



United Nations

FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.12



Framework Convention on
Climate Change

Distr.: General
25 November 2019

English only

Subsidiary Body for Implementation

Fifty-first session

Madrid, 2–9 December 2019

Item 19(c) of the provisional agenda

Administrative, financial and institutional matters

Other budgetary matters

Budgetary implications of UNFCCC mandates: standard costs

Note by the Executive Secretary


Summary

This report responds to a request from the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-fourth session to prepare, regularly update and publish before each session of the subsidiary bodies brief reports on standard costs and, if available, options for reducing the cost of activities where practicable. It should be read in conjunction with the first report in response to this request (FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4), which was made available for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its fiftieth session. The first report includes an overview of standard costing practices in other parts of the United Nations system, as well as options for approaches to preparing and using standard costs for supporting decision-making in relation to new UNFCCC mandates under consideration by the governing or subsidiary bodies. This second report contains information on the costing of UNFCCC documents.

GE.19-20352(E)



* 1 9 2 0 3 5 2 *

Please recycle 



I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), at its twenty-fourth session, requested the secretariat to prepare, regularly update and publish before each session of the subsidiary bodies brief reports on standard costs and, if available, options for reducing the cost of activities where practicable.¹

B. Scope of the report

2. This report is the second to respond to the request referred to in paragraph 1 above. It should be read in conjunction with the first report,² made available for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its fiftieth session, which contains background information on standard costing practices of the secretariat and other United Nations entities intended to facilitate decision-making. This second report focuses on the costing of UNFCCC documents.

3. A comprehensive review of the costing parameters of all the documents of many types the secretariat prepares each year would exceed the mandate of this report. The review therefore focuses on document types, including progress and workshop reports, mandated in the last four years at sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

4. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation may wish to consider the information provided in this report as part of its consideration of this agenda item and to provide guidance on possible next steps, as appropriate.

II. Costing of UNFCCC documents

5. Standard costing is used to a limited extent at the United Nations for various reasons.³ One of them is that several parameters usually need to be considered when estimating the cost of a planned output. For example, a newly mandated technical paper may require a relatively low-cost review of the available literature or it may require specialized research by expert consultants.⁴

6. Every year, the secretariat prepares several hundred documents in response to mandates from the governing or subsidiary bodies. From 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019, a total of 499 official and 197 unofficial documents were edited and processed.⁵ Documents published on the UNFCCC website⁶ are of many different types; for example, annual review reports, compilation and accounting reports, technical papers and workshop reports. The documents vary greatly in size and complexity, and in turn, the resources required by the secretariat to prepare and/or process them differ to a large degree. While some documents are simply posted on the UNFCCC website as received (e.g. biennial reports from Parties), others require input from experts, based on their research or review of large sets of data and amounts of information (e.g. reports on the in-depth reviews of national communications), and are internally cleared, formatted and edited before being published on the UNFCCC website.

¹ Decision 18/CP.24, para. 15.

² FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4.

³ FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4, paras. 11–14.

⁴ FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4, para. 25.

⁵ FCCC/SBI/2019/14, para. 79.

⁶ <https://unfccc.int/documents>.

7. While the actual cost of a document will vary depending on specific parameters related to both its inputs and the nature of its output, an estimate can inform decision-making. An example set of standard costs for three document types was developed to indicate the range of costs involved in preparing UNFCCC documents.

8. The example set of three standard costs is as follows:

(a) **Document A: workshop report (15–20 pages).** A document summarizing the proceedings, including presentations made and discussions held, of a one-day workshop. The report would be prepared by Professional level secretariat staff with in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and a good understanding of the intergovernmental process. It would be reviewed and cleared by the appropriate managers, formatted as an official UNFCCC document, edited by professional editors and published on the UNFCCC website. Estimated cost inclusive of programme support cost (PSC): EUR 5,000;

(b) **Document B: synthesis report (25–30 pages).** A document synthesizing views and/or information in submissions from Parties, organizations and other stakeholders as well as forum discussions on a particular topic. The report would be prepared by Professional level secretariat staff with input from a consultant, and reviewed, cleared, formatted, edited and published as specified for document A. The resources (time, human and financial) required to prepare the report would be significantly greater than those for document A because of its numerous inputs and more complex preparation process and the larger output (i.e. length of the report). Estimated cost inclusive of PSC: EUR 15,000;

(c) **Document C: multi-year progress report (20–25 pages).** A document detailing the progress in implementing a multi-year work programme established by the COP. The report would draw on a large number of sources, as specified in the terms of reference for the review adopted by the COP, including submissions from Parties, observer organizations and other stakeholders; national reports; and outcomes of workshops and dialogues. The report would be prepared by Professional level secretariat staff, and reviewed, cleared, formatted, edited and published as specified for document A. The resources (time, human and financial) required to prepare the report are estimated to be much greater than those for document A because of its numerous inputs and more complex preparation process and the larger output (i.e. length of the report). Estimated cost inclusive of PSC: EUR 60,000.

9. The example costings in paragraph 8 above demonstrate some of the factors involved in estimating the cost of preparation of a document. These factors and others are summarized as follows:

(a) The quantity and complexity of the inputs to be reviewed during preparation of the document;

(b) The systems and tools, whether standard or specialized, required for collecting and processing the data and information required for the document;

(c) The need for contracting specialized consultants with varying levels of expertise to prepare or assist in preparing the document;

(d) The need to support the participation of experts in preparing the document;

(e) The translation requirements of the document;

(f) The printing requirements of the document.

10. The governing and subsidiary bodies may wish to consider the cost factors referred to in paragraph 9 above when proposing new mandates for the preparation of a document with a view to limiting its budgetary implications while at the same time maximizing its value.