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Reports on other activities

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

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

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This report describes the activities relating to the technical review of information reported under the Convention in the first biennial reports and sixth national communications submitted by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in 2014 and 2015. It also provides information on the composition of expert review teams, on the outcomes of the second meeting of the lead reviewers of biennial reports and national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention and on the training of experts for the review of biennial reports and national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention.

¹ Exact dates within the sessional period are subject to confirmation.

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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 the selection of experts for the review teams and the lead reviewers (LRs), and on the actions taken to ensure the application of the selection criteria² 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”³ (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 a part of the report mentioned in paragraph 1 above, containing suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews in the light of the objectives of the review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, BRs and NCs.⁴

3. The COP, by decision 15/CP.20, requested the secretariat to include in this report information on the training programme, in particular, on the examination procedures and the selection of trainees.

B. Scope of the note

4. The review cycle for the first biennial reports (BR1s) and sixth national communications (NC6s) of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) started in early 2014 and has been completed in 2015. This report provides information on the activities related to the reviews of BR1s and NC6s conducted in 2014–2015, including the composition of the ERTs for these reviews, and is based on the experiences gathered during the review cycle. It also includes the suggestions made by the LRs at their second meeting (March 2015) on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews of BRs and NCs and information on the training activities for BR and NC reviewers conducted in 2015.

5. An overview of the status of submissions and reviews of BR1s and NC6s, as well as the status of the preparation of the review reports, is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2015/INF.9.

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 report.

² Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraphs 36 and 37.

³ Annex to decision 13/CP.20.

⁴ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 44.

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

7. The new international assessment and review (IAR) process for developed country Parties established by decision 2/CP.17 was launched in early 2014, following the receipt of BR1 and NC6 submissions from Annex I Parties. The IAR process aims to review the progress made in achieving emission reductions and assess the provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support to developing country Parties, and to assess emissions and removals related to quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets in a rigorous, robust and transparent manner, with a view to promoting comparability and building confidence. The IAR comprises two steps: a technical review of the BR and NC of each developed country Party and a multilateral assessment (MA) of the progress made towards achieving its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target.

8. The technical review, which constitutes the first step of the IAR process, was conducted by the international ERTs in 2014–2015, with the output being the in-depth review reports of the NC6s and the technical review reports of the BR1s. These reports serve as an input to the MA process.

9. The second step of the IAR process, the MA,⁵ is conducted under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its working group session. The first round of the MA was conducted at SBI 41 and SBI 42, and involved the assessment of the performance of 41 developed country Parties. The assessment is based on the BR1s and NC6s, as well as on their review reports, and is focused on how the developed country Parties are progressing towards achieving their economy-wide emission reduction targets. The assessment of the performance of the two remaining developed country Parties is anticipated at SBI 43, in December 2015.

A. First technical review cycle of the biennial reports and national communications

10. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, in the years when NCs and BRs are submitted together, both the NC and the BR shall be subject to an in-country review. A Party's BR shall be reviewed in conjunction with its NC in the years in which both the BR and the NC are submitted.⁶ The submission due date for NC6s and BR1s alike was 1 January 2014; therefore, the reviews of each Party's BR1 and NC6 were conducted in conjunction with each other.

11. In 2014, reviews of 41 Parties were conducted in accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines included in the annex to decision 23/CP.19, while the reviews of 3 Parties⁷ in 2015 were conducted in accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines included in the annex to decision 13/CP.20. The contents of these two sets of the UNFCCC review guidelines for NCs and BRs are identical, and were subsequently included as separate chapters in the UNFCCC review guidelines adopted by decision 13/CP.20.

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 Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraphs 18 and 114.

⁷ The in-country review of one Party comprised only the review of its fifth national communication (NC5) because it had not yet submitted its BR1.

12. In accordance with the procedure indicated in paragraph 10 above, between 24 February and 8 November 2014, in-country reviews of NCs and BRs for 31 Annex I Parties were conducted. The in-country reviews of the submissions from the remaining three Parties were conducted between 20 and 25 April 2015.⁸

13. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, the secretariat may consider other UNFCCC review processes when coordinating BR and NC reviews, with a view to addressing the need to improve the cost-effectiveness of the review process and national circumstances.⁹ Thus, centralized reviews were organized for the BR1s and NC6s of 10 Parties¹⁰ with total GHG emissions of less than 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (excluding land use, land-use change and forestry) in accordance with their most recent GHG inventory submission, with the exception of Parties included in Annex II to the Convention (Annex II Parties), for which the secretariat organized in-country reviews.¹¹ The centralized reviews took place from 5 to 10 May 2014 in Bonn, Germany.

B. Composition of the expert review teams

14. The ERTs shall be composed of experts selected on an ad hoc basis from the UNFCCC roster of experts, 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

15. The ERTs may vary in size and composition, taking into account the national circumstances of the Party under review.¹³ In-country reviews of BR1s and NC6s were conducted by ERTs consisting of four experts with relevant experience. The reviews of four Parties with large economies (European Union, Germany, Japan and United States of America) and Turkey were conducted by ERTs consisting of five experts.

16. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, the review experts shall be selected in such a way that the collective skills and competences of the ERTs address all areas, including: the national circumstances relevant to GHG emissions and removals; GHG inventory information; policies and measures (PaMs); projections and the total effect of PaMs; vulnerability assessment, climate change impacts and adaptation measures; financial resources; transfer of technology; research and systematic observation; and education, training and public awareness.¹⁴ For the reviews of BRs, competence in reviewing the quantitative economy-wide emission reduction target and the progress made towards achieving this target is required.

17. With regard to the division of tasks within the ERT, typically, an expert is assigned to the review of information provided on each of the following sections: PaMs; projections and the total effect of PaMs and the target and progress made towards achieving the economy-wide target; and the provision of support to developing country Parties. Another expert is typically assigned to the review of information provided on: the national

⁸ See document FCCC/SBI/2015/INF.9.

⁹ Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 23.

¹⁰ Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Slovakia and Slovenia.

¹¹ Decision 9/CMP.9, paragraph 3.

¹² Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraphs 26 and 28–30.

¹³ Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 26.

¹⁴ Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 77(c).

circumstances; vulnerability assessment, climate change impacts and adaptation measures; research and systematic observation; and education, training and public awareness.

18. Pursuant to the UNFCCC review guidelines, the secretariat shall select the members of the 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 of the ERTs, 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.¹⁵

19. In 2014–2015, 150¹⁶ individual experts from 74 Parties carried out reviews of BR and NC submissions from 43 Annex I Parties and Kazakhstan.¹⁷ Of these 150 experts, 71 (47 per cent) were from non-Annex I Parties and 79 (53 per cent) were from Annex I Parties. Among the experts from Annex I Parties, 28 were from Annex I Parties with economies in transition and 50 were from Annex II Parties.

20. From a geographical balance perspective, the number of experts from the different regional groups is as follows: 15 experts (10 per cent) from African States; 33 experts (22 per cent) from Asia-Pacific States; 35 experts (23 per cent) from Eastern European States; 18 experts (12 per cent) from Latin American and Caribbean States; and 49 experts (33 per cent) from Western European and other States.¹⁸ From a gender perspective, out of 150 reviewers, 94 were male (63 per cent) and 56 were female (37 per cent).

21. The number of reviews in which the experts nominated by a Party participated varies. Experts from China and Belgium have significantly contributed to the reviews by each participating in eight reviews. Experts from Austria and Denmark participated in five reviews. Several Parties' experts participated in four reviews, such as Canada, Germany, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Thailand and the United States of America, while experts from Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, France, Ghana, India, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, South Africa, Sudan, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland each participated in three reviews. The table below provides a breakdown of the participation of experts by nominating Party in the 2014–2015 reviews of BRs and NCs.

¹⁵ Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 37.

¹⁶ In total, during the 2014–2015 reviews of BRs and NCs, 165 individual review activities by 150 individual experts were conducted. Owing to the shortage of experts or their unavailability to participate in a review, out of these 150 experts, 11 experts participated in two reviews and 2 experts participated in three reviews.

¹⁷ Kazakhstan is an Annex I Party for the purposes of the Kyoto Protocol, but remains a non-Annex I Party for the purposes of the Convention. At its twelfth session, the COP requested Kazakhstan to submit its NC and annual GHG inventories in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 2(b), and Article 12 of the Convention, using the UNFCCC reporting guidelines relevant to Annex I Parties.

¹⁸ The Western European and other States group includes, among other Parties, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

Number of reviews in which experts from the nominating Party participated in the 2014–2015 review cycle

Albania – 1	Cuba – 2	Lithuania – 3	South Africa – 3
Algeria – 1	Czech Republic – 2	Mexico – 2	Sri Lanka – 1
Antigua and Barbuda – 1	Denmark – 5	Mongolia – 3	Sudan – 3
Argentina – 2	Ecuador – 1	Netherlands – 2	Swaziland – 1
Armenia – 1	Egypt – 2	New Zealand – 3	Sweden – 1
Australia – 1	European Union – 1	Norway – 3	Thailand – 4
Austria – 5	Fiji – 2	Pakistan – 1	Tonga – 1
Bahamas – 1	Finland – 1	Philippines – 1	Trinidad and Tobago – 1
Belarus – 1	France – 3	Poland – 3	Turkey – 1
Belgium – 8	Georgia – 1	Portugal – 1	Turkmenistan – 1
Bhutan – 1	Germany – 4	Republic of Korea – 1	Ukraine – 3
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) – 1	Ghana – 3	Republic of Moldova – 4	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – 3
Bosnia and Herzegovina – 1	Greece – 2	Romania – 4	United Republic of Tanzania – 1
Brazil – 3	Hungary – 2	Russian Federation – 3	Uruguay – 1
Bulgaria – 3	India – 3	San Marino – 1	United States of America – 4
Canada – 4	Indonesia – 1	Saudi Arabia – 2	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) – 1
Chile – 3	Ireland – 1	Singapore – 2	
China – 8	Japan – 2	Slovakia – 3	
Croatia – 2	Kenya – 2	Slovenia – 2	
	Latvia – 2		

22. The coordination of the reviews was hampered by the significant rate at which the invitation to participate in the reviews was declined. In total, the secretariat invited 380 experts; of these, 215 experts declined the invitation (56.6 per cent of all invitations). The main reasons included a lack of interest in participating in the reviews, other priorities, a lack of time, or a lack of financial support provided to the experts from those Annex I Parties for which the travel cost is not covered by the secretariat.

23. It is worth noting that the UNFCCC roster of experts, 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. Owing to the shortage of experts or their unavailability to participate in a review, 11 experts participated in two reviews and 2 experts participated in three reviews.

III. Second meeting of lead reviewers of biennial reports and national communications

24. The 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 should also ensure the quality and objectivity of the thorough and comprehensive technical examination of the reviews and provide for the continuity, comparability and timeliness of the reviews.¹⁹

¹⁹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 42.

25. According to the established practice, the experts who had previous experience in the review processes under the Convention and/or its Kyoto Protocol and have the recognized relevant competences and/or demonstrated leadership skills were invited to act as LRs for the BR1 and NC6 reviews in 2014–2015. According to the UNFCCC review guidelines, the 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.²⁰ In the 2014–2015 reviews, 67 experts acted as LRs. Out of this number, 5 experts served as LRs in two reviews, 34 LRs were from Annex I Parties and 33 were from non-Annex I Parties.

26. In line with the UNFCCC review guidelines,²¹ and taking into account decision 23/CMP.1, the secretariat organized the second meeting for the LRs of BRs and NCs on 5 and 6 March 2015 in Bonn. A total of 49 experts from non-Annex I Parties and 50 experts from Annex I Parties were invited to the meeting. Out of the 63 experts who attended, 37 were from non-Annex I Parties and 26 were from Annex I Parties.

27. The meeting addressed both procedural and technical issues relating to the review of BRs and NCs from Annex I Parties with a view to facilitating the work of the LRs in ensuring quality, efficiency and consistency in the reviews across all Parties. The conclusions and recommendations made by the LRs at their second meeting are presented in paragraphs 28–49 below.

A. Reviews of second biennial reports²²

28. The LRs noted the successful launch of the IAR process in 2014. The BR1s and NC6s of 41 Parties were reviewed in 2014.²³ In total, 82 in-depth review reports of NC6s and technical review reports (TRRs) of BR1s had been prepared by ERTs and published on the UNFCCC website by 1 March 2015, within the 15-month completion deadline for reviews as stipulated in the UNFCCC review guidelines.²⁴ In total, 152 experts from 72 Parties (70 experts from non-Annex I Parties and 82 experts from Annex I Parties) participated in the reviews in 2014. The LRs acknowledged the significant efforts made by the ERTs, the LRs and the secretariat in successfully completing the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014.

29. The LRs noted the overall approach to the reviews of the second biennial reports (BR2s) in 2016, as presented by the secretariat during the meeting, following the UNFCCC review guidelines, which require that in the years when the BRs are not reported in conjunction with the NCs, the BRs shall be subject to a centralized review.²⁵ The centralized reviews of the BR2s of all 44 Annex I Parties are planned to take place in the

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

²¹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 51.

²² The text in paragraphs 28–49 is reproduced as agreed at the second meeting of lead reviewers of biennial reports and national communications.

²³ The reviews of the submissions from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Turkey were scheduled for 2015 because Belarus informed on its intention to resubmit its NC6 in early 2015, and the textual parts of the BR1s of Kazakhstan and Turkey, as well as Turkey's common tabular format (CTF) tables, were not submitted in time for the 2014 review cycle. Belarus resubmitted its NC6 in February 2015. Turkey did not submit its NC6, BR1 and CTF tables, however it did submit its NC5 in December 2013.

²⁴ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 17, states that "The ERTs shall make every effort to complete the individual review of BRs within 15 months of the due date of their submission for each Annex I Party".

²⁵ 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".

period March–June 2016. This will allow the TRRs of the BR2s to be published in time for Parties to undergo the MA at the working session of the SBI at the end of 2016 and in mid-2017.

30. The LRs acknowledged the challenges faced by the secretariat in planning and coordinating the reviews of the NC6s and BR1s in 2014. The LRs noted that these challenges arose from: (a) an insufficient number of well-prepared experts to conduct the reviews, due to other competing priorities or a lack of funding to cover the travel costs of their participation in cases where experts are funded by the Governments that nominated them; and (b) the outdated and inaccurate list of experts on the UNFCCC roster of experts which is not necessarily updated by the national focal points. The LRs noted that the web page of the roster of experts should include the fields of expertise of the nominated expert and could include an indication of how often that expert had supported a review process. The LRs also acknowledged the new challenge arising from the mandated parallel review and analysis processes that will take place in 2016 (i.e. the technical analysis of biennial update reports, reviews of GHG inventories and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol, and the technical assessment of reference levels) and which will demand the participation of the same limited number of technical experts. The LRs noted that over 130 experts are required to conduct the centralized reviews of the BR2s in 2016.

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

B. Multilateral assessment

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

C. Training of review experts

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

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

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

D. Improvements in the review process

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

37. The LRs appreciated the review tools used by the ERTs throughout the review process in 2014, including the checklists, the review report templates and the biennial report virtual team room (BR VTR) application. The LRs took note of the improvements undertaken in the biennial report common tabular format (BR CTF) application that would be used by Annex I Parties for the submission of the BR2s, as well as possibilities to enhance the use of the BR synthesis and analysis tool and the BR data interface in preparing for the reviews. The LRs also appreciated the enhancements presented by the secretariat during the meeting, in particular on the user-friendliness of the review report templates for the BR2s, and the functionality and user-friendliness of the BR VTR. The LRs further noted the usefulness of the checklists and the technical review report template in the preparation of high-quality review reports and encouraged experts to actively use them during the reviews.

E. The role of lead reviewers in improving the review process

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

39. The LRs agreed to maintain a strong role in leading ERTs in all phases of the review process, particularly in: enhancing the engagement of the ERT throughout the entire review process; promoting the use of appropriate tools by the ERT; supporting the preparation of the ERT before the review week (communicating with and providing guidance to the ERT on substantive matters, including questions to the Party under review on completeness and transparency); promoting the timely delivery by the ERT of agreed outputs during and after

the review week; and overseeing the overall quality of the ERT's outputs throughout the review process. The LRs also agreed that all members of the ERT should strive to be actively engaged and involved in all stages of the review process.

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

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

F. Addressing challenges in reviewing biennial reports and national communications

42. The LRs welcomed the discussion paper²⁶ prepared by the secretariat on the main challenges and practice experienced in reviewing the NC6s and BR1s of Annex I Parties in 2014. With the aim of facilitating the discussions at the LRs meeting, the discussion paper provided examples of the main challenges faced by ERTs during the review and the approaches taken by ERTs to address these challenges, namely on cross-cutting matters such as the assessment of completeness and transparency of the reported information, and on substantive matters such as PaMs, progress towards the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets, provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support, and supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol. The LRs exchanged information on their experiences in reviewing substantive matters in the NC6s and BR1s and discussed approaches applied to address the challenges experienced in the 2014 reviews in the context of the UNFCCC review guidelines.

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

44. The LRs also noted that one of the most common challenges was related to the review of information provided on the progress towards the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets. These challenges were identified in relation to the way in which the information has to be reported by Parties in their BRs and common tabular format (CTF) tables, the fact that information on this matter has been reported for the first time

²⁶ *First biennial reports and sixth national communications: review challenges and practice.*

Available at

<http://unfccc.int/focus/mitigation/the_multilateral_assessment_process_under_the_iar/items/8809.php>.

using the CTF tables, and also on how to reflect Parties' progress in a meaningful and consistent way in the review reports.

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

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

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

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

49. The LRs agreed that the review approaches discussed during the meeting (including those referred to in paras. 43, 44, 46, 47 and 48 above) are useful and could be applied in future reviews. The LRs recommended that the secretariat update the discussion paper based on the agreed outcomes of the LRs meeting, the presentations of the LRs and the outcome of the breakout groups. The LRs will discuss the updated discussion paper at their next LRs meeting. The LRs noted that the discussion paper did not cover review approaches in relation to all reporting requirements, which are equally as important as those highlighted in the discussion paper.

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

50. Past experience shows that the training of experts for the review of GHG inventories and supplementary information submitted under the Kyoto Protocol has greatly contributed to the rigour and consistency of the review process. This, in turn, has contributed to a significant increase in the quality of the reported information, improving its transparency, accuracy, completeness, consistency and comparability. As a result of the training activities, experts have improved and updated their professional knowledge and technical skills, enabling consistency to be achieved across the reviews. Experts have also gained a clearer understanding of the review tasks as a result of the training activities, which has helped to improve the efficiency of the review process and shorten the time needed for each specific review task.

51. With the aim of addressing such needs, 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 and recognized its importance.

52. In response to this 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 support, technology transfer and capacity-building.

53. In developing the training programme, the secretariat took into account that the UNFCCC review guidelines state that experts participating in technical reviews shall have recognized competence in the areas of NCs and BRs to be reviewed.

54. The UNFCCC review guidelines also state that the training to be provided to the experts and the subsequent assessment after the completion of the training²⁷ and/or any other means needed to ensure the necessary competence of the experts for their participation in ERTs shall be designed and operationalized by the secretariat in accordance with the relevant decisions of the COP.²⁸

55. The UNFCCC review guidelines further state that the secretariat shall design and implement training activities for review experts, including LRs, and the subsequent assessment of the experts' qualifications, under the guidance of the SBSTA.²⁹

56. As requested at SBSTA 39,³⁰ the training materials were made available by electronic means to all review experts participating in the review of NC6s and BR1s in 2014, before the review, for assistance with their preparation for the reviews. In total,

²⁷ Experts who opt not to participate in the training have to successfully undergo a similar assessment to qualify for participation in ERTs.

²⁸ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 29.

²⁹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paragraph 52.

³⁰ FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 67.

147 review experts³¹ (73 from non-Annex I Parties and 74 from Annex I Parties) have been given access to the training materials. The training modules were used and appreciated by the reviewers who participated in the 2014 review cycle of NC6s and BR1s and were essential to ensure the consistency and comparability of the reviews. The secretariat has received very positive feedback on these materials.

57. In 2015, the secretariat completed the online implementation of the courses of the training programme, and in April 2015, it offered the programme to review experts participating in the three in-country reviews indicated in paragraph 12 above. A total of 13 experts participated in the training programme; of these, 12 experts passed one or more examinations conducted online. During this first training cycle, no problems were encountered, and the feedback that the secretariat received was very positive.

58. In preparation for the reviews of BR2s in 2016, the secretariat has 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 these 278 invited experts, 177 have 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. It is expected that these review experts will undertake the online examinations of the courses in the period from 28 to 30 September 2015.

³¹ This number includes all the experts who accepted the invitation to participate in the reviews. A few of these experts subsequently declined the invitation.