

**Conclusions and recommendations**  
**Second meeting of lead reviewers for the review of**  
**biennial reports and national communications**  
**Bonn, Germany**

*5–6 March 2015*

1. The second meeting of lead reviewers (LRs) for the review of biennial reports (BRs) and national communications (NCs) was held in Bonn, Germany, from 5 to 6 March 2015. A total of 49 experts from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) and 50 experts from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) were invited to the meeting. Of the 63 experts who attended, 37 were from non-Annex I Parties and 26 were from Annex I Parties.

2. In accordance with the “Guidelines for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas inventories, biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC review guidelines) included in the annex to decision 13/CP.20, and with decision 23/CMP.1, the meeting addressed both procedural and technical issues relating to the reviews of BRs and NCs from Annex I Parties with a view to facilitating the work of the LRs in fulfilling their task to ensure consistency in the reviews across Parties.

### **Reviews of second biennial reports**

3. The LRs noted the successful launch of the international assessment and review (IAR) process in 2014. The first biennial reports (BR1s) and sixth national communications (NC6s) of 41 Parties were reviewed in 2014.<sup>1</sup> In total, 82 in-depth review reports (IDRs) of NC6s and technical review reports (TRRs) of BR1s had been prepared by expert review teams (ERTs) and published on the UNFCCC website by 1 March 2015, within the 15-month completion deadline for reviews as stipulated in the UNFCCC review guidelines.<sup>2</sup> In total, 152 experts from 72 Parties (70 experts from non-Annex I Parties and 82 experts from Annex I Parties) participated in the reviews in 2014. The LRs acknowledged the significant efforts made by the ERTs, the LRs and the secretariat in successfully completing the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014.

4. The LRs noted the overall approach to the reviews of the second biennial reports (BR2s) in 2016, as presented by the secretariat during the meeting, following the UNFCCC review guidelines, which require that in the years when the BRs are not reported in conjunction with the NCs, the BRs shall be subject to a centralized review.<sup>3</sup> The centralized reviews of the BR2s of all 44 Annex I Parties are planned to take place in the period March–June 2016. This will allow the TRRs of the BR2s to be published in time for Parties to undergo the multilateral assessment (MA) at the working session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at the end of 2016 and in mid-2017.

5. The LRs acknowledged the challenges faced by the secretariat in planning and coordinating the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014. The LRs noted that these challenges arose from: (a) an insufficient number of well-prepared experts to conduct the reviews, due to other competing priorities or a lack of funding to cover the travel costs of their participation in cases where experts are funded by the Governments that nominated them; and (b) the outdated and inaccurate list of experts on the UNFCCC roster of experts (RoE) which is not necessarily updated by the national focal points. The LRs noted that the web page of the RoE should include the fields of expertise of the nominated expert and could include an indication of how often that expert had supported a review process. The LRs also acknowledged the new challenge arising from the mandated parallel review and analysis processes that will take place in 2016 (i.e. the technical analysis of biennial update reports, reviews of greenhouse (GHG) inventories and supplementary information under the

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<sup>1</sup> The reviews of the submissions of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Turkey were scheduled for 2015 because Belarus informed on its intention to resubmit its NC6 in early 2015, and the textual parts of the BR1s of Kazakhstan and Turkey, as well as Turkey’s common tabular format tables, were not submitted in time for the 2014 review cycle. Belarus resubmitted its NC6 in February 2015. Turkey did not submit its NC6, BR1 and CTF tables, however it has submitted its NC5 in December 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 17, states that “The ERTs shall make every effort to complete the individual review of BRs within 15 months of the due date of their submission for each Annex I Party.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 19, states that “In the years when the BR is not reported in conjunction with the NC, the BR shall be subject to a centralized review”.

Kyoto Protocol, and the technical assessment of reference levels) and which will demand the participation of the same limited number of technical experts. The LRs noted that over 130 experts are required to conduct the centralized reviews of the BR2s in 2016.

6. For successful high-quality reviews, a sufficient number of well-prepared experts available to support the review process is essential. The LRs reiterated the need to continue increasing the number of technical experts who can actively participate in the review process with the support of their nominating Parties, in order to ensure the completeness and balance of expertise of ERTs, in particular by increasing the participation of experts from non-Annex I Parties. The LRs encouraged Parties to continue nominating experts with robust technical background to the RoE, to regularly update the RoE, as appropriate, and to facilitate experts' participation in the reviews by allocating the necessary time and resources for the relevant experts in their 2016 workplan and by ensuring that they are fully available for the entire review process.

## **Multilateral assessment**

7. The LRs acknowledged the successful launch of the first MA session and the conduction of the MA of 17 Annex I Parties under the IAR process at SBI 41 (December 2014), as well as the plan for the MA of the 24 remaining Annex I Parties at SBI 42 (June 2015). The LRs recognized their important role in ensuring the quality of the review reports of NCs and BRs and the timely delivery of these reports in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the MA process.

## **Training of review experts**

8. The LRs welcomed the information on the training activities undertaken by the secretariat in 2014 and the planned training activities in 2015, including the organization of online courses and examinations in 2015 under the new "Training programme for review experts for the technical review of biennial reports and national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention" (decision 15/CP.20, annex) (hereinafter referred as to the new training programme). The LRs also welcomed the provision of the training materials on the reviews of BRs and NCs developed by the secretariat in 2014 to experts who participated in the reviews of the BR1s and NC6s of Annex I Parties, which helped to enhance their knowledge of substantive matters and approaches to the technical review process and to provide guidance on the common understanding of the review steps, with a view to facilitating a consistent approach in the reviews across Parties.

9. The LRs noted the scope and focus of the courses of the new training programme for the review of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties and the examination requirements, which new review experts and LRs must pass in accordance with the requirements of the new training programme. The LRs considered that experienced review experts and LRs should acquire the new practical skills and knowledge for reviews provided in the training courses, including the experience gained in 2014 during the review process, with the aim of enhancing their knowledge of substantive matters and approaches to the technical review process, in particular taking into account the 2016 reviews of BRs. The LRs further noted that further development of the new training programme on vulnerability and adaptation aspects would be useful.

10. The LRs also noted that experienced review experts would benefit from taking the general and cross-cutting review course and its examination, as well as the courses and corresponding examinations related to their expertise. The LRs strongly encouraged these experts to undertake the indicated courses, where possible in 2015 or shortly thereafter, when the courses will be offered online by the secretariat starting in 2015.

## **Improvements in the review process**

11. The LRs noted that there is room for further improvement in the efficiency and consistency of the review processes and that a timely and thorough preparation is essential for an efficient review. The LRs encouraged the secretariat to make every effort for early preparations for the reviews of the BR2s by undertaking a preliminary check of the availability of experts, the early composition of ERTs, and the timely provision of all relevant information to ERTs. To facilitate these early preparations, the LRs encouraged experts to plan their involvement in the BR2 reviews in 2016 and to allocate sufficient time for this task.

12. The LRs appreciated the review tools used by the ERTs throughout the review process in 2014, including the checklists, the review report templates and the biennial report virtual team room (BR VTR) application. The LRs took note of the improvements undertaken in the biennial report common tabular format (BR CTF) application that would be used by Annex I Parties for the submission of the BR2s, as well as

possibilities to enhance the use of the BR synthesis and analysis tool and the BR data interface in preparing for the reviews. The LRs also appreciated the enhancements presented by the secretariat during the meeting, in particular on the user-friendliness of the review report templates for the BR2s, and the functionality and user-friendliness of the BR VTR. The LRs further noted the usefulness of the checklists and the technical review report template in the preparation of high-quality review reports and encouraged experts to actively use them during the reviews.

### **The role of lead reviewers in improving the review process**

13. The LRs recognized that efficient and consistent reviews, as well as high-quality review reports, depend to a great extent on the guidance and leadership provided by the respective LRs.

14. The LRs agreed to maintain a strong role in leading ERTs in all phases of the review process, particularly in: enhancing the engagement of the ERT throughout the entire review process; promoting the use of appropriate tools by the ERT; supporting the preparation of the ERT before the review week (communicating with and providing guidance to the ERT on substantive matters, including questions to the Party under review on completeness and transparency); promoting the timely delivery by the ERT of agreed outputs during and after the review week; and overseeing the overall quality of the ERT's outputs throughout the review process. The LRs also agreed that all members of the ERT should strive to be actively engaged and involved in all stages of the review process.

15. The LRs further agreed that good preparation by ERTs before the review week is essential to the success of the reviews, and the LRs could help with this preparation by, inter alia, urging ERTs to use the checklists and by ensuring the quality of the questions formulated by ERTs to the Parties under review. The LRs also agreed that an effective and user-friendly BR VTR is crucial in improving the efficiency of the review process, especially for centralized reviews.

16. The LRs discussed the specific role of the LRs in centralized reviews, which has significant implications for the organization of and preparation for the forthcoming centralized reviews of the BR2s in 2016. The LRs agreed on the importance of having a comprehensive management plan for the review process prepared by the LRs, with the assistance of the secretariat, including review preparations, activities during the review week and report preparation. This is fundamental to the timely delivery of the review reports while ensuring their quality.

### **Addressing challenges in reviewing biennial reports and national communications**

17. The LRs welcomed the discussion paper<sup>4</sup> prepared by the secretariat on the main challenges and practice experienced in reviewing the NC6s and BR1s of Annex I Parties in 2014. With the aim of facilitating the discussions at the LRs meeting, the discussion paper provided examples of the main challenges faced by ERTs during the review and the approaches taken by ERTs to address these challenges, namely on cross-cutting matters such as the assessment of completeness and transparency of the reported information, and on substantive matters such as policies and measures, progress towards the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets, provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support, and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol. The LRs exchanged information on their experiences in reviewing substantive matters in the NC6s and BR1s and discussed approaches applied to address the challenges experienced in the 2014 reviews in the context of the UNFCCC review guidelines.

18. The LRs noted that some ERTs faced difficulties in using the gradations “partially” or “mostly” when assessing completeness and transparency. The LRs confirmed that the four-gradation approach used to assess completeness and transparency suggested at the first LRs meeting has proven to be useful and recommended that ERTs continue using this approach in future reviews of NCs and BRs. The LRs took note of the definitions of the gradations presented in the discussion paper and requested the secretariat to explore the application of further options for these gradations and to provide relevant input to the discussions at the next LRs meeting with a view to reaching an agreement on this matter.

19. The LRs also noted that one of the most common challenges was related to the review of information provided on the progress towards the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets. These challenges

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion paper entitled “First biennial reports and sixth national communications: review challenges and practice”. Available at <[http://unfccc.int/focus/mitigation/the\\_multilateral\\_assessment\\_process\\_under\\_the\\_iar/items/8809.php](http://unfccc.int/focus/mitigation/the_multilateral_assessment_process_under_the_iar/items/8809.php)>.

were identified in relation to the way in which the information has to be reported by Parties in their BRs and common tabular format (CTF) tables, the fact that information on this matter has been reported for the first time using the CTF tables, and also on how to reflect Parties' progress in a meaningful and consistent way in the review reports.

20. The LRs noted that the submissions of the BR2s will include information regarding GHG emissions and removals that will most likely be based on the new "Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part 1: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories" (decision 24/CP.19, annex) and encouraged ERTs to take this into consideration when reviewing the BR2s and to compare the reported information with that contained in the BR1s. The LRs requested the secretariat to prepare and provide information to ERTs that would facilitate their understanding of the implications of these changes.

21. As regards experience and practice in reviewing information on the provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support to developing country Parties, the LRs discussed how to approach the possible double counting of financial resources reported in the sections of the BRs and NCs on finance, on technology transfer and on capacity-building, the national approach for tracking the provision of the support, the description of "new and additional" financial support, and the transfer of 'hard' or 'soft' environmentally sound technology.

22. With respect to experience and practice in reviewing the supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol and other NC-related elements, the LRs discussed approaches on how to review the information provided on: supplementarity in the use of market mechanisms; steps taken to promote and/or implement any decisions by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO); domestic legislative arrangements and administrative procedures for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol; the consistency of GHG inventory information in the NCs, BRs and national inventory reports; and issues in relation to the review of research and systematic observation. The LRs requested the secretariat to compile information on the relevant decisions by ICAO and IMO and to provide it to ERTs.

23. The LRs noted that, in view of the absence of an agreed quantitative threshold on supplementarity in the "Guidelines for the preparation of the information required under Article 7 of the Kyoto Protocol" (decision 15/CMP.1, annex) for NCs under the Kyoto Protocol, and in cases where a Party has not indicated how it uses this term, the ERT should clarify with the Party, as necessary, how its use of the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms is supplemental to domestic action, how its domestic action thus constitutes a significant element of the effort made to meet its quantified limitation and reduction commitment, and which information/criteria it uses to define supplementarity. In cases where a Party has reported that it does not intend to use units from the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms, the ERT can consider that the requirement of supplementarity has also been fulfilled.

24. The LRs agreed that the review approaches discussed during the meeting (including those referred to in paras. 18, 19, 21, 22 and 23 above) are useful and could be applied in future reviews. The LRs recommended that the secretariat update the discussion paper based on the agreed outcomes of the LRs meeting, the presentations of the LRs and the outcome of the breakout groups. The LRs will discuss the updated discussion paper at their next LRs meeting. The LRs noted that the discussion paper did not cover review approaches in relation to all reporting requirements, which are equally as important as those highlighted in the discussion paper.