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Arrangements for intergovernmental meetings

Views on the frequency and location of sessions of the governing bodies after 2020 and their budgetary and other implications

Synthesis report by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains a synthesis of the views expressed by Parties on the frequency and location of sessions of the governing bodies after 2020. It was prepared in response to the request from SBI 48 that the secretariat prepare a synthesis report on the submissions and make it available before the discussion at SBI 50. The SBI also requested that the secretariat prepare an information paper, including on the budgetary and other implications of different proposals contained in the submissions. Owing to the limited number and late receipt of the submissions, this report contains both the synthesis of the submissions and information on the budgetary and other implications of the proposals made.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AILAC	Independent Association for Latin America and the Caribbean
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
COP	Conference of the Parties
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

I. Mandate and scope

1. The SBI has considered various options relating to the frequency and location of sessions of the governing bodies since SBI 36 (May 2012). In 2018, SBI 48 agreed that this matter would be reconsidered at SBI 50 to allow Parties to fully take into consideration the outcomes of the Paris Agreement work programme.¹
2. SBI 48 invited Parties to submit by 15 March 2019 their views on the frequency and location of sessions of the governing bodies after 2020 for consideration at SBI 50. The SBI requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report on the submissions.² The three submissions received as at 24 May 2019 – from Belize on behalf of AOSIS, Costa Rica on behalf of AILAC, and Switzerland – are synthesized in chapter II below.³
3. The SBI also requested the secretariat to prepare an information paper on the budgetary and other implications of the different proposals contained in the submissions from Parties. Owing to the limited number and late receipt of submissions, this information has been provided in chapter III of this document.

II. Synthesis of submissions from Parties

A. Considerations regarding change in the frequency of sessions

4. The Parties noted in their submissions that any change in the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies after 2020 would need to take into account the established cycles of mandates under the Convention and the Paris Agreement.
5. In this context, they highlighted the following cycles and mandates in particular:
 - (a) The five-year cycle of the global stocktake starting in 2023;
 - (b) The five-year cycle for the communication of nationally determined contributions starting in 2020;
 - (c) The replenishment cycles of the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism – the GEF and the GCF;
 - (d) The biennial high-level ministerial dialogues on finance, from 2021;
 - (e) The biennial consideration of synthesis reports and conclusions of in-session workshops on information to be communicated by Parties under Article 9, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement, from 2021;
 - (f) The second report on determining the needs of developing countries related to the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement, to be submitted by the Standing Committee on Finance in 2024 (the report is due every four years).
6. They also highlighted other matters that could be taken into account, including:
 - (a) The need for annual CMA sessions until 2024 to ensure that the CMA meets the deadline for establishing a new collective quantified goal;
 - (b) The annual guidance provided by the COP to the GEF and the GCF;
 - (c) The need for the CMA to prepare for the global stocktake and endorse the work to be undertaken by the subsidiary bodies so as to enable the technical assessments for the global stocktake to begin;
 - (d) The potential impact of a change in the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies on the frequency of sessions of the subsidiary bodies;

¹ FCCC/SBI/2018/9, paragraph 140.

² As footnote 1 above.

³ The submissions are available on the UNFCCC submissions portal at <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissionsstaging/Pages/Home.aspx>.

(e) Existing mandates for constituted bodies to meet in conjunction with sessions of the governing bodies or report annually to their respective governing bodies. Examples given by Parties in their submissions included the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, which is scheduled to meet twice a year, in conjunction with the sessions of the subsidiary bodies and of the COP; the Compliance Committee, which reports annually to the COP; and the capacity-building technical progress reports, to be made available at sessions of the subsidiary bodies convened in conjunction with the sessions of the governing bodies.

1. Proposal to change the frequency

7. Switzerland noted in its submission that with the adoption of the outcomes of the Paris Agreement work programme the climate change process has achieved a level of maturity similar to that of multilateral environmental agreements whose governing bodies meet on a biennial or triennial cycle. It also noted that making the cycle of COP sessions less frequent than annual would ensure an effective process while avoiding unnecessary burdens on Parties and the secretariat. In its view, the frequency of COP sessions needs to be consistent with the new regime while taking into account the cycles established by the Paris Agreement.

8. In this regard, Switzerland proposes the following intervals between COP sessions, noting that there may be other options:

(a) 2.5 years, starting after COP 28 (two COP sessions in five years):

COP session in December 2023, June 2026, December 2028, June 2031, and so on;

(b) 2 + 3 years, starting after COP 28 (two COP sessions in five years):

COP session in 2023, 2025, 2028, 2030, 2033, 2035, 2038, and so on;

(c) 2 + 2 + 1 year, starting after COP 28 (three COP sessions in five years):

COP in 2023, 2025, 2027, 2028, 2030, 2032, 2033, 2035, 2037, 2038, and so on;

9. Switzerland added that under the options proposed above, meetings of the subsidiary bodies between COP sessions would continue to be held every six months and would be held in Bonn, and a leaders' event could be held every five years to coincide with the global stocktake.

2. Proposals to postpone consideration of the change in frequency

10. AILAC and AOSIS proposed that further consideration of the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies be postponed.

11. AILAC holds the view that consideration of the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies should be postponed until at least 2028 as there are several mandates for the review of the modalities adopted in Katowice at specific sessions between 2020 and 2030. This would allow discussions to be informed by the lessons learned from the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of its work programme.

12. AILAC proposed that the secretariat prepare an information note on the implications of any change in the frequency of COP sessions on fulfilling the mandates and commitments of Parties under the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of its work programme.

13. AOSIS holds the view that the discussions could be postponed until after 2030 given the critical importance of the 2020–2030 period. The current and future mandates of the COP, the CMA, the SBSTA, the SBI and the constituted bodies serving both the Convention and the Paris Agreement, together with the urgency of increasing ambition and the need to address ongoing climate change challenges, call for annual sessions of the governing bodies.

B. Location of sessions after 2020

14. AOSIS and Switzerland both supported the continuation of the current approach with respect to the location of sessions of the governing bodies after 2020, namely the rotation of COP session hosts among the five United Nations regions.

15. Switzerland noted that the interval options outlined in paragraph 8 above would allow for the rotation of hosts of the global stocktake among the United Nations regions.

III. Brief overview of budgetary and other implications of the proposals made

16. Under Switzerland's proposals regarding changes to the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies, sessions of the subsidiary bodies between COP sessions would continue to take place every six months and would be held in Bonn.

17. In the current model, the cost of sessions of the subsidiary bodies held in the first sessional period in Bonn is borne by the host country of the secretariat, whereas the cost of a session held in conjunction with sessions of the governing bodies is borne by the host country of the conference. Under the proposal to reduce the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies and increase that of sessions of the subsidiary bodies held in Bonn, Parties, not the annual conference host, would need to review and agree on funding arrangements to cover the cost of sessions of the subsidiary bodies held in the second sessional period.

18. Given that in the current model a subsidiary body session is already convened every six months, the proposal would have no significant impact on the requirements of the Trust Fund for Participation in the UNFCCC process. Savings could be made in respect of participation funding since, at present, fewer delegates receive financial support for sessions of the subsidiary bodies than for sessions of the governing bodies. However, if additional meetings of the constituted bodies are envisaged in support of the implementation agenda, this would result in an increased demand on this Fund.

19. As noted in the submissions and in previous documents prepared for the SBI on changing the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies, and taking into consideration the recent decisions adopted at the Katowice conference, implications for the intergovernmental process include:⁴

(a) **Review of institutions and constituted bodies by the governing bodies:** current timelines for the review and extension of mandates of institutions and constituted bodies may need to be adjusted. For example, the Financial Mechanism is reviewed every four years, the mandate of the Consultative Group of Experts has been extended to 2026, at which time any extension will need to be considered, and the first review of the modalities and procedures of the committee referred to in Article 15 of the Paris Agreement is to be conducted at CMA 7 (2024). Timing of the reviews may need to be adjusted to take into account any change in the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies. Further arrangements may be required to address any gap in the extension of the mandates of some bodies in view of any adjustments in the timing of such reviews;

(b) **Mandates arising under the Paris Agreement:** various mandates and cycles specified in the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of the Paris Agreement work programme may need to be taken into account, such as a global stocktake at CMA 6 (2023), setting a new collective quantified goal on finance prior to 2025, the review of the enhanced transparency framework to be undertaken at CMA 11 (2028), and consideration of guidance on matters relating to nationally determined contributions at CMA 7 (2024), CMA 10 (2027) and CMA 11 (2028). A change in the frequency of the sessions would require that these deadlines and cycles be adapted;

(c) **Annual reporting of institutions and constituted bodies to the governing bodies:** the annual reporting requirements of the operating entities of the Financial

⁴ FCCC/SBI/2016/2.

Mechanism and of the constituted bodies to the governing bodies would need to be adapted to a new cycle. Consequently, the workplans of these bodies would need to be adjusted and arrangements put in place to address this shift;

(d) **Approval of the programme budget:** the process for the approval of the programme budget, currently on a biennial cycle, would need to be adapted to a revised frequency;

(e) **Timing of the election and the term of office of the President and Bureau:** the timing of the election and the term of office of the President and the Bureau of the COP, the CMP and the CMA would need to be reconsidered. Currently, according to the draft rules of procedure being applied, the term of officers of the Bureau is one year. If the frequency of sessions of the governing bodies is changed, Parties would need to consider extending the term of officers and/or decide on alternative arrangements. The draft rules of procedure also state that the President is elected at the commencement of the session. If the sessions are convened less frequently, Parties may wish to consider whether electing the President at the end of a session would be more efficient so that the President would prepare for his or her conference rather than, as per the current procedure, officially taking up duties upon his or her election at the start of the conference;

(f) **Election of members of constituted bodies:** the annual cycle of election of members and alternate members of some constituted bodies would require reconsideration and adjustment to a revised frequency of sessions.
