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Administrative, financial and institutional matters

Annual report

2019 secretariat activities, programme delivery highlights and financial performance

Annual report by the secretariat

Summary

The secretariat's 2019 annual report has been prepared in response to the mandate contained in decision 21/CP.23, paragraph 18.

It provides an overview to a broad range of stakeholders of the secretariat's activities, key achievements in the UNFCCC process and financial data for 2019.


The full publication is available at <https://unfccc.int/annualreport>.

* Dates of the session to be determined.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
GCA portal	global climate action portal (NAZCA)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAP	national adaptation plan
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
REDD+	reducing emissions from deforestation; reducing emissions from forest degradation; conservation of forest carbon stocks; sustainable management of forests; and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (decision 1/CP.16, para. 70)
SB	sessions of the subsidiary bodies
SCF	Standing Committee on Finance

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. COP 23 requested the secretariat to prepare and make available an annual report, as outlined in document FCCC/SBI/2016/INF.14, paragraph 37, to be considered at each session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation following the closure of the preceding financial year, providing information on the secretariat's activities in the preceding year, programme delivery highlights and financial performance.¹ The annual reports should facilitate the understanding of a broad range of stakeholders and interested observers with regard to what the secretariat is delivering and the challenges it is facing, and thus contribute to improved outreach and provide Parties, non-Party stakeholders, the public and the media with easy-to-understand information on the UNFCCC process. At its forty-ninth session, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation considered the enhancements to future annual reports proposed by the secretariat in document FCCC/SBI/2018/INF.19.²

B. Scope of the document

2. This document provides a summary of the 2019 annual report, which presents the key achievements in the UNFCCC process and the activities of the secretariat, particularly their impact in relation to the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. It also provides an outlook for 2020 and beyond.

II. Secretariat activities and key achievements in the UNFCCC process in 2019

A. Overview

3. The secretariat provided organizational and substantive support for the intergovernmental process, including for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies, the work of the 14 constituted bodies and a wide range of work programmes, forums, panels and task forces. The secretariat processed 206 official documents and numerous submissions, maintained its data portals, and organized numerous meetings, workshops and events held during and between UNFCCC conferences.

4. The secretariat facilitated interaction among Parties, between Parties and non-Party stakeholders and across the United Nations system so as to enhance action towards achieving the objectives of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.

5. Chapter II.B below presents highlights of the work referred to in paragraphs 3–4 above.

B. Supporting the intergovernmental process

6. The secretariat supported SB 50 in Bonn in June 2019 and COP 25 in Madrid in December 2019. COP 25, presided over by Chile, was attended by 28,000 participants and 32 Heads of State and Government. It involved around 2,500 meetings and 260 side events and the assistance of 2,000 volunteers. At SB 50 and COP 25, the secretariat supported negotiations among Parties on a wide range of issues, including on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement and climate finance. Major decisions related to gender, the second periodic review of the long-term global temperature goal and progress towards that goal, and the impact of the implementation of response measures, among other things, were adopted at COP 25.

¹ Decision 21/CP.23, para. 18.

² FCCC/SBI/2018/22, para. 114.

7. In addition, the secretariat contributed to other key conferences, including by supporting high-level events of the COP 25 Presidency and the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit and by organizing three regional climate weeks.

8. The secretariat helped to strengthen the Climate Ambition Alliance launched at the Climate Action Summit and worked with partners, United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental organizations to assist countries in preparing their nationally determined contributions.

9. The secretariat continued to support the mitigation efforts of Parties, by, for example, coordinating technical reviews and analyses of national reports, including on REDD+, and training reviewers and experts involved in the multilateral consideration of climate policies. Greenhouse gas data and information on mitigation actions of Parties were synthesized in the report *Climate action and support trends*,³ released at the Climate Action Summit. The secretariat also supported Parties in implementing the measurement, reporting and verification framework under the Convention and preparing for the enhanced transparency framework.⁴ It also continued supporting the work⁵ of the Consultative Group of Experts to help developing countries to meet their reporting requirements, including preparing a technical handbook⁶ to help developing country Parties to prepare for implementation of the enhanced transparency framework. In addition, the secretariat organized training workshops and webinars for Parties and continued to process submissions of national communications, biennial update reports and national inventory reports and organize their review and analysis.

10. With regard to adaptation, the secretariat supported the work of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group on assisting developing countries with adaptation planning, launched the Open NAP initiative⁷ to help developing countries produce their first NAPs by 2020, and assisted the Least Developed Countries Expert Group and the Adaptation Committee with expert meetings and private sector engagement, including on financing for adaptation action. The Adaptation Committee, with the support of the secretariat, published its flagship report *25 Years of Adaptation under the UNFCCC*⁸ in 2019. Under the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, new partnerships were formed to increase understanding of adaptation knowledge gaps. Furthermore, the secretariat supported the efforts of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts to launch a technical expert group on comprehensive risk management and to strengthen partnerships.

11. As mandated by the COP,⁹ the secretariat launched the Needs-based Finance¹⁰ project to assist developing countries in implementing priority mitigation and adaptation actions. In cooperation with the Asian Development Bank and the Governments of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, the secretariat convened an expert meeting on the needs of developing countries and on translating these needs into action, which has informed the forthcoming report of the SCF on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement. In addition, the secretariat assisted

³ UNFCCC. 2019. *Climate action and support trends*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://www.uncclearn.org/learning-resources/library/24911>.

⁴ See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/transparency-and-reporting/the-big-picture/what-is-transparency-and-reporting>.

⁵ See document FCCC/SBI/2019/19.

⁶ Consultative Group of Experts. 2019. *Technical handbook for developing country Parties on preparing for implementation of the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement* (with addendum). Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/202962> and <https://unfccc.int/documents/202963>.

⁷ See <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/opennapbrief.pdf>.

⁸ Adaptation Committee. 2019. *25 Years of Adaptation under the UNFCCC: Report by the Adaptation Committee*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/204710>.

⁹ Decision 6/CP.23, para. 10.

¹⁰ See https://unfccc.int/NBF_Project.

the SCF with its biennial assessment and overview of climate finance flows¹¹ and the 2019 SCF Forum, on climate finance and sustainable cities.¹²

12. To enhance the engagement of indigenous peoples in the UNFCCC process, the secretariat supported the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform in finalizing its two-year workplan.

13. The secretariat continued to assist the Technology Executive Committee in implementing the technology framework and developing its four-year workplan, which was adopted at COP 25. The secretariat developed a climate technology project database, and organized events and dialogues for the Technology Executive Committee on policy options, practices and technologies with high mitigation potential, as well as technical expert meetings on circular economy, smart energy and water.

14. The secretariat supported capacity-building activities such as the 2nd Capacity-building Hub¹³ of the PCCB, held at COP 25, the establishment of the PCCB Network,¹⁴ and training workshops, seminars and expert meetings.

15. The secretariat continued to support the clean development mechanism, which issued 50,995,101 certified emission reduction credits to 187 projects and 36 programmes in 55 countries in 2019. In addition, the secretariat organized the meetings of the Executive Board of the clean development mechanism and its panels, and the 20th Designated National Authorities Forum.

16. The secretariat also organized a number of capacity-building events through its regional collaboration centres and supported countries with carbon pricing through the Collaborative Instruments for Ambitious Climate Action initiative.

17. The secretariat engaged with the scientific community, including through partnerships with the IPCC and the World Meteorological Organization, on the Earth Information Day at COP 25¹⁵ and events on the IPCC Special Reports on Climate Change and Land¹⁶ and on the Ocean and Cryosphere.¹⁷

18. Under the guidance of the high-level champions of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, the secretariat organized sessions at regional climate weeks and COP 25, released the *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2019*¹⁸ and the thematic Climate Action Pathways¹⁹ and enhanced the GCA portal,²⁰ which now includes over 20,000 actions and features an interactive map and country-specific pages. The secretariat's Climate Neutral Now initiative attracted 239 new signatories in 2019, and its Momentum for Change initiative received 670 applications for the United Nations Global Climate Action Awards.

19. The secretariat organized Action for Climate Empowerment activities, including the Youth Forum, a video competition and a high-level ministerial event at COP 25.

¹¹ See <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/resources/biennial-assessment-of-climate-finance>.

¹² See <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/events-meetings/scf-forum/climate-finance-and-sustainable-cities>.

¹³ See <https://unfccc.int/capacity-building-hub>.

¹⁴ See <https://unfccc.int/pccb-network>.

¹⁵ See <https://unfccc.int/topics/science/events-meetings/systematic-observation/earth-information-day-2019>.

¹⁶ IPCC. 2019. *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*. PR Shukla, J Skea, E Calvo Buendia, et al. (eds.). Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srcc/>.

¹⁷ IPCC. 2019. *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. H-O Pörtner, DC Roberts, V Masson-Delmotte, et al. (eds.). Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/home/>.

¹⁸ Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action. 2019. *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2019*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership-for-global-climate-action>.

¹⁹ Available at <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate-action-pathways>.

²⁰ <https://climateaction.unfccc.int/>.

20. With regard to gender and climate change, COP 25 adopted the enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, which sets out ways to enhance gender equality and empower women. The secretariat supported activities and events to this end and prepared a synthesis report,²¹ which further demonstrated increased engagement on gender across the UNFCCC.

21. The secretariat improved its operational and technical readiness for supporting the intergovernmental process. It continued its organizational reforms, including implementing its new organizational structure, promoting leadership development and enhancing its culture of collaboration. Furthermore, it invested in information technology: it upgraded the greenhouse gas data interface, consolidated its technology infrastructure and data centre and developed measures for sharing data with other organizations, among other projects.

22. The secretariat worked with key partners on initiatives such as eco-friendly credit cards for offsetting emissions, strategies for making companies ‘climate-positive’ and creative design tools for enhancing awareness.

23. Finally, the secretariat deployed innovative practices to improve its outreach through social and digital media, which led to a 33 per cent increase in followers across its social media channels – from 1.3 to 1.8 million.

C. Financial performance

24. The annual report provides key financial results for 2019, including total revenue and expenses, funding by trust fund, and comparisons of budgeted and actual expenditure for the core budget and the international transaction log, as well as lists of Party and non-Party contributors to the Trust Fund for Supplementary Activities. These results are also captured in the secretariat’s budget performance report for the biennium 2018–2019.²²

D. Secretariat staff

25. The secretariat strives to maintain a diverse and balanced workforce that is representative of the Parties it serves. At the end of 2019, the secretariat workforce comprised 390 fixed-term and temporary staff. The annual report outlines the staff composition by gender, geography, level and funding source.

III. Outlook for 2020 and beyond

26. In 2020, the secretariat’s first priority is to ensure continuity of support for the intergovernmental process amid the limitations due to the coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak. Despite the limitations on face-to-face meetings, the secretariat will strive to facilitate progress in a balanced manner across all areas of its work, and to do so in a transparent manner that enables the participation of all interested Parties. The secretariat will work with the COP Presidencies and presiding officers to ensure the smooth postponement of SB 52 and COP 26, and will work with Parties to facilitate the submission of new and updated nationally determined contributions. It will continue to provide support for other existing and new workstreams and work programmes, and to constituted bodies. In line with public health measures, staff members will work from home for as long as necessary, communicating through digital means and organizing virtual meetings where possible.

27. The secretariat will continue to implement its new organizational structure on the basis of the review processes conducted in 2018–2019, with a view to better responding to governments’ requests for support and proactively addressing emerging needs. It will increase outreach and communication efforts and continue to improve its digital infrastructure.

²¹ FCCC/CP/2019/8 and Corr.1.

²² FCCC/SBI/2020/3 and Add.1–2.

28. The secretariat's programme budget for the biennium 2020–2021 reflects these needs and responsibilities, is able to accommodate the adjustments in operations arising from the coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak, and seeks to ensure that services in support of all activities tasked to the secretariat by Parties can be provided in a balanced, sustainable, reliable and cost-efficient manner.
