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Technical assessment process for proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels submitted by developing country Parties

Synthesis report by the secretariat

Summary

This synthesis report provides an overview of the two sessions of technical assessment of proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels that took place in 2014 and 2015, covering timing, composition of the assessment teams and experience gained from the facilitative technical exchange of information. It presents several challenges faced by the secretariat in organizing and coordinating the annual technical assessment sessions thus far, including: the availability of a limited number of land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) experts for the technical assessments; the technical complexity of the submissions, demanding intensive engagement of the LULUCF experts throughout the process; and the development of tools and materials to facilitate the work of the experts during the assessments. The report also covers steps that have been taken by the secretariat to overcome some of the identified challenges as well as some suggestions for actions that could be taken by Parties in order to facilitate future technical assessment sessions.

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I. Introduction

A. Background and mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 1/CP.16, requested developing country Parties aiming to undertake the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of that decision¹ to develop the elements referred to in paragraph 71 of the same decision. One of the elements to be developed is a national forest reference emission level (FREL) and/or forest reference level (FRL) or, if appropriate, as an interim measure, a subnational FREL and/or FRL, in accordance with national circumstances, the provisions contained in decision 4/CP.15 and any further elaboration of those provisions adopted by the COP.²

2. Subsequently, the COP, by decision 12/CP.17, adopted the modalities for FRELs and FRLs. In that decision, the COP invited developing country Parties to submit their proposed FREL and/or FRL, on a voluntary basis, when deemed appropriate and in accordance with the guidelines contained in the annex to that decision.³ It also requested the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to develop guidance for a process that enables the technical assessment of the proposed FREL and/or FRL when submitted or updated by developing country Parties.⁴

3. COP 19 adopted seven decisions⁵ on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries, collectively referred to as the Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus.⁶

4. Within that set of decisions, decision 13/CP.19 sets out the guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions of Parties on their proposed FREL and/or FRL. The COP decided that the proposed FREL and/or FRL might be technically assessed in the context of results-based payments.⁷ By this same decision, the COP requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report on the technical assessment process of proposed FRELs and/or FRLs submitted by developing country Parties for consideration by the SBSTA after the first year of technical assessments.⁸

B. Scope of this report

5. This synthesis report provides an overview of the technical assessment sessions that took place in 2014 and 2015, and presents information gathered at the two sessions and the challenges faced by the secretariat in organizing and coordinating annual technical assessment sessions thus far. Chapter II provides an overview of the technical assessment sessions, including timing, the facilitative technical exchange of information and the composition of the assessment teams. The challenges faced by the secretariat in organizing and preparing for the technical assessment sessions are identified in chapter III. In

¹ The COP encouraged developing country Parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking the following activities: reducing emissions from deforestation; reducing emissions from forest degradation; conservation of forest carbon stocks; sustainable management of forests; and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (referred to as REDD-plus).

² Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(b).

³ Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 13.

⁴ Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 15.

⁵ Decisions 9/CP.19 to 15/CP.19.

⁶ FCCC/CP/2013/10, paragraph 44.

⁷ Decision 13/CP.19, paragraphs 1 and 2.

⁸ Decision 13/CP.19, paragraph 4.

conclusion, the report covers measures that have been taken by the secretariat to overcome some of the identified challenges, as well as possible next steps that could be taken by Parties in order to facilitate future technical assessment sessions, their efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure that the process remains a facilitative, non-intrusive, technical exchange of information between the submitting Parties and the technical assessment experts.

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

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

II. Technical assessment of proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels submitted by developing country Parties

7. This chapter provides an overview of the technical assessment sessions that took place in 2014 and 2015, covering the timing of the sessions and the submissions assessed. It also provides some information on the technical assessments to take place in 2016 and 2017. General experience with and outcomes of the technical exchanges of information that took place during the sessions in 2014 and 2015 are described. Finally, the chapter provides information on the composition of the assessment teams.

A. Technical assessment sessions

8. Following the adoption of decision 13/CP.19, the process of the technical assessment of submissions of developing country Parties on proposed FRELs and/or FRLs was launched in 2014. The objective of the technical assessment is to assess the degree to which the information provided by Parties is in accordance with the guidelines for submissions of information on reference levels.⁹ The assessment process also offers a facilitative, non-intrusive, technical exchange on the construction of FRELs and/or FRLs with a view to supporting the capacity of developing country Parties for the construction and future improvement of their FRELs and/or FRLs.

9. **Timing of the technical assessment sessions:** the secretariat scheduled the dates for the technical assessment sessions in 2014 and 2015 after careful consideration of factors such as the timing of all technical review processes being organized under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol in any given year, the timing of the UNFCCC negotiation sessions, the availability of land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) experts from the UNFCCC roster of experts during the year and the need for ongoing fundraising to support the organization of the technical assessments. The entire annual technical assessment process spans 43 weeks, including an annual one-week long centralized technical assessment session in Bonn, Germany, organized by the secretariat.¹⁰

⁹ The guidelines are contained in the annex to decision 12/CP.17.

¹⁰ See decision 13/CP.19, annex, paragraphs 10–18, for information on the timing of the technical assessment process.

10. The secretariat communicated the submission deadlines and timelines for the 2014 and 2015 sessions in a message to all Parties.¹¹ The secretariat has also communicated the schedule for the technical assessment sessions in 2016 and 2017 in a second message to all Parties.¹² The secretariat will continue to inform Parties in advance of the timelines for future technical assessment sessions, taking into account the factors referred to in paragraph 9 above. It is envisaged that the early notification of the indicative timelines for the assessment sessions will facilitate the preparation of FREL and/or FRL submissions by Parties, taking into account their other reporting requirements under the Convention.

11. **Technical assessment sessions in 2014 and 2015:** in 2014, only one submission of a proposed FREL was received, from Brazil. At the request of the Party, a shortened assessment session was organized.¹³ The technical assessment report was published in December 2014.¹⁴ Completion of the technical assessment of its proposed FREL allowed Brazil to report its results-based actions in a technical annex to its biennial update report at the end of 2014.¹⁵

12. Five Parties submitted their proposed FRELs and/or FRLs for the 2015 technical assessment session: Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Malaysia and Mexico. All five technical assessments were completed successfully, and the technical assessment reports were published by the end of 2015. In accordance with the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 13/CP.19, the secretariat has made all of the technical assessment reports available on the web platform on the UNFCCC website.¹⁶ A general summary of the main features of FRELs and/or FRLs submitted for technical assessment in the 2014 and 2015 sessions, as found in the published technical assessment reports, is contained in the annex to this report.

13. **Ongoing technical assessment session in 2016:** for the 2016 session, nine developing country Parties have proposed their FRELs and/or FRLs for technical assessment: Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Paraguay, Peru, Viet Nam and Zambia. The centralized technical assessment session in Bonn took place from 14 to 18 March 2016. The whole process, including the publication of the nine technical assessment reports, is expected to be completed before the end of November 2016.

14. **Technical assessment session in 2017:** Parties have been requested to submit their proposed FREL and/or FRL to the secretariat by the deadline of 2 January 2017 in order to participate in the 2017 technical assessment session. The centralized technical assessment session in Bonn is scheduled to take place from 13 to 18 March 2017. The whole process is expected to be completed by the end of November 2017.

¹¹ Available at <http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/notifications/application/pdf/message_to_parties_reference_levels.pdf>.

¹² Available at <http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/notifications/application/pdf/message_to_parties_information_on_the_submission_of_proposed_forest_reference_emission_levels_and_or_forest_reference_levels.pdf>.

¹³ The session in 2014 was organized on an exceptional basis and for 2014 only. It resulted in considerably shortened response timelines for the Party. In a normal assessment session, in accordance with the established guidelines, a Party is given 8–12 weeks to provide its comments on the draft report prepared by the assessment team. In the shortened assessment session, the Party was expected to respond within two weeks in order to keep to the proposed timelines for the session.

¹⁴ FCCC/TAR/2014/BRA.

¹⁵ In accordance with decision 14/CP.19, paragraph 6.

¹⁶ <<http://redd.unfccc.int/>>. The technical assessment reports of the five submitting Parties are available at <<http://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/forest-reference-emission-levels.html>>.

B. The process for a facilitative, non-intrusive, technical exchange of information and its outcomes

15. The submitting Parties and the technical assessment teams that participated in the technical assessment sessions in 2014 and 2015 acknowledged that the process provided a valuable opportunity for a rich, open, facilitative and constructive technical exchange of information between them. The technical exchange also contributed to building trust between the respective Party and the assessment team, resulting in increased transparency of the data and information submitted.

16. In all cases, Parties provided transparent and complete information and data in overall accordance with the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 12/CP.17. Parties also based their estimation of emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes, as well as the eventual calculation of their FREL and/or FRL, on the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and guidelines, as adopted or encouraged by the COP, as appropriate.¹⁷

17. On the basis of the technical inputs and suggestions provided by the assessment teams during the facilitative and constructive technical exchanges, Parties provided modified submissions¹⁸ that significantly improved the transparency,¹⁹ consistency and accuracy of the methodological information, data, approaches, methods and models used in constructing their FREL and/or FRL.

18. Furthermore, the technical assessment reports identified potential areas for future technical improvement. All six Parties that underwent the technical assessment process in 2014 and 2015 have shown a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of future submissions of their FREL and/or FRL. It has also been acknowledged that improvements are subject to national capabilities and policies and the availability of adequate and predictable support.

C. Composition of the technical assessment teams

19. The technical assessment teams are composed of LULUCF experts selected from the UNFCCC roster of experts. Each submission is assessed by two LULUCF experts, one from a developed country and the other from a developing country. The COP requested the secretariat to ensure a balanced representation of LULUCF experts from developing and developed countries on the assessment teams.²⁰ Participating experts serve in their personal capacity and are neither representing the Party undergoing the technical assessment nor funded by that Party.

20. In the period 2014–2015, six pairs²¹ of LULUCF experts selected from the UNFCCC roster of experts were invited to participate in the technical assessment sessions. One expert from a Party included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Party) participated in the technical assessment sessions in both 2014 and 2015. All experts were selected on the basis of their expressed availability and willingness to be fully engaged throughout the entire period of the technical assessment sessions.

¹⁷ In accordance with decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 1(c), and the annex to decision 12/CP.17.

¹⁸ Available at <<http://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/forest-reference-emission-levels.html>>.

¹⁹ “Complete” here means the provision of information that allows for the reconstruction of the FREL and/or FRL.

²⁰ Decision 13/CP.19, annex, paragraph 9.

²¹ Six experts were from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention and the other six were from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention.

21. Of the LULUCF experts who participated in the 2014–2015 technical assessment sessions, one was from African States, one from Asia-Pacific States, four from Latin American and Caribbean States, and five from Western European and other States.

22. Nine pairs of LULUCF experts are participating in the 2016 technical assessment session: two from African States, two from Asia-Pacific States, six from Latin American and Caribbean States, seven from Western European and other States and one from States with economies in transition.

23. The Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE) may nominate one of its experts from a developing country Party with relevant expertise to participate as an observer in the centralized technical assessment.²² The CGE was invited to nominate an observer for the assessment sessions in 2014 and 2015. A CGE observer participated in the 2014 and 2016 sessions, but not in the 2015 session.

III. Challenges in the technical assessment process

24. This chapter highlights the key challenges faced by the secretariat in organizing the technical assessment sessions. The LULUCF experts who undertook the technical assessments in the 2014–2015 period also provided feedback on and suggestions for the organization of the sessions. The following is not an exhaustive list of the concerns and challenges that arose from the assessment sessions; rather, the key challenges or constraints encountered are framed in three sections: (1) preparation for the technical assessment sessions, (2) availability and training of experts and (3) process-related challenges. All of the challenges faced during the technical assessment sessions were managed or internalized using the limited supplementary resources available and by implementing the approaches outlined in the remainder of this chapter as well as in chapter IV below.

A. Preparation for the technical assessment sessions

25. Thus far, the LULUCF experts have successfully completed two technical assessment sessions of proposed FRELs and/or FRLs. The experts were fully engaged in the early stages of the technical assessment process, which required the preparation of preliminary technical questions to obtain clarification and additional data and information from the submitting Parties (that would allow them to assess the submissions for transparency, completeness and consistency), and they remained involved throughout the entire 43 week process. The experts also actively engaged in facilitative and interactive technical exchanges with the Parties concerned. They were fully committed to the timely delivery of the final technical assessment reports.

26. Tools and materials for the technical assessments were developed by the secretariat on the basis of existing experience with similar review processes, including the technical assessment of forest management reference levels under the Kyoto Protocol.²³ Nevertheless, as this was a new process, the tools and materials had to be redeveloped to ensure consistency with the guidance contained in the annex to decision 13/CP.19. The following tools were provided by the secretariat throughout the technical assessment process in 2014 and 2015, and were appreciated by the LULUCF experts: (1) checklist tables, (2) a technical assessment report template, (3) guidance and decision booklets and (4) a schedule for the process, in accordance with the guidance on timing set out in the

²² Decision 13/CP.19, annex, paragraph 9.

²³ See document FCCC/KP/AWG/2011/INF.2.

annex to decision 13/CP.19, with milestones for each stage. The schedule, in particular, proved to be a valuable tool for the experts as it allowed them to plan their work schedules around the assessment process and ensure timely completion. Both the secretariat and the participating LULUCF experts continue to compile experience from the assessment process, which will be reflected in improved tools and materials.

27. On the basis of their experience with the technical assessments, there was a consensus among the LULUCF experts that the assessment of proposed FRELs and/or FRLs is technically complex and labour intensive. In particular, the intensity of the process (e.g. multiple technical exchanges with the Party concerned) allowed each pair of LULUCF experts to deal with only one FREL and/or FRL submission per session. In addition, on the basis of experience, two actions were deemed helpful by the LULUCF experts during the centralized technical assessment sessions. The first was having at least one experienced LULUCF expert in each assessment team as part of building the experience and capacity of experts who are newer to the process, in order to prepare them to take the lead in future assessment sessions. The second was discussing the technical issues common to all or several of the submissions and sharing views on how each assessment team could address those common technical issues. The coordinated sharing of views on common technical issues was deemed essential to facilitating consistency across the technical assessment reports.

B. Availability and training of experts

28. The secretariat encountered several challenges in planning and coordinating the process of the technical assessment of FRELs and/or FRLs in the period 2014–2015 in relation to the availability of LULUCF experts. The challenges stem from the need to have a sufficient number of well-prepared experts available to support the technical assessment process for it to be successful and produce high-quality outcomes. They include: (1) an insufficient number of available experienced LULUCF experts to conduct the technical assessments and (2) the outdated and inaccurate list of LULUCF experts on the UNFCCC roster of experts, as many Parties have not updated their nominations list.

29. The coordination of the 2015 technical assessment session was hampered by the rate at which the invitation to participate in the assessment was declined. In total, the secretariat invited 17 LULUCF experts, 5 of whom declined the invitation. For the 2016 session, the secretariat inquired about the availability of 25 experts, of which 5 declined and 2 did not respond. In responding to the invitation to participate in the technical assessment process, many LULUCF experts explained that they had other competing priorities, and a number of developed country experts explained that they could not secure funding to cover their travel costs and subsistence allowance.

30. The fact that several parallel mandated review and analysis processes will take place in 2016 is likely to exacerbate the lack of available LULUCF experts for the technical assessment process. This issue was acknowledged in the conclusions and recommendations²⁴ of the 2nd meeting of lead reviewers for the review of biennial reports and national communications.²⁵ The mandated processes include the technical analysis of biennial update reports, the technical review of biennial reports, the review of greenhouse gas inventories and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol and the technical assessment of FRELs and/or FRLs, all of which will demand the participation of technical

²⁴ Available at http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/application/pdf/lr2_draft_conclusions_final_edited_final_11_march.pdf.

²⁵ The meeting took place on 5 and 6 March 2015 in Bonn.

experts from the same limited pool of the UNFCCC roster of experts. This challenge may critically affect the technical assessment process in the future because of the limited number of available LULUCF experts. The number of submissions for technical assessment is likely to increase in the near future as more developing country Parties move from building readiness to the implementation of the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of decision 1/CP.16.²⁶

31. As reflected in the conclusions by the lead reviewers referred to in paragraph 30 above, they reiterated the need to continue increasing the number of technical experts who can actively participate in the review and analysis processes with the support of their nominating Parties. This would ensure the completeness and balance of expertise in the assessment teams, in particular, by increasing the participation of experts from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties). The lead reviewers further encouraged Parties to continue nominating experts with a robust technical background to the UNFCCC roster of experts, to regularly update the roster of experts, as appropriate, and to facilitate experts' participation in the reviews by allocating the necessary time and resources for them in their annual workplans and by ensuring that they are fully available for the entire process.

32. As at the end of May 2015, the UNFCCC roster of experts contained 111 LULUCF experts, 27 from non-Annex I Parties and 84 from Annex I Parties. Since August 2014, some Parties have updated their part of the roster, nominated new experts and deleted obsolete records. However, the roster still contains a large volume of outdated data and the names of experts who are no longer active in the review and analysis processes. Factoring out the experts for which the information on the roster is outdated, the number of LULUCF experts that could be selected for participation in all of the review and analysis processes under the UNFCCC drops to only 99 experts.

33. One of the main reasons for the significant discrepancy between the number of nominated LULUCF experts on the roster and the number of active experts participating in reviews or technical assessments is that only a few Parties regularly update their list of nominated LULUCF experts. In fact, many LULUCF experts on the roster have moved to other positions, have retired, are no longer available for various reasons or are deceased. In addition, many of the available experts are prevented from devoting time to the annual review or technical assessment activities because of significant workloads and the increased demand for their participation in international climate change negotiations and related activities. This problem has been exacerbated in recent years, and seems unlikely to be resolved as climate change negotiations and activities continue to intensify.

34. In the light of the limited number of actively participating LULUCF experts, and following relevant decisions of the COP and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and conclusions of the subsidiary bodies, the secretariat, in April 2015, invited national focal points:

- (a) To nominate new experts who can actively participate in any of the review and analysis processes;
- (b) To regularly check and, where necessary, update the information on experts already nominated to the UNFCCC roster of experts;

²⁶ Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 73 states that such activities should be implemented in phases.

(c) To remove experts who are no longer available for cooperation with the secretariat from the roster.²⁷

C. Process-related challenges

35. Submissions of FRELs and/or FRLs are on a voluntary basis, which presents another challenge for the planning of the technical assessment process ahead of time, as the number of submissions that will actually be received for an annual technical assessment session can be difficult to predict. This presents difficulty in meeting the timeline requirement included in the annex to decision 13/CP.19, whereby the secretariat has only two weeks to find suitable available LULUCF experts for the annual session after the final number of submissions received has been confirmed. The secretariat has taken two measures to address this challenge:

(a) Parties were given early notification of the planned dates for the technical assessment sessions in 2015 and 2016, with a request to Parties to give the secretariat an early indication of their intention to submit a FREL and/or FRL for technical assessment. The responses from Parties provided the secretariat with an approximate number of submissions that are likely to be received for the planned technical assessment sessions;

(b) LULUCF experts were contacted informally about their availability several months before the submission deadline. This helped the secretariat to identify the approximate number of LULUCF experts who could potentially be available for the upcoming technical assessment session.

36. Decision 13/CP.19 does not provide guidance on two matters essential to the success and smooth running of the technical assessment process. First, the guidance does not specify whether the LULUCF experts participating in the technical assessments should have any mandatory qualifications or training for assessing information and data relating to LULUCF or REDD-plus. Second, there is no guidance on the treatment of confidential information provided for the purpose of the technical assessment. To address these two matters, the secretariat has taken steps based on practices for other review and analysis processes, such as offering training courses to experts and the non-disclosure of confidential information (see paras. 41 and 45 below).

37. The submission of FRELs and/or FRLs in a United Nations language other than English presents an additional challenge for the secretariat. In many cases, it is difficult to find available LULUCF experts with knowledge of a language other than English and fluency in English. Selecting a team to assess a submission presented in a United Nations language other than English is thus a major challenge. Moreover, the technical assessment of such submissions has some limitations because it is difficult to assess in depth the information submitted in a language other than English by the Party under technical assessment (see para. 44 below).

IV. Steps taken to address the challenges

38. This chapter summarizes the various steps being taken by the secretariat and offers suggestions for addressing the challenges identified in chapter III above with a view to improving the upcoming technical assessment sessions and ensuring their efficiency and

²⁷ See http://unfccc.int/files/ghg_data/ghg_data_unfccc/application/pdf/mandate_updating_of_the_unfccc_roster_of_experts.pdf.

efficacy. The suggestions below are additional to the steps already taken by the secretariat outlined in chapter III above.

A. Availability and training of experts

39. In 2015, the secretariat initiated the development of a new software platform for the UNFCCC roster of experts, with the objective of developing an integrated information management and communication solution that will allow for efficient management and assessment of all information relating to the nominated experts. The platform is expected to facilitate for the national focal points the nomination of experts for all review and analysis processes and the updating of the relevant information. It will also facilitate the selection of experts for various training processes, the tracking of information relating to nomination and training and the allocation of experts to the different review and analysis processes under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol. The new software platform is expected to be fully available by mid-2016.

40. It is critical for the continued efficiency and efficacy of the technical assessment process to have available a sufficient number of LULUCF experts nominated by Parties. At COP 19,²⁸ Parties, in particular developing country Parties, were invited to nominate technical experts with the relevant qualifications to the UNFCCC roster of experts. In addition, Parties were requested to confirm to the secretariat who their active LULUCF experts are, and who will be available to participate in the technical assessment of FRELs and/or FRLs.²⁹ As noted by the lead reviewers and referred to in paragraph 31 above, Parties are encouraged to facilitate the full participation of their nominated experts in the review and analysis processes under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol by allocating the necessary time and resources. In addition, having a larger pool of LULUCF experts to choose from will allow the secretariat to extend the experience of conducting technical assessments of FRELs and/or FRLs to more LULUCF experts and to harness the varying levels of experience and expertise among them, thus ensuring high-quality assessments.

41. The secretariat continues to strongly encourage and invite all available LULUCF experts listed on the UNFCCC roster of experts to take the relevant Convention and Kyoto Protocol training courses and examinations. Experts who have passed the examinations have demonstrated that they possess in-depth knowledge of the review of LULUCF greenhouse gas inventories and are well-prepared for the technical assessment process. Having teams comprising such trained experts greatly facilitates consistency in the technical assessment process and knowledge-sharing among experts. Hence, the secretariat will continue to prioritize the invitation of trained experts to conduct the FREL and/or FRL technical assessments. To enlarge the pool of such trained experts, the secretariat: (1) facilitates the access of experts to the relevant training programmes, (2) periodically invites Parties to nominate new experts for the training programmes and (3) provides relevant information and updates on the organization of the training courses on the UNFCCC website³⁰ and via other electronic means, such as the secretariat's newsletter.

B. Planning and organizational issues

42. To ensure well-planned and well-organized technical assessment sessions, the cooperation of Parties is essential for meeting the time frames set out in the early notification of the planned technical assessment sessions (see para. 35(a) above). As noted

²⁸ Decision 13/CP.19, paragraph 5.

²⁹ Decision 13/CP.19, annex, paragraph 8.

³⁰ <<http://unfccc.int/9251>>.

in the messages to Parties referred to in paragraph 10 above, the timely submission of FRELs and/or FRLs facilitates the organization and coordination of technical assessment sessions and ensures sufficient preparation time for the LULUCF experts, which is necessary for successful outcomes.

43. Parties have already been informed of the timelines for the technical assessment session in 2017 in a message from the secretariat to Parties dated 19 February 2015.³¹ Parties intending to submit FRELs and/or FRLs for the 2017 session are requested to provide an early notice to the secretariat by 31 October 2016 at the latest. The deadline for submissions is 2 January 2017. The centralized technical assessment session has been scheduled to take place from 13 to 18 March 2017 (see para. 14 above).

44. Parties are encouraged to accompany a submission in another United Nations language with an English translation.³² This allows flexibility in the selection of LULUCF experts who are able to assess in depth the data and information provided by the Party. An English translation also increases the visibility of the submission by widening its readership. Following established practices, the technical assessment reports prepared by the experts will continue to be published in English only (see para. 37 above).

45. Regarding the treatment of confidential information provided by a Party for the purpose of the technical assessment, the secretariat notes that the provisions contained in the annex to decision 20/CP.19, paragraphs 13 and 14, and relevant practices can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the technical assessment process. Hence, when some of the additional technical information provided by a Party requires confidentiality protection in accordance with its national legislation, the confidentiality of that information shall be protected by the LULUCF experts. The obligation of the LULUCF experts not to disclose confidential information shall continue after the termination of their services as LULUCF experts. Such obligation shall also apply to the technical assessment process. The LULUCF experts are required to sign an agreement for expert services at technical assessment sessions that sets forth the terms and conditions for the session, including protecting confidential information (see para. 36 above).

46. The secretariat continues to build and improve the technical assessment process by gathering experience with the organization of each session. With the support of and feedback from the participating LULUCF experts, the secretariat will continue to review, revise and upgrade, if appropriate, the tools and materials developed for the process. Working closely together with the assessment teams and taking into account the comments provided by the submitting Parties, the secretariat will continue to compile and edit the final technical assessment reports, ensuring that they are of high quality and delivered according to schedule.³³

47. As noted in paragraph 30 above, the number of FREL and/or FRL submissions is expected to increase in future years. The secretariat notes the organization and coordination of the technical assessment sessions has budgetary implications, and hence would like to remind Parties, in particular developed country Parties in a position to do so, to continue to support the technical assessment process in the coming years in order to ensure well-organized and high quality assessments.

³¹ Available at
<http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/notifications/application/pdf/message_to_parties_information_on_the_submission_of_proposed_forest_reference_emission_levels_and_or_forest_reference_levels.pdf>.

³² The translation does not need to be official.

³³ Decision 13/CP.19, annex, paragraph 18.

Annex

**Summary of the main features of the proposed forest reference
emission levels and/or forest reference levels**

	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Guyana</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
Technical assessment session	2014	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015
Proposed FREL/FRL (in t CO ₂ eq/yr)	1 106 027 617 (2006–2010) 907 959 466 (2011–2015)	51 599 618.7	43 418 126	46 301 251	–183 550 000 (2006–2010) –197 830 000 (2011–2015)	44 388 620
Type and duration of FREL/FRL	FREL for 1996–2005 and 1996–2010	FREL based on average historical emissions for 2000–2012	FREL = historical emissions for 2000–2008	Combined reference level approach	FRL based on historical emissions for 1992–2005 and 1997–2010	FREL = average annual CO ₂ emissions for 2000–2010
Adjustment for national circumstances	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
National/subnational	Subnational	Subnational	National	National	National, covering permanent reserved forests only	National
Activities included	Reducing emissions from deforestation	Reducing emissions from deforestation	Reducing emissions from deforestation	Reducing emissions from deforestation Reducing emissions from forest degradation	Sustainable management of forests	Reducing emissions from deforestation
Pools included	AB, BB and L	AB and BB	AB, BB, DW and L	AB, BB and DW	AB and BB	AB and BB
Gases included	CO ₂	CO ₂	CO ₂	CO ₂	CO ₂	CO ₂

Note: The information for this summary of main features was taken from the technical assessment reports for the Parties concerned.

Abbreviations: AB = above-ground biomass, BB = below-ground biomass, DW = dead wood, FREL = forest reference emission level, FRL = forest reference level, L = litter, t CO₂ eq/yr = tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.