is still too early to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the training programme based on the ongoing experience of the 2016 review cycle and the limited experience of the 2015 review cycle. Therefore, the LRs considered that the implementation of the GHG inventory reviewers training programme should be extended until any enhancement or further development of the courses of the GHG inventory reviewers training programme is considered and agreed by the SBSTA.
17. The LRs reiterated the importance that Parties nominate experts with experience in GHG inventories, including robust general and sectoral technical expertise, to the UNFCCC roster of experts and regularly update their nominations. The LRs also reiterated the importance of the support from Parties to ensure that their experts can complete the required training programmes, in order to have more qualified reviewers available for the GHG inventory review process.
18. The LRs acknowledged the resource constraints, both human and financial, in the secretariat and encouraged Parties to continue to support the training activities by providing sufficient resources to continue and strengthen the implementation of the training programme and for undertaking any enhancements of the GHG inventory reviewers training programme as referred to in paragraph 16 above.

III. Guidance on the development of review tools and materials

Review tools and materials

19. The LRs noted that the development of the new data warehouse with GHG emission data from the Parties’ GHG inventory submissions is still ongoing and could not be completed because of insufficient funding. They also noted that this affects the functioning of the review tools, the GHG data interface, the status reports under both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, and the aggregate GHG information that are linked to the data warehouse.

20. The LRs noted that the review tools – Locator, Comparison tool, SCOT (submission comparison tool), 7% tool, 2% tool, key category analysis tool and SODT (statistical outlier detection tool) – were improved following the recommendations of the 11th and 12th meetings of the LRs, and have been used during the 2016 review cycle. The LRs also noted that the overall functionality of these tools remained unchanged after they were integrated into the new data warehouse.
21. Considering the feedback received from experts during the 2016 review cycle, the LRs noted the plan of the secretariat to further enhance some of the review tools, namely the Locator and the comparison tool, and welcomed the plan for involving a group of LRs/ERTs in the testing of the enhanced tools. The LRs noted that user manuals on the review tools are under preparation by the secretariat in response to the recommendations of the 12th and 13th meetings of LRs and that these manuals are planned to be made available in advance of the launch of the 2017 review cycle.
22. The LRs noted that, because of the lack of financial resources, the secretariat may not be in the position to implement the planned enhancements of all the review tools. To that end, the LRs requested that the Locator be given priority.

Status report

23. Regarding the standardized set of data comparisons, the LRs noted that the consistency checks in the status reports have been implemented in line with the recommendations of the 13th meeting of LRs.³ The LRs also noted the implementation of the recommendation of the 13th meeting of LRs regarding highlighting, in the status reports, the missing information identified in the status report.
24. In addition, the LRs requested the secretariat to invite a group of experienced reviewers among the LRs to conduct an assessment of the standardized data comparisons. For this purpose, it requested that the secretariat set up all necessary arrangements to further proceed on that matter, and to report back at the 15th meeting of the LRs.

Aggregate GHG information

25. In order to streamline the aggregate GHG information, the secretariat circulated a questionnaire to experienced reviewers, and compiled and presented the results in accordance with the recommendation of the 12th meeting of LRs. Owing to the low response rate of the questionnaire and in line with the recommendation of the 13th meeting of LRs, the secretariat provisionally implemented its streamlining proposal for the 2016⁴ review cycle. In addition, and as recommended by the LRs, the same process of consultations was extended until December 2016.
26. The LRs agreed on the streamlining of the aggregate GHG information and recommended that the aggregate GHG information remains as per the version published for the 2016 review cycle.

Inventory virtual team room

27. The LRs noted that around 300 experts, LRs, review officers and Party representatives have used the revised GHG Inventory Virtual Team Room (I-VTR) during the 2016 review cycle. The LRs also noted that almost all teams (20 out of 21) have used the question and answer module of the I-VTR, and half of the teams have used the RITS and report preparation modules. Considering that 80 per cent of the users who participated in a survey after the 2016 review cycle found the I-VTR system “easy” or “very easy” to use, and that more than half consider that the I-VTR “improves the efficiency in conducting the review”, the LRs recognized the benefits of using the I-VTR in the review process.

³ http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/review_process/application/pdf/asr_sample_template_from_lr13.pdf.

⁴ <http://unfccc.int/resource/webdocs/agi/2016.pdf>.

28. The LRs also noted the essential role that LRs play in promoting the use of specific functions of the I-VTR (e.g. the questions and answers between ERTs and Parties, finding and tracking issues in a single database to ensure consistency and collaboratively preparing the review reports) and requested the secretariat to identify possibilities to further enhance the I-VTR for the next review cycle. The LRs noted the need for Parties to support further development of the I-VTR by providing additional financial resources.

Other review materials

29. The LRs welcomed the update of the *Handbook for Review of National GHG Inventories* (hereinafter referred to as the Review Handbook), to reflect decisions 24/CP.19, 13/CP.20, 2/CMP.7, 6/CMP.9, 3/CMP.11 and 4/CMP.11 and 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*.
30. The LRs agreed that the draft Review Handbook is a useful resource for both new and experienced reviewers and recognized it as a source when providing guidance to ERTs. The LRs are encouraged to provide comments by 15 April 2017.
31. The LRs took note of the background paper by the secretariat on improving the drafting of findings and recommendations, prepared for the refresher seminar for experienced GHG reviewers.
32. The LRs also welcomed the compilation by the secretariat of all reporting, review and accounting requirements relating to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in a user-friendly document (i.e. the consolidated decisions from the second commitment period).⁵
33. The LRs welcomed the update of the *Kyoto Protocol Reference Manual* for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The LRs agreed to provide comments by 15 April 2017 on this update. The LRs recommended that the secretariat finalize the document and make it available on the UNFCCC website.
34. The LRs agreed to encourage ERTs to use these materials and requested the secretariat to include the documents referred to in paragraphs 29, 30, 31 and 32, in the package of review materials delivered to ERTs at least one month prior to the start of each review week during the 2017 review cycle, and make the package of review materials available to Parties.

IV. Improvements to the quality, efficiency and consistency of reviews, in accordance with decisions 13/CP.20 and 4/CMP.11

35. The LRs reaffirm their role in leading ERTs and the review process, ensuring the quality and consistency of the reviews and supporting new experts. The LRs recognized the need for LRs to support and guide ERTs, particularly on KP-LULUCF issues,⁶ during the first years of the use of the new “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) (i.e. the UNFCCC Annex I inventory reporting guidelines) and the new “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) (i.e. the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines).. The LRs also recognized their role in promoting the use of tools and materials and the need to follow up on the quality assurance process.

⁵ Available at <http://unfccc.int/9501>.

⁶ Decisions 2/CMP.7 and 6/CMP.9.

36. The LRs discussed specific ways to improve the consistency and efficiency of the review process based on the experiences from the 2016 reviews and the background paper on consistency prepared by the secretariat. In particular, the LRs recommend that LRs promote the following procedures:
- a) Initiating the review of GHG inventory submissions by ERTs at least one month before the review week;
 - b) Dedicating more time early in the review week to the consideration of issues and the general assessment (chapter ‘Overview’ in the review report, potential questions of implementation, recommendation for an exceptional in-country review, Saturday Papers and key issues);
 - c) If recommending that the next review for a Party be conducted as an ICR, include in the annex to the ARR a summary of the rationale supporting the need for an ICR and highlighting particular issues from the current ARR conducive to further discussion in the ICR;
 - d) Streamlining the preparation and population of the RITS and drafting of review reports during the review week;
 - e) Enhancing the efficiency of the review process by including the main substantive findings in the review reports and keeping minor findings, typos and editorial issues in the RITS;
 - f) Confirming that, with respect to the application of the significance threshold in paragraph 37(b) of the annex to decision 24/CP.19:
 - i. The threshold applies to both source and sink categories;
 - ii. A category not reported by the Party in its annual submission, but which is demonstrated to be insignificant during the review week, is not to be included in the Saturday Paper;
 - iii. Potential problems identified by the ERT that would result in an adjustment less than the thresholds given in paragraph 37(b) of the annex to decision 24/CP.19 should not be included in the Saturday Paper;
 - g) When reviewing KP-LULUCF activities for Parties with commitment period accounting, not raising accounting issues for KP-LULUCF in Saturday Papers in years prior to the final year of the commitment period, since they do not have accounting implications and the issues will still appear in the review reports and would be highlighted in the reports if they are not solved within three submissions.
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