

**Eleventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, Bonn, Germany, 10–12 March 2020**

Reference document for item 5(a)

**Expert groups on slow onset events and non-economic losses**

**(i) Revision of the terms of reference**

*About this document*

This document provides information on the mandate to revise the terms of reference for the two expert groups on slow onset events and non-economic losses. It offers key considerations to facilitate the Executive Committee's action in response to the mandate.

The Executive Committee will be invited to revise the terms of reference for the expert groups on slow onset events and non-economic losses.

**A. Mandate**

1. In the context of the second review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) in 2019,<sup>1</sup> the Parties stressed the importance of enhancing the work on slow onset events (SOEs) and non-economic losses (NELs) associated with climate change impacts and requested the Executive Committee (Excom) to revise the terms of reference (TOR) for and launch the expert groups on SOEs and NELs, taking into account the broad range of issues covered by the relevant strategic workstreams, which may need to be addressed using a sequential approach.<sup>2</sup>

**B. Relevant work to date**

2. COP 20 decided that the Excom may establish expert groups, subcommittees, panels, thematic advisory groups or task-focused ad hoc working groups to help execute the work of the Excom in guiding the implementation of the WIM, as appropriate, in an advisory role, and that report to the Excom.<sup>3</sup>

3. Excom 7 (March 2018) adopted standard TOR<sup>4</sup> for its expert groups and designated members of the Excom to serve on expert groups that had already been established.<sup>5</sup> At the same meeting, the Excom reaffirmed that the respective expert groups would guide further steps on the strategic workstreams on SOEs and NELs. Table 1 below contains the activities of the Excom's workplan concerning the establishment of expert groups under this agenda item.

**Table 1: Relevant activities of the five-year rolling workplan to this item.**

*Strategic workstream (a): enhanced cooperation and facilitation in relation to slow onset events*

*Strategic workstream (b): enhanced cooperation and facilitation in relation to non-economic losses*

Activity 2: Establish a technical expert group/panel to improve the knowledge base on and develop recommendations for approaches to addressing slow onset events, with a view to converting this knowledge base into products that support efforts at the regional and national levels.

Activity 1: Establish an expert group to develop inputs and recommendations to enhance data on and knowledge of reducing the risk of and addressing NELs, including how to factor these into the planning and elaboration of measures to address loss and

<sup>1</sup> Decision 4/CP.22, paragraph 2.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 2/CMA.2, paragraphs 24 and 25.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 2/CP.20, paragraph 8.

<sup>4</sup> <https://unfccc.int/node/66088>.

<sup>5</sup> FCCC/SB/2018/1, annex II.

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damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

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### C. Progress of work and the current status of the expert group on SOEs

4. As set out in a footnote to decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 25, SOEs include the following: sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and desertification.

5. A summary of the work undertaken based on the initial two-year workplan and five-year rolling workplan of the Excom, which are related to advancing the work on SOEs, is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: Relevant work on SOEs to date**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Activities</i>
2015– present	Development of an online <a href="#">database</a> containing relevant information on over 160 organizations working on SOEs and their scope of work. The online database is updated on a rolling basis as additional relevant information becomes available.  (Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 3, activity a)
2016	Promotion of SOEs topics to be considered in the agenda of the SBSTA Research Dialogue, through a <a href="#">letter</a> to the Chair of the SBSTA.  Two posters displayed at the 8th Research Dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work towards slow onset events <a href="#">poster</a></li><li>• Work towards catalyzing further action <a href="#">poster</a></li></ul> (Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 3, activity b)
2016	<a href="#">Invitation</a> to relevant organizations and experts to collaborate with the Excom to facilitate access to information, including through collaborative channels or databases, and technologies to track the impacts of, and enable approaches to address, loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including SOEs.  (Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 3, activity c)
2016– 2017	Questionnaire to acquire feedback from the national focal points of non-Annex I Parties on the systems and processes currently in place for conducting and coordinating analyses of climate risk and loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, taking into account extreme events and SOEs. The summary of the information provided was annexed to the Excom’s 2017 report (FCCC/SB/2017/1).  (Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 5, activities a and b)
2017	Organization of a <a href="#">side event</a> 'Breaking new ground: Risk financing for slow onset events' at COP 23, to facilitate insightful thinking on features of financial instruments as well as innovative ways for collaboration and partnerships to enhance action and support for addressing the risks of SOEs.  The side event was preceded by a three-day awareness-raising photo campaign ‘What are you doing to address the risks of slow onset events?’  (A follow-up action to gaps identified in the 2016 SCF Forum on Financial instruments that address the risks of loss and damage)
2018	Preparation of a <a href="#">scoping paper</a> that provides a review of the scope of work being undertaken on SOEs as reported by partners in the SOEs database, with selected examples of efforts to address SOEs by geographic regions.  (Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 3, activities a and d)

6. At Excom 8 (September 2018), the members elected to serve on the expert group on SOEs (SOEs champion members) presented a plan to develop a special issue of the journal *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, by engaging the research and scientific community, as a way to enhance the knowledge base and highlight potential approaches to assessing and addressing SOEs at the local, national and regional level. The Excom endorsed the plan by the SOEs champion members.

7. During 2019, the work progressed to determine the approach, process and an overall timeline for this journal special issue. The Excom engaged five experts to serve as guest editors on a voluntary basis through a call for expressions of interest. In cooperation with Elsevier, the Excom issued a call for abstracts on SOEs (e.g. emerging understanding about SOEs and climate change impacts), to be considered for the issue.

8. The two calls for expressions of interest were promoted on the UNFCCC website and disseminated through members' network, WIM roster of experts, and other relevant communication channels such as the UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme partners network.

9. As of the beginning of March 2020, invitations have been issued to authors of selected abstracts to submit full papers for consideration by the end of May 2020, to be followed by a peer-review process of the manuscripts. Final publication is planned for June 2021.

10. The expert group on SOEs, as described in the TOR adopted at Excom 7, has not been fully operationalized to date. Accordingly, the remainder of the activities listed in the Excom's strategic workstream (a) have not been implemented yet.

#### D. Progress of work and the current status of the expert group on NELs

11. NELs encompass a broad range of matters that are not economic and not commonly traded in markets, impacting individuals (e.g. life, health, human mobility), society (e.g. territory, cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, societal/cultural identity) and environment (e.g. biodiversity, ecosystem services).

12. A timeline of NELs activities implemented in the context of the Excom's initial two-year workplan are provided in Table 3.

**Table 3: Relevant work on NELs to date**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Activities</i>
2016	<p>Organization of a <a href="#">side event</a> 'Shining the light on non-economic losses: Challenges, risks and lessons learned for addressing them' during the 44th session of the subsidiary bodies (SB).</p> <p>The side event was preceded by a three-day awareness-raising photo campaign 'What do non-economic losses mean to you?'</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 4, activity a)</p>
2016	<p>Establishment of the first expert group on NELs at <a href="#">Excom 3</a>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Initial two-year workplan, Action Area 4, activity b)</p>

13. Under its initial two-year workplan,<sup>6</sup> the Excom established the first expert group on NELs, by TOR adopted at Excom 3 (April 2016). The purpose of the expert group was to develop inputs and recommendations to enhance data on and knowledge of reducing the risk of and addressing non-economic losses, including how to factor these into the planning and elaboration of measures to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

14. The expert group ceased operations upon the completion of its mandate. The inputs and recommendations developed by the expert group were considered in the development of workstream (b) of the current workplan of the Excom.

15. The NELs champion members have repeatedly expressed difficulties in selecting external experts to join a NELs expert group, as well as in determining the appropriate operating modality for the group. At the past three Excom meetings, the NELs champion members shared the following challenges in finalizing the list of potential experts to be engaged:

(a) The number of registered experts through the WIM roster of experts, who possess relevant NELs expertise is limited.

(b) Lack of financial support for experts from developing countries who may be willing to work but would be unable to participate in in-person meetings.

16. Against this backdrop, NELs champion members suggested, at Excom 10, to consider the possibility of reaching out to organizations that have relevant expertise to nominate a representative for the expert

<sup>6</sup> FCCC/SB/2014/4, annex II.

group in addition to a modality of the Excom to engage with individual experts directly. The former modality would also help the expert group to acquire the institutional support, resources and capacity available through these organizations. However, the current standard TOR does not have a provision to facilitate requesting organizations to nominate their experts for Excom expert groups. The NELs champion members also raised the possibility of structuring the expert group as a ‘steering committee’.

17. In addition, the NELs champion members suggested:

(a) To narrow down the focused thematic areas of NELs, for example, based on three clusters (environment, society and individuals) to identify relevant organizations/experts.

(b) To tailor the standard TOR adopted at Excom 7 to a specific TOR for the expert group on NELs.

18. These challenges and suggestions can serve as the basis for the Excom’s discussion on ways in which the current TOR can be revised to suit the specific needs, modalities and processes for moving forward the work of these two expert groups.

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