



United Nations

FCCC/TRR.1/BLR



Framework Convention on
Climate Change

Distr.: General
17 August 2015

English only

Report of the technical review of the first biennial report of Belarus

Developed country Parties are requested, in accordance with decision 2/CP.17, to submit their first biennial report to the secretariat by 1 January 2014. This report presents the results of the technical review of the first biennial report of Belarus conducted by an expert review team in accordance with 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”.

GE.15-13897(E)



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I. Introduction and summary

A. Introduction

1. For Belarus, the Convention entered into force on 9 August 2000. Under the Convention, Belarus made a commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 8 per cent by 2020 below the base year level. The base year is 1990 for carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) and 1995 for hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride (known collectively as the fluorinated gases (F-gases)).
2. This report covers the in-country technical review of the first biennial report (BR1)¹ of Belarus, coordinated by the secretariat, in accordance with 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” (decision 13/CP.20).
3. The review took place from 20 to 25 April 2015 in Minsk, Belarus, and was conducted by the following team of nominated experts from the UNFCCC roster of experts: Ms. Kema Kasturiarachchi (Sri Lanka), Mr. Eduardas Kazakevicius (Lithuania), Ms. Batimaa Punsalmaa (Mongolia) and Mr. Koen Smekens (Belgium). Ms. Punsalmaa and Mr. Smekens were the lead reviewers. The review was coordinated by Ms. Barbara Muik (secretariat).
4. During the review, the expert review team (ERT) reviewed each section of the BR1.
5. In accordance with decision 13/CP.20, a draft version of this report was communicated to the Government of Belarus, which did not provide comments.

B. Summary

6. The ERT conducted a technical review of the information reported in the BR1 of Belarus according to the “UNFCCC biennial reporting guidelines for developed country Parties” (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs).
7. During the review, Belarus provided further relevant information on the progress made towards the achievement of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target, including on mitigation actions and their effects as well as on projections and changes to the methodology.

1. Completeness and transparency of reporting

8. Gaps and issues related to the reported information identified by the ERT are presented in table 1 below.

2. Timeliness

9. The BR1 was submitted on 14 January 2014, after the deadline of 1 January 2014 mandated by decision 2/CP.17. However, the common tabular format (CTF) tables were submitted before the deadline, on 30 December 2013. The ERT noted the delayed submission of the BR1 textual report.

¹ The biennial report submission comprises the text of the report and the common tabular format (CTF) tables. Both the text and the CTF tables have been subject to the technical review.

3. Adherence to the reporting guidelines

10. The information reported by Belarus in its BR1 and CTF tables is mostly complete and mostly transparent (see table 1). However, the ERT noted also that the BR1 is only a two-page document (without cover page) and lacks clear descriptions of the required elements. The ERT concludes that the BR1 submission of Belarus was not in adherence to the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs as per decision 2/CP.17. The ERT recommends that Belarus submit its next biennial report (BR) (and CTF tables) on time, as well as in accordance with the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs.

Table 1
Summary of completeness and transparency issues of reported information in the first biennial report of Belarus^a

<i>Sections of the biennial report</i>	<i>Completeness</i>	<i>Transparency</i>	<i>Reference to paragraphs</i>
Greenhouse gas emissions and trends	Mostly complete	Transparent	13
Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target	Complete	Partially transparent	16
Progress in achievement of targets	Partially complete	Partially transparent	18, 23, 24, 26, 29
Projections	Mostly complete	Mostly transparent	32–34
Provision of support to developing country Parties ^b	NA	NA	

Abbreviation: NA = not applicable.

^a A list of recommendations pertaining to the completeness and transparency issues identified in this table is included in chapter III below (conclusions).

^b Belarus is not a Party included in Annex II to the Convention and is therefore not obliged to adopt measures and fulfil obligations as defined in Article 4, paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, of the Convention.

II. Technical review of the reported information

A. All greenhouse gas emissions and removals related to the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

11. Belarus has provided a summary of information on GHG emission trends for the period 1990–2011 in its BR1 and CTF table 1. This information is fully consistent with the 2013 national GHG inventory submission. The ERT noted that Belarus resubmitted its sixth national communication (NC6) a year later than it submitted its BR1, and included therein updated information corresponding to its 2014 national GHG inventory submission. During the review, the ERT took note of the 2014 annual submission. The relevant information therein is reflected in this report.

12. Total GHG emissions² excluding emissions and removals from land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) decreased by 35.8 per cent between 1990 and 2012, whereas total GHG emissions including net emissions or removals from LULUCF decreased by 42.3 per cent over the same period. Further information on the review of

² In this report, the term “total GHG emissions” refers to the aggregated national GHG emissions expressed in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent excluding land use, land-use change and forestry, unless otherwise specified.

emissions and emission trends is provided in chapter II.A of the report of the technical review of the sixth national communication (IDR/NC6).

13. The ERT noted that Belarus has not reported the mandatory information on the provision of summary information on the national inventory arrangements, in accordance with decision 23/CP.19 and on the changes to these national inventory arrangements since its last national communication (NC) or biennial report. This summary information was made available during the review and was consistent with the information provided in the NC6. The ERT recommends that Belarus includes this – already available – information as well as information on any changes to the national inventory arrangements in its next BR.

B. Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

14. In its BR1 and CTF table 2, Belarus reported a description of its target, including associated conditions and assumptions. The Party provided in its BR1 a textual description of its relevant targets, including the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target. The target for Belarus is set at a reduction in emissions of 8 per cent by 2020 compared with the 1990 level.

15. However, the ERT noted that in CTF table 2, Belarus has included the quantified emission reduction commitment under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (2013–2020), which amounts to 88 expressed as percentage of the base year level. During the review, the Party clarified the target and confirmed that the textual description of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target in its BR1 is correct; that is, –8 per cent compared with the base year. In its target, Belarus includes all GHGs, including nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃), with 1990 as the base year for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O and 1995 as the base year for the F-gases and NF₃. The global warming potential values of the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are used. All sectors except LULUCF are included; Belarus decided to exclude the emissions from the LULUCF sector in both the base year and the target year.

16. During the review, because Belarus did not provide information about the use of market-based mechanism (i.e. CTF table 2(e) was blank), the ERT requested further information about this from the Party. In response to this request, Belarus stated that it does not intend to make use of such mechanisms as a buyer. The ERT recommends that Belarus report more transparent information on the description and assumptions related to the target and state explicitly in its next BR the status of the intended use of market-based mechanisms.

C. Progress made towards the achievement of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

17. In its BR1 and CTF tables 3 and 4, Belarus reported information on its mitigation actions implemented and planned since its fifth national communication (NC5) to achieve its target.

18. However, the ERT noted that the BR1 does not include complete information required by the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs regarding progress towards the target, and also noted that CTF table 4 is not filled in. During the review, the ERT explained to the Party that CTF table 4 is to be filled in regardless of the Party's decision to exclude LULUCF or to abstain from using market-based mechanisms in order to reach the target, and provided guidance to the Party on how to do it. The ERT recommends that

Belarus follow the guidance provided during the review and report completely on progress towards its target by providing at least a filled-in CTF table 4 in its next BR.

19. The ERT reviewed all available information in the BR1 and provided during the review, and provided its assessment of progress made by Belarus towards achieving the target. In 2011 total GHG emissions excluding LULUCF amounted to 87,499.56 kt carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂ eq), which is 37.1 per cent below the base year level of 139,154.23 kt CO₂ eq. In 2012, total emissions amounted to 89,283.33 kt CO₂ eq, or 35.8 per cent below the target level.

20. Given the emissions target set by Belarus of an 8 per cent reduction compared with the base year, current emissions are well below the target. In addition, projected trends of GHG emissions (see para. 36 below) indicate that Belarus's emissions level is likely to remain considerably below its target level in 2020.

1. Mitigation actions and their effects

21. Belarus has provided in its BR1 limited information on its package of mitigation actions introduced to achieve its target. There was no textual description of the mitigation actions in the BR1 itself, only a reference to CTF table 3. The information on mitigation actions in the table was organized by sector and by gas and it included most of the mandatory information, such as sectors affected, objectives, types of mitigation actions, implementation start dates and implementing entities. A detailed review of the reported information is provided in chapter II.B of the IDR/NC6.

22. However, the ERT noted that CTF table 3 does not contain any descriptions of mitigation actions and only 3 of the 16 measures listed have estimates of cumulative mitigation impacts over different periods, which are not described in the BR1. During the review, Belarus provided a revised CTF table 3 which included mitigation impacts for other mitigation actions. In cases where the mitigation impact was not estimated, this was clearly indicated in the revised table.

23. In order to ensure the completeness of its reporting, the ERT recommends that Belarus include all mandatory information on mitigation actions in its next BR, including brief descriptions and annual mitigation impacts for relevant years. If the mitigation impact for a particular policy is not reported, Belarus should provide an explanation why it did not report this information.

24. The ERT noted that CTF table 3 lists 16 mitigation actions whereas 35 policies and measures (PaMs) are reported in the NC6. During the review, Belarus explained that the difference between these two documents resulted from the resubmission of the revised NC6 one year after the original submission, and the revised communication included additional PaMs. However, the ERT noted that the differences are not solely due to the resubmission of the NC6, but also result from a lack of coordination among the institutions responsible for the PaMs sections in the NC6 and BR1. In order to ensure adherence to the reporting requirements, the ERT encourages Belarus to ensure consistency between information submitted in NCs and BRs for the years they are both submitted.

25. The ERT noted that potential synergies and overlaps of the effects of individual mitigation actions are not analysed in the BR1 and no details are provided on how the effects of actions are monitored over time. During the review, the Party provided additional information on the mitigation impacts of other PaMs and explained the potential overlaps between mitigation actions and their combinations.

26. To improve the transparency the ERT recommends that Belarus group PaMs, if there is a clear linkage or overlap, for example by combining longer-term sector strategies

and shorter-term implementation programmes and by providing, if applicable, quantitative estimates of the impacts for combinations of mitigation actions accompanied by a brief description of methodologies, in its next BR. The ERT also suggests that including a chart explaining the overall design, hierarchy and linkages among the various mitigation actions would strengthen the transparency of the reported information.

27. During the review, the Party stated that the assessment of climate impacts is not compulsory in Belarus, therefore some ministries and other institutions do not always provide estimates of mitigation impacts for their sector policies even if they do influence GHG emission trends. The achievement indicators used by some ministries for monitoring the policy implementation are not directly related to GHG emissions thus making it difficult for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to properly assess and report the achieved or expected mitigation impacts of these PaMs. In order to ensure the transparency and completeness of the BRs, the ERT encourages Belarus to improve its reporting of the way in which progress with mitigation actions is monitored and evaluated over time. This information should include a description of how cooperation between various national ministries and institutions has been strengthened in order to assess the ex ante and ex post climate impact of all mitigation actions reported in the biennial reports.

28. Based on the reported results of projections performed by Belarus, existing PaMs and their estimated impacts are sufficient to achieve the target. The key policies delivering the highest mitigation impact are: the State programme on energy system development until 2016, the National Programme for the Development of Local and Renewable Energy Sources for 2011–2015 and the State energy saving programme for 2010–2015, including programmes promoting energy efficiency in buildings. Table 2 provides a concise summary of the key mitigation actions implemented by Belarus to achieve its target.

Table 2
Summary of information on mitigation actions reported by Belarus

<i>Sectors affected</i>	<i>List of key policies and measures</i>	<i>Estimate of average annual mitigation impact (kt CO₂ eq)</i>
<i>Policy framework and cross-sectoral measures</i>		
	State programme on mitigation actions in 2013–2020	1 400 ^a
	National Programme for Socio-economic Development (2011–2015)	NE
	Strategy on technological potential development until 2015	440
Energy	Strategy on energy potential development in 2011–2015 and until 2020	NE
Energy supply	State programme on energy system development until 2016	400
Renewable energy	National Programme for the Development of Local and Renewable Energy Sources for 2011–2015	678
	State programme on construction of energy sources on local fuels in 2011–2015	114
Energy efficiency	State energy saving programme for 2010–2015	340
Residential and commercial sectors	Comprehensive programme on construction and reconstruction of energy-efficient buildings	175

<i>Sectors affected</i>	<i>List of key policies and measures</i>	<i>Estimate of average annual mitigation impact (kt CO₂ eq)</i>
	for 2009–2010 and until 2020	
Transport	State Programme for the Development of Road Transport for 2011–2015	NE
	State Programme for the Development of Railway Transport for 2011–2015	26
Industrial sectors	Programme of the development of the industrial complex for the period up to 2020	NE
Agriculture	State Programme for sustainable rural development for 2011–2015	NE
Forestry	State forestry development programme for 2011–2015	175
Waste management	Programme of development of housing and communal services until 2015	230 ^b

Note: The estimates of avoided greenhouse gas emissions given for some measures are average annual avoided emissions in carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent. These were calculated by the expert review team by dividing the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions avoided during the implementation phase of that policy or measure (relative to a scenario in which this policy or measure is not implemented), as provided by Belarus during the review, by the number of years over which the policy or measure was implemented. This estimation approach does not take into account the effects of the policy or measure in the years after the end date of implementation.

Abbreviation: NE = not estimated.

^a This figure comprises impacts of some of the sector policies and measures listed below.

^b This programme and the figure includes energy efficiency measures for the building sector and greenhouse gas emission reduction measures in the waste sector.

29. The ERT noted that in its BR1 Belarus provides very limited information on its domestic institutional arrangements, stating only that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is the authority responsible for the implementation of the “Party’s commitments under the Convention”. However, the Party does not provide information on changes in its domestic institutional arrangements as required by the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs. During the review, Belarus informed the ERT about the abolishment of the State Commission on Climate Change on 7 December 2014, after the submission of the BR1. In order to ensure completeness of reporting the ERT recommends that Belarus report on any changes in domestic institutional arrangements in its next BR.

30. The ERT noted that in its BR1 Belarus does not provide information on the assessment of the economic and social consequences of response measures. During the review, Belarus explained that the implementation of the Party’s obligations under the Convention has mainly positive impacts on the environment, the economy and social development. The governmental policy is to protect the environment and create favourable living conditions for future generations and thus Belarus believes that its climate policies do not have any adverse impacts on other Parties. The ERT encourages Belarus, to the extent possible, to provide the required information in its next BR.

2. Estimates of emission reductions and removals and the use of units from the market-based mechanisms and land use, land-use change and forestry

31. Belarus did not report in its BR1 and CTF table 4 on its plans to use market-based mechanisms under the Convention and other mechanisms as CTF table 4 was not filled in by the Party (see para. 18 above). During the review, the Party explained that it did not acquire any units from market-based mechanisms in the reported years, nor does it intend to do so for future years. In addition, consistent with its target definition, no contribution from LULUCF is being considered for the progress towards the target. Table 3 provides a summary of Belarus’s progress towards its target.

**Table 3
Summary information on the use of units from market-based mechanisms and land use, land-use change and forestry as part of the reporting on the progress made towards achievement of the target by Belarus**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Emissions excluding LULUCF (kt CO₂ eq)</i>	<i>LULUCF^a emissions/removals (kt CO₂ eq)</i>	<i>Emissions including LULUCF (kt CO₂ eq)</i>	<i>Use of units from the market-based mechanisms (kt CO₂ eq)</i>
Base year	139 154.08	NA	NA	NA
1990 ^b	139 151.23	NA	NA	NA
2010	89 425.90	NA	NA	NA
2011	87 499.56	NA	NA	NA
2012	89 283.33	NA	NA	NA

Abbreviations: LULUCF = land use, land-use change and forestry, NA = not applicable.

^a Belarus’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8 per cent by 2020 compared with the base year does not include emissions/removals from LULUCF.

^b Emissions and removals for 1990 are reported if a base year other than 1990 is used.

3. Projections

32. Belarus has provided in its BR1 and CTF tables 5 and 6 information on its projections for 2020. A detailed review of the reported information is provided in chapter II.C of the IDR/NC6, but it has to be noted that the Party resubmitted its NC6 after having submitted its BR1 and projections were slightly updated in the resubmitted NC6. The ERT noted that Belarus only reported a ‘with measures scenario’ in its BR1, while a ‘without measures’ scenario and a ‘with additional measures’ scenario were also reported in its NC6. Although not required, no explanation was provided on why these scenarios were not reported in the BR1. The ERT recommends that Belarus, in its next submission, report on the same scenarios in its NC and BR, or at least provide an explanation why they are excluded in the BR.

33. The ERT also noted that Belarus did not report on emission projections for transport separately, although this is required by the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs and in the CTF tables. The ERT noted that these projections are available from the national projection system and recommends that Belarus report on transport emission projections separately from those from energy in its next BR, as the Party did do in its resubmitted NC6.

34. The ERT further noted that Belarus did not provide projection data for 2030. During the review, Belarus’s experts explained that work to estimate 2030 emissions is under way

as part of the ongoing national effort in 2015 to establish the intended nationally determined contribution. The ERT recommends that Belarus report on its 2030 projections according to the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs in its next submission, taking into account national circumstances.

35. In its BR1, Belarus did provide updated information on the projections compared with its NC5. However, the changes in the methodologies used for the preparation of projections since the NC5 were not provided. As a result of the later resubmission of the NC6, the projections data in the BR1 and the NC6 are not consistent. The ERT considered it inappropriate to analyse the information submitted in the BR1 against the information reported in the latest NC6, as this latter document was more recent than the former. The ERT encourages Belarus to report, in its next BR, on changes since its most recent NC in the methodologies used for the preparation of projections.

36. The ERT noted the information reported by Belarus in the NC6 on projected emission trends by 2020. According to the reported information, the projected emission trends are 26.5 per cent below the base year by 2020, while the target is 8 per cent below the base year.

III. Conclusions

37. The ERT conducted a technical review of the information reported in the BR1 and CTF tables of Belarus in accordance with the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs. The ERT concludes that the BR1 and CTF tables provide a general overview of information on emissions and removals related to the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target, and a description of the target and progress made by Belarus to achieve its target. During the review, Belarus provided additional information on its target definition, on the effect of PaMs and on its intended use of LULUCF and market-based mechanisms.

38. Belarus's emissions and removals related to the target were estimated for 2012 to be 35.8 per cent below its 1990 level excluding LULUCF. The decrease in emissions was driven by a significant change to the Belarusian economy in the early 1990s following the beginning of the transition towards a market economy, the growing share of the services sector in the economy, changes in the fuel mix and the effect of energy efficiency measures. Current emissions show an increasing trend caused by an economic recovery and continued reliance on fossil fuels for primary energy supply. Despite continuous economic growth since 1995, the Party's emissions are well below 1990 levels and GHG emissions per gross domestic product continued to decrease.

39. Emissions and removals from the LULUCF sector are not included in the quantified economy-wide emission reduction target. Also, the use of market-based mechanisms is not foreseen by Belarus, at least not with Belarus as an acquiring Party.

40. Belarus is committed to achieving its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target of an 8 per cent reduction in emissions by 2020 compared with the 1990 level. Current emissions are well below this target and, according to the projections, emissions are likely to remain so.

41. According to the reported information, the projected emissions are 26.5 per cent below 1990 by 2020, while the target is 8 per cent below 1990 levels. Only a 'with measures' scenario is reported in the CTF tables and Belarus only reported projections up to 2020. No information on 2030 projections was provided during the review.

42. Belarus has reported on its adopted mitigation actions in achieving its emission reduction commitments. The largest mitigation impacts are expected from PaMs implemented in the energy supply and demand sectors, focusing on the modernization of

electricity generation capacity and promoting the use of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency. These measures primarily aim at the reduction of energy intensity and the improvement of energy security of the economy of Belarus, with the decline in GHG emissions as a co-benefit. Most of the Belarusian mitigation actions are a mix of regulatory measures and fiscal instruments. The key policies delivering the highest mitigation impact are the State programme on energy system development until 2016, the National Programme for the Development of Local and Renewable Energy Sources for 2011–2015 and the State energy saving programme for 2010–2015.

43. In the course of the review, the ERT formulated several recommendations relating to the completeness and transparency of Belarus's reporting under the Convention. The key recommendations³ are that Belarus:

- (a) Improve the completeness of reporting by including in the next BR the following:
 - (i) Summary information on the national inventory arrangements;
 - (ii) Information on progress towards the target, including filling in CTF table 4;
 - (iii) All mandatory information on mitigation actions;
 - (iv) Information on changes in domestic institutional arrangements;
 - (v) Projections for 2030;
 - (vi) Emission projections for transport separately from those from energy;
- (b) Improve the transparency of reporting by including in the next BR the following:
 - (i) A more comprehensive textual BR in accordance with the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on BRs, supported by the CTF tables;
 - (ii) More detailed information on the description and assumptions related to its target, including the use of market-based mechanisms and of LULUCF;
 - (iii) A grouping of PaMs, if there is a clear linkage or overlap;
 - (iv) Appropriately and consistently filled-in CTF tables 2 and 4;
 - (v) The same scenarios in its NC and BR, or at least an explanation when there is a difference.

³ The recommendations are given in full in the relevant sections of this report.

Annex

Documents and information used during the review

A. Reference documents

“UNFCCC biennial reporting guidelines for developed country Parties”. Annex to decision 2/CP.17.

Available at <<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/cop17/eng/09a01.pdf#page=4>>.

“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”. Annex to decision 13/CP.20. Available at <http://unfccc.int/meetings/lima_dec_2014/meeting/8141/php/view/decisions.php>.

FCCC/ARR/2013/BLR. Report of the individual review of the annual submission of Belarus submitted in 2013. Available at <<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/arr/blr.pdf>>.

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Common tabular format tables of Belarus. Available at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/biennial_reports_and_iar/submitted_biennial_reports/items/7550.php>.

2013 GHG inventory submission of Belarus. Available at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/national_inventories_submissions/items/7383.php>.

2014 GHG inventory submission of Belarus. Available at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/annex_i_ghg_inventories/national_inventories_submissions/items/8108.php>.

B. Additional information provided by the Party

Responses to questions during the review were received from Mr. Ivan Narkevitch and Ms. Evgeniya Bertosh (Rue Bel SRC “Ecology”), including additional material on updated policies and measures, greenhouse gas projections and recent climate policy developments in Belarus.
