

Conclusions from the 1st meeting of lead reviewers of biennial transparency reports

I. Introduction

1. The 1st meeting of lead reviewers (LRs) of biennial transparency reports (BTRs) was held in Bonn from 24 to 25 April 2024. In line with paragraph 178 of the modalities, procedures and guidelines for the transparency framework for action and support referred to in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement (MPGs),¹ a balanced participation between experts from developed and developing country Parties was achieved, with 91 experts participating in the meeting of the 128 experts invited. In addition, a representative of Azerbaijan, as the incoming Presidency of the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, attended the meeting as an observer.

2. In accordance with the MPGs, the meeting helped to facilitate the work of LRs in undertaking their mandated tasks of ensuring that the technical expert reviews (TERs) of BTRs are conducted in accordance with those modalities, procedures and guidelines, ensuring the quality and objectivity of the TERs, providing for the continuity and consistency of the reviews across Parties, providing suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the TERs, and providing technical advice to the members of technical expert review teams (TERTs).²

3. These conclusions will be included in the annual report on the technical expert review, to be prepared by the secretariat for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice at its sixty-first session (November 2024).³ Such reports will provide the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice with inputs for providing further guidance to the secretariat on organizing and coordinating the TERs.

II. Opening of the meeting

4. The LRs noted with appreciation the information provided by the secretariat in response to the requests made at their 2023 joint meeting,⁴ including additional background information to support discussions during the meeting and up-to-date information on related topics.

5. The LRs welcomed the secretariat's efforts in organizing in 2024 the 1st meeting of BTR LRs as a single meeting of all LRs, encompassing the participation of experienced technical review experts who served as LRs of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories and of biennial reports (BRs) and national communications (NCs), and co-leads of technical analyses of biennial update reports (BURs), who qualified as BTR LRs after passing the relevant examinations of the training courses on BTR reviews. The LRs noted with appreciation that the work at previous meetings of GHG inventory LRs, and BR and NC LRs both ensured and reinforced overtime a smooth transition from the reviews and technical analyses under the existing measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) arrangements under the Convention to the BTR reviews under the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement (ETF), and has helped to strengthen the LRs' sense of ownership, commitment and leadership in relation to the review process.

6. The LRs noted the presentation made by the Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee (PAICC) on the interlinkages between the work of the PAICC and the ETF, and emphasized that the information provided allowed for a better understanding of the respective mandates and roles of TERTs and the PAICC in facilitating implementation of the Paris Agreement. The LRs requested the secretariat to organize future interaction with the PAICC.

¹ Decision 18/CMA.1, annex.

² As per decision 18/CMA.1, annex, paras. 183–186.

³ As per decision 18/CMA.1, para. 6(b).

⁴ The conclusions and recommendations from the meeting are available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/627213>.

III. Review guidance for biennial transparency report reviews

7. The LRs took note of the background materials prepared by the secretariat,⁵ which provided useful information on review practices and approaches under the existing MRV arrangements with regard to the review and technical analysis processes. The LRs noted that the practices and approaches used for BTR reviews will build on those established under and experience from the existing MRV arrangements while taking into account the flexibility for developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities.⁶

8. The LRs requested the secretariat to prepare by the second half of 2024 the first version of the Review Guidance for BTR reviews (RG), which should be user-friendly, concise, fully consistent with the MPGs and built on the review practice outlined in the GHG inventory review handbook, the BR and NC review practice guidance, the BUR technical analysis practice guidance and the compilation of conclusions and recommendations from the meetings of GHG inventory LRs included in the materials referred to in paragraph 7 above. The LRs also requested the secretariat to include in the RG to be used in the first cycle of BTR reviews, the guidance discussed and agreed at this meeting on paying attention to the respective national capabilities and circumstances of developing country Parties (see para. 21 below).

9. In addition, the LRs requested the secretariat to compile information on and analyse any issues raised by the TERTs during the BTR reviews, including with regard to the voluntary review of adaptation information, with a view to discussing them at future meetings of BTR LRs, noting that the review practices and approaches used for BTR reviews are expected to evolve as review experience is gained.

IV. Addressing confidentiality in biennial transparency report reviews

10. The LRs noted that Parties may designate information provided to the TERT during a BTR review as confidential and should provide the basis for protecting such information, and that maintaining confidentiality of such information is essential for the integrity of the review process.⁷

11. The LRs noted the existing code of practice for the treatment of confidential information in the technical review of GHG inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention,⁸ noting that the procedures established in the code have successfully served in that review process for nearly two decades.

12. The LRs considered the information provided in the background paper “Procedures for handling of confidential information submitted in biennial transparency reports under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement” prepared by the secretariat, which is based on existing procedures for handling confidential information under the Convention, and welcomed the secretariat’s plans to incorporate the presented code of practice and service agreements for experts and consultants contained therein into the TER process for BTRs under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement, and make them publicly available.

⁵ “Analysis of the review-related issues raised by the ERTs during the review of BR5s and NC8s with a view to inform the review practice under the ETF, as appropriate”, “Assessment of the consistency of assessments and improvements in reporting across the review of BR5s and NC8s, as well as how reporting and review practices under the existing MRV arrangements have evolved through the BR review cycles and how these review practices can inform the reporting and technical expert review processes under the ETF”, “Review Handbook: transition to the reviews under the enhanced transparency framework”, and “Compilation of conclusions and recommendations from the meetings of GHG inventory LRs relevant for future technical expert review teams”.

⁶ In accordance with Article 13, para. 2, of the Paris Agreement and as reflected in the MPGs.

⁷ Decision 18/CMA.1, annex, para. 164.

⁸ Decision 12/CP.9, annex II.

V. Applying the guiding principles of the modalities, procedures and guidelines in reviewing the consistency with the modalities, procedures and guidelines of the submitted information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving nationally determined contributions

13. The LRs welcomed the background paper prepared by the secretariat and its accompanying presentation on a proposed approach to applying the guiding principles of the MPGs⁹ in reviewing the consistency with the MPGs of the information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted in BTRs.

14. The LRs noted that the guiding principles of the MPGs of completeness and transparency were widely applied in the review of BRs and NCs and in the technical analysis of BURs, and that the application of these guiding principles in the review of BTRs should build on this experience. The LRs noted that transparency, accuracy, completeness, consistency and comparability (TACCC) principles are well defined in the context of reporting and reviewing national GHG inventories.

15. The LRs noted that there is no experience in assessing the application of the TACCC principles in the review of information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving NDCs. The LRs recognized a need to explore how the guiding principles of the MPGs are to be applied in reviewing the consistency with the MPGs of such information.

16. The LRs requested the secretariat to collect from the first cycle of BTR reviews relevant examples of and experience in the application of the TACCC principles when reviewing the information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving NDCs. The LRs requested the secretariat to organize a working group of LRs to assess the information collected, together with relevant information from the background paper mentioned in paragraph 13 above, with a view to proposing a review guidance on this matter, to be considered at the next meeting of LRs.

VI. Paying attention to the respective national capabilities and circumstances of developing country Parties in biennial transparency report reviews

17. The LRs expressed appreciation for the technical paper prepared by the secretariat and its accompanying presentation providing the information and analysis on how the TERTs can pay particular attention during the BTR reviews to the respective national capabilities and circumstances of developing country Parties.¹⁰ The LRs acknowledged the importance of building on the experiences and lessons learned from the technical analyses of BURs under the international consultation and analysis process under the Convention.

18. The LRs noted that the BTR reviews serve as an important opportunity for building capacities, including by identifying areas of improvement, such as data collection, for enhancing capabilities and improving reporting over time.

19. Noting that the BTR reviews will be guided by the MPGs, the LRs recognized the different starting points of developing country Parties in the reporting and review process and highlighted the importance of avoiding placing undue burden on developing country Parties during the review process.

20. The LRs noted that to minimise the risk of undue burden on the Parties during the review process it will be important for the TERT to have a good understanding of the national capabilities and circumstances of developing country Parties as reported in their BTRs and how these may impact the quality of the Party's reporting. The LRs agreed that this assessment should be conducted prior to the review week and that LRs should guide the

⁹ Decision 18/CMA.1, annex, para. 3.

¹⁰ In accordance with decision 18/CMA.1, annex, para. 147.

TERT in operationalizing paragraph 147 of the MPGs by prioritizing issues and recommendations.

21. The LRs requested the secretariat to incorporate the guidance in paragraphs 18–20 above into the RG referred to in paragraph 8 above, which will be applied during the first review cycle of the BTRs.

VII. Simplified review procedures for national inventory reports

22. The LRs continued discussing the procedures for the simplified review of national inventory reports. They welcomed the information presented by the secretariat on the approaches for assessing time series consistency and use of higher-tier methods for key categories. The LRs also welcomed the draft review report template presented by the secretariat.

23. The LRs noted that further improvements could be made by simulating the use of thresholds for identifying outliers by sector and/or category and/or simulating the use of statistical methods for the assessment of time series consistency, and by considering refined rules for the assessment of the use of higher-tier methods. The LRs requested the secretariat to continue the efforts to deliver the above-mentioned improvements, enhance the review report template and identify simplified review process methods for assessing the qualitative information contained in national inventory documents in consultation with a group of LRs and report the results at the next meeting of LRs.

24. The LRs requested the secretariat to operationalize the simplified reviews for the 2025 review cycle, taking into account the outcomes indicated in paragraph 23 above, and report on the results at the next meeting of LRs.

25. The LRs requested the secretariat to develop the supporting review tools, as possible and subject to availability of resources, and to identify options for further elaborating the approaches of simplified reviews with a view to enhancing their usefulness for the BTR reviews and the coverage of the provisions of the MPGs after 2025.

VIII. Other matters

26. The LRs expressed appreciation to the secretariat for providing updated information on the training courses for BTR reviews.

27. The LRs took note of the need for developed country Parties, and other Parties in a position to do so, to continue supporting the review process, in particular by providing supplementary financial support for the BTR review process. In addition, the LRs noted the need for Parties to support their national experts participating in BTR reviews throughout the entire process, taking into account the specific requirements involved (e.g. the time required to prepare for the review and the time needed during and after the review week to develop and finalize the technical expert review report), and to nominate experts with appropriate experience and sectoral technical expertise to the UNFCCC roster of experts and regularly update such nominations.
