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Reports on other activities

Annual report on the technical review of information reported under the Convention by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in their biennial reports and national communications

Technical review of information reported under the Convention by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in their biennial reports and national communications

Annual report by the secretariat

Summary

This report describes the activities relating to the technical review of information reported under the Convention in the second biennial reports submitted by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in 2016. It also provides information on the composition of expert review teams and on the training of reviewers.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 13/CP.20, requested the secretariat to prepare an annual report to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on the composition of expert review teams (ERTs) performing the review of national communications (NCs) and biennial reports (BRs), including on the selection of experts for the review teams and the lead reviewers (LRs) and on the action taken to ensure the application of the selection criteria¹ defined in 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”² (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC review guidelines).

2. The UNFCCC review guidelines indicate that the LRs shall collectively prepare an annual report to the SBSTA as part of the report referred to in paragraph 1 above, containing suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, BRs and NCs.³

B. Scope of the note

3. This report provides information on activities relating to the review of the second biennial reports (BR2s) conducted in 2016, covering the composition of the ERTs for the review of the BR2s, the conclusions of the 3rd meeting of LRs and training activities undertaken for BR and NC reviewers under the Convention.

4. An overview of the status of submission and review of the BR2s, as well as the status of the review reports, is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2016/INF.9.

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

5. The SBSTA will be invited to take note of the information contained in this report.

II. Technical review as part of the international assessment and review process

6. The international assessment and review (IAR) process for developed country Parties established by decision 2/CP.17 was launched in 2014. The IAR process aims to promote the comparability of efforts among all developed country Parties with regard to their quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets. IAR comprises two steps: technical review of the reports of each developed country Party, including its BR and NC, followed by multilateral assessment (MA) of the progress made towards achieving its economy-wide target.

¹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraphs 36 and 37.

² Decision 13/CP.20, annex.

³ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 44.

7. The technical review of the BR2s, which constitutes the first step in this round of the IAR process, was conducted by international ERTs from January to November 2016, with the output being the technical review reports (TRRs) of the BR2s. Reviews of all 43 submitted BR2s have been conducted, and reports have been published or are in the last stage of preparation.⁴ Those reports will serve as input to the MA process. Ukraine has not yet submitted its BR2.

8. The second step in the IAR process, MA,⁵ is conducted under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its working group sessions. MA for 24 Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) will be conducted at SBI 45 and for the remaining 19 Annex I Parties at SBI 46.

A. Technical review of the second biennial reports

9. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, technical review of the BR2s was conducted in the form of centralized reviews in Bonn, Germany. From 7 to 12 and from 14 to 19 March 2016 the BR2s of 24 Parties⁶ were reviewed, and from 30 May to 4 June and from 6 to 11 June 2016 the BR2s of the remaining 19 Parties⁷ were reviewed. Turkey submitted its sixth national communication (NC6) and its joint BR1 and BR2 in 2016; thus those reports were reviewed in conjunction.

10. The technical review includes a preparatory phase (composition of the ERTs and preparatory desk review by the experts), a centralized review and the finalization of the review reports. In total, the preparation for the review takes three to four months, the centralized review takes six days and the finalization of a TRR for each Party takes at least four months.

B. Composition of the expert review teams

11. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines,⁸ the ERTs shall be composed of experts selected on an ad hoc basis from the UNFCCC roster of experts (RoE), nominated by Parties and, as appropriate, by intergovernmental organizations. Participating experts shall have recognized competence in the area to be reviewed and shall neither be nationals of the Party under review nor be nominated or funded by that Party.

12. The ERTs may vary in size and composition, taking into account the national circumstances of the Party under review,⁹ and the review experts shall be selected in such a way that the collective skills and competences of the ERTs address all areas under review. For the review of BRs, competence in reviewing policies and measures (PaMs), GHG

⁴ See document FCCC/SBI/2016/INF.9 for the status of submission and review of the BR2s.

⁵ Further information on the MA process can be found at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/international_assessment_and_review/items/8451.php>.

⁶ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁷ Belarus, Canada, Cyprus, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and United States of America.

⁸ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraphs 26 and 28–30.

⁹ Decision 13/CP.30, annex, paragraph 26.

emission trends and projections, and the provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support, as well as an understanding of the quantitative economy-wide emission reduction target and the progress made towards achieving it, are required.

13. With regard to the division of tasks within an ERT, a team of 10–12 experts reviewed the BR2s of four Parties. Typically, one expert was assigned to review the information provided in each of the following parts of the BR: (1) PaMs; (2) projections, the economy-wide target and the progress made towards achieving it; and (3) the provision of support to developing country Parties.

14. Pursuant to the UNFCCC review guidelines, the secretariat shall select the members of an ERT with a view to achieving a balance between experts from Annex I Parties and Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) in the overall composition, and will make every effort to ensure geographical balance among the experts selected from non-Annex I Parties and among those selected from Annex I Parties.¹⁰

15. A total of 112 individuals from 65 Parties were involved in the review of the 43 BR2s and one NC6 conducted in 2016, of which 61 were from non-Annex I Parties and 51 from Annex I Parties. Among the experts from Annex I Parties, 17 were from Parties not included in Annex II to the Convention (non-Annex II Parties)¹¹ and 34 were from Parties included in Annex II to the Convention (Annex II Parties).

16. The number of reviews conducted by experts from the different regional groups is as follows: African States, 14 reviews; Asia-Pacific States, 29 reviews; Eastern European States, 21 reviews; Latin American and Caribbean States, 16 reviews; and Western European and other States,¹² 32 reviews (see the figure below). From a gender perspective, the ERTs were composed of 65 male and 47 female reviewers.

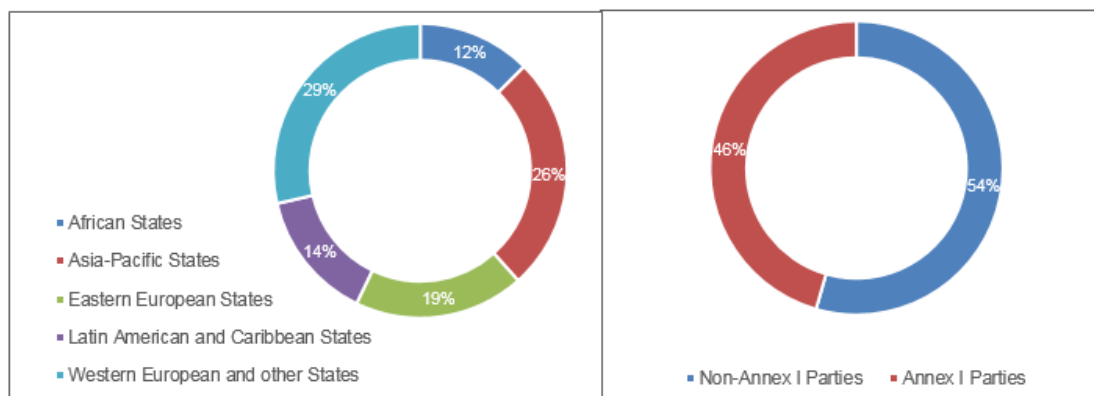
17. The number of reviews in which experts nominated by a Party participated varies. Experts from China and Thailand participated in six and five reviews, respectively. Belgium, Sudan and United States of America contributed by supporting the participation of their national experts in four reviews. Several Parties supported their experts' participation in three reviews, such as Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Denmark, France, Georgia, Japan, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Turkey. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the participation of experts in the reviews in 2016, by nominating Party.

¹⁰ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 37.

¹¹ Fourteen experts were from countries with economies in transition listed in Annex I to the Convention and three were from Turkey.

¹² Western European and other States include, among other Parties, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

Participation of experts in the reviews of the second biennial reports, by geographical distribution



**Table 1
Number of experts participating in the technical reviews of the second biennial reports in 2016, by nominating Party**

Argentina – 3	France – 3	Peru – 1
Armenia – 1	Georgia – 3	Republic of Korea – 1
Australia – 1	Germany – 1	Republic of Moldova – 3
Austria – 2	Greece – 1	Romania – 3
Belgium – 4	Hungary – 1	Russian Federation – 2
Benin – 1	India – 1	Saint Lucia – 1
Bosnia and Herzegovina – 1	Ireland – 1	San Marino – 1
Brazil – 3	Italy – 1	Slovenia – 1
Bulgaria – 1	Japan – 3	South Africa – 2
Burundi – 1	Kazakhstan – 1	Sri Lanka – 1
Canada – 3	Kenya – 1	Sudan – 4
Chile – 1	Latvia – 1	Sweden – 2
China – 6	Lithuania – 1	Switzerland – 1
Colombia – 1	Malawi – 2	Tajikistan – 2
Croatia – 1	Malaysia – 2	Thailand – 5
Cuba – 3	Mexico – 1	Turkey – 3
Czech Republic – 1	Mongolia – 1	Turkmenistan – 1
Denmark – 3	Netherlands – 1	Ukraine – 2
Ecuador – 1	New Zealand – 1	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – 1
Egypt – 1	Nigeria – 1	United Republic of Tanzania – 1
European Union – 1	Norway – 1	United States of America – 4
Fiji – 1	Paraguay – 1	

18. The coordination of the reviews and efforts to ensure geographical balance in the ERTs between experts from Annex I and non-Annex I Parties were hampered by the significant rate at which the invitations to participate in the reviews were declined. In total, the secretariat invited 177 experts, of which 64 declined (56.6 per cent). The main reasons

for this include: lack of interest in participating in the reviews; other priorities; lack of time; and lack of financial support provided to the experts by Annex I Parties, where the cost of participating in the reviews is usually covered by the nominating Party.

19. It is worth noting that the RoE, which includes experts nominated by Parties for the tasks to be performed under the Convention, is partially outdated and some nominated experts lack the relevant competences.

III. Third meeting of lead reviewers for biennial reports and national communications

20. LRs play a critical role in the BR and NC technical review process. They should ensure that the reviews in which they participate are performed by each ERT according to the relevant UNFCCC review guidelines and consistently across Parties, and must also ensure the quality and objectivity of the thorough and comprehensive technical examination of the reviews and provide for their continuity, comparability and timeliness.¹³

21. According to the UNFCCC review guidelines, LRs shall act as co-lead reviewers for the ERTs; one co-lead reviewer shall be from an Annex I Party and one from a non-Annex I Party.¹⁴ In all 11 centralized reviews conducted in 2016, the ERT composition criteria were met: 11 LRs were from Annex I Parties and 11 from non-Annex I Parties.

22. Also, following the UNFCCC review guidelines, only experts who have passed the training module “General and cross-cutting aspects of the review of NCs and BRs programme” are eligible to act as LRs. When inviting experts to act as LRs for the BR2 reviews, previous experience in the review processes under the Convention and/or its Kyoto Protocol and demonstrated professional expertise and leadership skills were taken into account by the secretariat.

23. In line with the UNFCCC review guidelines,¹⁵ the secretariat held the 3rd meeting of LRs for the review of BRs and NCs¹⁶ on 3 and 4 March 2016 in Bonn. A total of 40 experts from non-Annex I Parties and 42 experts from Annex I Parties were invited to the meeting. Of the 52 experts who attended the meeting, 25 were from non-Annex I Parties and 27 were from Annex I Parties.

24. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines and taking into account decision 23/CMP.1, the meeting addressed 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 of ensuring the consistency of the reviews across Parties. The LRs discussed the successes and challenges in the first round of IAR, improvements to be made to the review process and review tools, the role of LRs in the review of the BR2s and the review practice guidance.¹⁷

¹³ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 42.

¹⁴ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraphs 38 and 41.

¹⁵ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 51.

¹⁶ The conclusions of the meeting and other relevant information are available at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/items/9296.php>.

¹⁷ Available at <http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/technical_reviews/application/pdf/review_practice_guidance_2016.pdf>.

A. Successes and challenges in the first round of international assessment and review

25. The LRs noted the successful conclusion of the first cycle of the IAR process in 2015, which contributed to enhanced transparency of climate actions and facilitated trust-building among Parties. In total, 43 in-depth review reports of NC6s and one of a fifth national communication (Turkey) and 43 TRRs of first biennial reports (BR1s) were prepared by ERTs and published on the UNFCCC website by the deadline stipulated in the UNFCCC review guidelines.¹⁸ The LRs also noted the successful completion of MA for 43 developed country Parties in 2015, of which 17 were assessed during the working group session at SBI 41, 24 at SBI 42 and 2 at SBI 43, and the completion of all Parties' MA records by February 2016.

26. The LRs acknowledged that 150 experts from 74 Parties (71 experts from non-Annex I Parties and 79 experts from Annex I Parties) participated in the reviews in 2014 and 2015. Owing to the shortage of experts, their unavailability to participate and some last-minute cancellations, 11 of those 150 experts participated in two reviews and 2 experts participated in three reviews. The LRs also acknowledged the significant efforts made by the ERTs, the LRs and the secretariat in successfully completing the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2015 within shorter time frames than in previous review cycles.¹⁹

27. The LRs further acknowledged the challenges faced by the secretariat in planning and coordinating the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014 and 2015, which arose from: (1) an insufficient number of experts available to conduct the reviews, owing to other competing priorities or a lack of funding to cover the travel costs of their participation in cases where they are funded by the governments that nominated them; (2) the outdated information on experts held on the RoE, which is maintained by the national focal points; (3) the need to ensure the timeliness of the publication of the review reports for the smooth operation of the MA process; and (4) the need to improve the quality and consistency of the review reports owing to their increased visibility in the MA process, where findings from them are often referred to.

28. The LRs noted that approximately 57 per cent of the experts invited to participate in the NC6 and BR1 reviews declined. 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 completeness and balance of expertise in the ERTs. The LRs also reiterated their encouragement of Parties to continue nominating experts who are actively engaged in NC and BR preparation at the national level and to regularly update the RoE. They further reiterated their encouragement of Parties to facilitate experts' participation in reviews by allocating the necessary time and resources in their workplans and to ensure that experts are fully available for the entire review process.

29. The LRs considered that, for successful, high-quality, consistent and timely reviews, it is essential to strengthen the role of the LRs along with the dedication and commitment of all review experts. It is also essential to improve the workflow of the review process and user-friendliness of the review tools to enhance the timeliness of the reviews, as well as to

¹⁸ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 17, states that 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.

¹⁹ The deadline for previous reviews of NCs was defined in decision 22/CMP.1, which was two years after the submission due date.

provide substantive guidance by LRs on review approaches and practices for review experts. The LRs acknowledged the efforts made by the secretariat to address those challenges and the measures implemented for the review of the BR2s in 2016 with the support and input of the review experts related to the training of experts, the enhancement of the review approach, the review process and the improvement of the review tools.

B. Approach to the review of the second biennial reports and multilateral assessment

30. The LRs noted that the BR2s of 44 Annex I Parties would be reviewed in 2016 through centralized reviews²⁰ in four rounds, two in March (24 Parties in six centralized reviews) and two in June (19 Parties in five centralized reviews), allowing the TRRs of the BR2s to be published in time for Parties to undergo MA at the working group sessions at SBI 45 and 46. The LRs welcomed the approach taken by the secretariat of grouping Parties for the centralized reviews with the aim of balancing the workload and ensuring sufficient time for finishing the TRRs in time for the MA sessions. In accordance with that approach, the reviews for Annex II Parties with larger economies were combined with those for non-Annex II Parties with smaller economies. The LRs noted the delay in the submission by 15 Annex I Parties of the textual parts of their BR2s and/or BR common tabular format (CTF) tables by the due date of 1 January 2016, which hampered the effective organization of their reviews. They also noted that, as at 5 March 2016, submissions of BR2s were still missing or incomplete, which may lead to delays in the review cycle.

31. The LRs acknowledged that early planning and preparation for the review cycle facilitates the timeliness and effectiveness of the reviews. They welcomed the good practices implemented by the secretariat of: (1) sending invitations to participate to experts three to four months before the scheduled review week; and (2) initiating communication with ERTs by a review officer one and a half to two months before the review week, together with the timely provision of all relevant information to ERTs. To facilitate such early preparation, the LRs encouraged experts to allocate sufficient time for their planned involvement in the BR2 reviews in 2016.

32. The LRs acknowledged that the enlarged ERTs and streamlined review coordination approaches proposed by the secretariat will help to improve the efficiency of the review process and that the principle of ‘draft – peer review – advice’ will prove to be a helpful approach to be applied for the reviews. At the same time, all experts in an ERT will bear collective responsibility for the preparation of four TRRs in each centralized review, and each expert will focus primarily on the review of one topic in one BR. Accordingly, one ERT consisting of 10–12 experts will review the BRs of four Parties, with two subteams focusing on two Parties. Then, each expert will peer review the draft TRR of the subteam colleague and advise all the ERT members on the remaining TRRs, as needed. The LRs noted that, in order to maintain a sufficient number of experts in the pool and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and skills, it is also good practice to involve qualified new experts in the review process; therefore, the LRs acknowledged the efforts of the secretariat to include 10–20 per cent of new experts in the 2016 review cycle, while ensuring the geographical and regional balance of the ERTs and, at the same time, trying to improve gender balance.

²⁰ 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.

33. The LRs also acknowledged the challenges that the secretariat has been facing when composing the ERTs owing to the outdated data on experts nominated to the RoE, the lack of funding for experts from Annex I Parties for their participation in the BR2 reviews and the competing needs for experts for various UNFCCC review processes (i.e. the technical analysis of biennial update reports, the reviews of GHG inventories and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol, and the technical assessment of reference levels), which limit the availability of experts. The LRs noted that around 115 experts are required to conduct the centralized reviews of the BR2s in 2016. They reiterated their encouragement for Parties to allocate the necessary time and resources for their experts to participate in the reviews, to update and nominate new experts to the RoE, as appropriate, and to ensure that experts are fully available for the entire review process.

C. Improvements to the review process and review tools

34. The LRs expressed their appreciation for the steps taken by the secretariat to facilitate improvements in the timeliness, efficiency and consistency of the review process, including through formal training and examination of experts and the improvements in the review tools. The LRs noted the secretariat's efforts to streamline the review process, to front-load the preparations for the review and to provide further tools, such as the schedule with deliverables for the preparation of the review reports.

35. Acknowledging the efforts made by the secretariat towards early preparation for the review of the BR2s, the LRs agreed to support those efforts by recommending early review preparation by ERTs, including by encouraging the preparation of the draft report by the ERTs to the extent possible ahead of the review week and by making every effort to support ERTs in completing the first draft of the review report on the last day of the review week. The LRs welcomed the quality assurance and quality control (QC) approach taken by the secretariat as a tool to help ensure consistency across review reports. The LRs requested the secretariat to provide them with a simplified QC checklist for use and guidance during the review of the BR2s.

36. The LRs reiterated the effectiveness of the review tools used by the ERTs throughout the review process in 2014 and 2015, including the review report template, the checklist and the biennial report virtual team room (BR VTR) application. The LRs expressed their appreciation for the enhancements made to the review tools presented by the secretariat at the meeting. In particular, the improvements to the user-friendly format and the additional guidance included in the TRR template, the checklist and the BR VTR were highlighted by the LRs at the meeting. They noted the usefulness of the TRR template and the checklist for the preparation of high-quality and consistent review reports and recommended that experts continue to use them during the reviews.

37. The LRs noted that the use of the BR VTR is expected to help greatly in improving the efficiency, timeliness and transparency of the review process. They urged experts and LRs to widely promote and support the use of the BR VTR during the BR2 review cycle and in future reviews. The LRs provided suggestions for the improvement and further enhancement of the user-friendliness of the review tools, which the secretariat will consider during the next update of the tools. Among the suggested improvements, the LRs noted the need to broaden the range of usable web browsers and versions of word processors, the need for user-friendly options to work offline and easier login options for the BR VTR, together with the need for unique login credentials for accessing applications related to all UNFCCC review processes.

D. Role of lead reviewers in the review of the second biennial reports

38. The LRs reiterated 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 LRs to their teams. They expressed their appreciation for the secretariat's initiatives and incentives to strengthen the engagement of LRs and experts in the reviews, such as the recognition scheme for LRs, the periodic communication with national focal points and LRs and the newsletter on review activities.

39. The LRs reaffirmed their commitment to continuing to strengthen their role in leading ERTs in all phases of the review process by: regularly inviting the active engagement of ERTs throughout the review process; leading the early preparation by ERTs before the review week; holding a conference call between LRs before the review week; ensuring that questions are sent to a Party well before the review week; ensuring the clarity of the questions formulated by the ERT to the Party under review; leading the timely provision of all deliverables during and after the review week; aiming to send all questions to the Party before the Tuesday evening during the review week; starting the peer review of the sections of the review report on the Thursday during the review week; and overseeing the overall quality of the ERT's outputs throughout the review process guided by the simplified QC checklist provided by the secretariat.

40. The LRs agreed to promote the importance of a management plan prepared by them for the centralized review week featuring daily deliverables to ensure the preparation of complete draft review reports by the end of the week.

E. Review practice guidance

41. The LRs welcomed the draft "Review practice guidance for national communications and biennial reports of Annex I Parties" (hereinafter referred to as the RPG) and supporting background papers,²¹ prepared by the secretariat as input to the 3rd meeting of LRs on the main challenges faced and review practices employed in reviewing the BR1s and NC6s of Annex I Parties in 2014 and 2015. The papers were prepared in accordance with the recommendations provided by the LRs at their 2nd meeting, requesting the secretariat to prepare an updated discussion paper including the outcomes agreed, the presentations of the LRs and the outcome of the breakout group discussions at that meeting.

42. The LRs noted that the draft RPG and supporting background papers provide examples and describe common approaches used by the ERTs to address the main challenges faced by them during the BR1 and NC6 reviews. Those challenges include cross-cutting issues such as the treatment of recommendations and encouragements in review reports and the assessment of the completeness and transparency of the reported information, among others, as well as substantive issues such as progress made towards achieving the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets, the provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support, and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol.

43. The LRs exchanged views on their experiences in reviewing cross-cutting and substantive matters addressed in the NC6s and BR1s, and discussed common practice

²¹ Available at http://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/application/pdf/7_after_editing_clearance_dv_lg_ks_dv_mostly_partially.pdf.

approaches to addressing the challenges experienced in conducting the reviews in 2014 and 2015, taking into account the information contained in the draft RPG and supporting background papers. The LRs recommended that the secretariat revise the draft RPG by incorporating the outcomes discussed and agreed at the meeting,²² including the review approach for a new issue (see para. 47 below), and make it available for the BR2 review cycle. The LRs, taking into account the outcome of their discussions, agreed that the review approaches presented in the RPG 2016 should be applied by the ERTs, as appropriate, in future reviews.

44. The LRs noted that the RPG will facilitate the enhancement of the consistency of reviews and the quality of the review reports across Parties and shall be provided by the secretariat to ERTs reviewing the BR2s and those reviewing subsequent BRs and NCs.

45. In this context, the LRs welcomed the background paper “Analysis of further options to use the gradations “mostly” and “partially” in the assessment of completeness and transparency in BRs”.²³ They requested the secretariat to provide an update of the analysis carried out for the background paper on the basis of the results of the technical review of the BR2s and to present such analysis as input to the discussion at the next meeting of the LRs in the context of the update of the RPG.

46. For the preparation of the RPG 2017, the LRs requested the secretariat to collect and analyse further topics raised by the ERTs reviewing the BR2s and to present an updated RPG for consideration by the LRs at their subsequent meetings, taking into account the experiences and common practices applied by the ERTs in future reviews of BRs and NCs.

47. The LRs also requested the secretariat to revise the RPG by incorporating the following review approach for a new issue discussed and agreed at the 3rd LR meeting, namely that the ERTs should note in the TRRs when Parties report in BR CTF table 7(b) Annex I Parties as recipient countries.

48. The LRs further requested the secretariat to analyse the following topics raised and discussed at the meeting and to present them as input to the discussions at the next meeting of the LRs in the context of the update of the RPG:

(a) Approaches to the technical assessment by ERTs of the progress made towards achieving targets;

(b) Transparency issues experienced by ERTs when reviewing CTF table 7(a), specifically on the columns “Status”, “Financial instrument” and “Sector”;

(c) Interpretation by ERTs of the term “as appropriate” when reviewing information reported in accordance with paragraph 17(a) of the “UNFCCC biennial reporting guidelines for developed country Parties” (decision 2/CP.17, annex I) in relation to the status of different funds;

(d) The use for the TRR of the latest available GHG inventory submission from the Party and of the GHG inventory data reported in the BR CTF tables.

²² The outcomes agreed during the parallel group discussions at the LR meeting for the revision of the draft RPG are available at http://unfccc.int/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/items/9296.php.

²³ Available at http://unfccc.int/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/items/9296.php.

IV. Training of experts for the review of biennial reports and national communications

49. The COP, by decision 15/CP.20, requested the secretariat to develop and implement a formal training programme for review experts for the technical review of BRs and NCs with the aim of contributing to the rigour and consistency of the review process.

50. In response to that request, the secretariat prepared a training programme for the technical review of NCs and BRs of Annex I Parties, to be implemented in the period 2014–2016, which includes the following four modules:

- (a) General and cross-cutting aspects of the review of NCs and BRs;
- (b) Technical review of targets and PaMs, their effects and their contribution to achieving those targets;
- (c) Technical review of GHG emissions, emission trends, projections and the total effect of PaMs;
- (d) Technical review of the provision of financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support.

51. As requested at SBSTA 39,²⁴ training materials were made available by electronic means to all review experts participating in the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014, before the review, to assist with their preparation for the reviews. In total, 147 review experts²⁵ (73 from non-Annex I Parties and 74 from Annex I Parties) were given access to the training materials in 2014. The training modules were used and appreciated by the reviewers who participated in the 2014 review cycle of the NC6s and BR1s and were essential to ensure the consistency and comparability of the reviews.

52. In 2015, the secretariat completed the online implementation of the courses of the “Training programme for the review experts for the technical review of information reported in biennial reports and national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” in accordance with decision 15/CP.20, and in April 2015, it offered the programme to experts participating in the three in-country reviews. A total of 13 experts participated in the training programme, 11 of which passed one or more examinations conducted online. The secretariat has received very positive feedback on the materials.

53. In preparation for the review of the BR2s in 2016, in the second half of 2015, the secretariat invited 278 experts to participate in the training programme for review experts for the technical review of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties. Of the 278 invited experts, 177 agreed to participate in the training cycle (92 from non-Annex I Parties and 85 from Annex I Parties), which was launched on 31 August 2015, and were given access to one or more courses of the training programme. The online examinations of the courses held by the secretariat from 28 to 30 September 2015 were undertaken by 120 experts, and 115 experts passed one or more.

54. In late 2015, the secretariat invited 338 experts to participate in the training programme. A total of 134 experts registered for the training, for which the online courses were available from 4 to 31 January 2016 and the online examinations took place from 1 to

²⁴ FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 67.

²⁵ This number includes all the experts who accepted the invitation to participate in the reviews. A few of those experts subsequently declined the invitation.

3 February 2016. A total of 85 experts (40 from Annex I Parties and 45 from non-Annex I Parties) participated in the examinations, 76 of which passed one or more.

55. Since the launch of the online training courses at the beginning of 2015, 202 experts have passed one or more of the examinations for qualifying as experts for the review of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties. The number of experts involved in the training programme for the review of BRs and NCs by training session is presented in table 2.

Table 2
Number of experts involved in the training programme for the review of biennial reports and national communications, by training session

	<i>April 2015</i>	<i>September 2015</i>	<i>January–February 2016</i>
Trainees invited	13	278	338
Trainees registered for training	13	177	134
Trainees who took examinations	13	120	85
Trainees who passed one or more examinations	11	115	76

56. As a result of the training activities, the experts have improved and deepened their professional knowledge and enhanced their technical skills, enabling consistency to be achieved across reviews. The training materials helped the review experts to enhance their knowledge of substantive matters and approaches to the technical review process and to enhance the common understanding of the review steps, with a view to facilitating a consistent approach to reviews across Parties. The training facilitated the efficiency of the review process and shortened the time needed for each specific review task.

57. At their 3rd meeting, the LRs strongly reiterated their encouragement of experienced review experts, in particular LRs, to undertake the relevant online training courses.