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Subsidiary Body for Implementation

The 9th Durban Forum on capacity-building


Report by the secretariat

Summary

The 9th Durban Forum on capacity-building took place in a virtual setting on 5 June 2020 as part of the June Momentum for Climate Change, under the overarching theme of capacity-building to support implementation of the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement – ensuring coherence and coordination of action and support.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BTR	biennial transparency report
BUR	biennial update report
CBIT	Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency
CGE	Consultative Group of Experts
COP	Conference of the Parties
ETF	enhanced transparency framework
GHG	greenhouse gas
ICA	international consultation and analysis
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MRV	measurement, reporting and verification
NDC	nationally determined contribution
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SIDS	small island developing State(s)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. COP 17 requested the SBI to further enhance the monitoring and review of the effectiveness of capacity-building by organizing an annual in-session Durban Forum for sharing experience and exchanging ideas, best practices and lessons learned among relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation of capacity-building activities. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a summary report on the Durban Forum for consideration by the SBI.¹

2. COP 24 requested the SBI to thematically align the meetings of the Durban Forum with the annual focus area of the PCCB,² which for 2020 is strengthening the coherence and coordination of capacity-building activities for implementing NDCs.³ Thus, the lessons learned from and outcomes of the Durban Forum feed directly into the work of the PCCB.

3. COP 25 emphasized the importance of continuing to identify and disseminate lessons learned to enhance the implementation of capacity-building activities through the Durban Forum and the PCCB.⁴

B. Structure of the report

4. Chapter II below presents the outcomes of the 9th Durban Forum, including key messages and information on their subsequent consideration by the PCCB; chapter III below provides information on the organization of the meeting, including its scope and objectives; chapter IV below summarizes the keynote addresses delivered at the meeting, the panel discussion and the breakout group discussions; and chapter V below presents conclusions.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

5. The SBI may wish to consider the information contained in this report in its deliberations on capacity-building.

II. Outcomes of the 9th Durban Forum

A. Key messages

6. There are various channels of support and resources for capacity-building, but much still needs to be done in addressing the needs of developing countries.

7. The PCCB, with its convening power, is well positioned to communicate capacity-building needs and has set up excellent initiatives in this regard, including the Capacity-building Hub and the PCCB Network. Its work on enhancing coherence and coordination of capacity-building in cooperation with other bodies, such as the Standing Committee on Finance and the CGE, is also valuable.

8. South–South cooperation is considered an effective approach to enhancing national capacity as it enables countries to share lessons learned in building capacity for transparency. As a result, other countries can save resources and replicate action that has already quickly achieved results.

¹ Decision 2/CP.17, paras. 144 and 147.

² Decision 15/CP.24, para. 6.

³ Decision 8/CP.25, para. 5.

⁴ Decision 10/CP.25, para. 11.

9. Platforms such as the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement, MRV Group of Friends and CBIT Global Coordination Platform can facilitate continuous communication and coordination among support providers and provide a useful space for networking. Such initiatives can play a role in providing a broad umbrella of long-term support, which must build on existing national efforts in developing and strengthening domestic MRV systems.
10. There is a lot of overlap between the reporting requirements for BURs and BTRs. Thus, technical knowledge and institutional arrangements developed under the existing transparency arrangements can help developing country Parties to prepare for future reporting under the ETF.
11. Lessons learned and experience from existing MRV processes, including ICA, show that Parties' reporting improves with each report submitted. Existing MRV systems provide a strong foundation for the ETF.
12. The ICA process helps Parties to increase their national capacity over time. After successfully completing their first cycle in this process, Parties are making improvements in their reporting in subsequent BURs.
13. For continuous improvement in reporting and effective transition to the ETF, it is important to retain human capacity at the national level, especially qualified experts with experience with existing transparency arrangements.
14. To further enhance implementation of the ETF, relevant UNFCCC processes must be streamlined to avoid bureaucratic issues at the national and international level.
15. Having institutional arrangements in place is critical for implementation of the ETF, such as ensuring data collection by establishing interministerial coordination mechanisms.
16. There are many existing tools for reporting on climate action, but efforts must be made to develop reporting tools tailored to the circumstances of developing countries.
17. Areas that require capacity-building include identifying GHG inventory data management systems, strengthening institutional arrangements, building capacity at the subnational level, understanding localized impacts in order to make better projections and modelling mitigation scenarios.
18. Support provided should be tailored to country needs, while South-South cooperation and gender considerations should be taken into account in designing support interventions.
19. Systemic and institutional capacity must be built by investing in and leveraging existing institutions.
20. Regional and subregional MRV networks and hubs have proven useful for sharing expertise and supporting capacity development and enhancement. Capacity-building support needs to be targeted and demand driven and there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. All stakeholders need to be involved in defining what is required to address actual capacity-building challenges. Capacity-building is a continuous process as evolving capacity gaps and needs necessitate new and flexible solutions.
21. Common challenges in assessing the effectiveness of capacity-building measures include lack of a common methodology and readily available and consistent data for evaluating capacity-building efforts. Despite these challenges, good practices in developing specific indicators and means for assessing the long-term impact of capacity-building have been established, which should be more actively disseminated among countries.

B. Consideration of the key messages by the Paris Committee on Capacity-building

22. COP 21 decided that the inputs to the PCCB include the reports on the Durban Forum.⁵ At its 4th meeting, the PCCB agreed to consider the outcomes of the 9th Durban Forum intersessionally in preparing its annual technical progress report.⁶

III. Organization of the 9th Durban Forum

A. Background documents

23. The following documents were prepared and made available on the dedicated Durban Forum web pages⁷ well in advance of the meeting to facilitate discussion:

- (a) A compilation and synthesis of the capacity-building work of bodies established under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol;⁸
- (b) A synthesis report on implementation of the framework for capacity-building in developing countries.⁹

B. Scope and objectives

24. The overarching theme of the 9th Durban Forum, namely capacity-building to support implementation of the ETF under the Paris Agreement – ensuring coherence and coordination of action and support, was selected taking into consideration the request of COP 24 referred to in paragraph 2 above. The theme was divided into the following subtopics:

- (a) Implications of the relevant modalities, procedures and guidelines adopted at COP 24 for developing countries in terms of building or strengthening capacity needs and gaps;
- (b) Lessons learned, in relation to both action taken and support received, in developing countries as regards capacity-building for MRV that could be useful in implementing the ETF;
- (c) Assessing and improving the effectiveness of capacity-building;
- (d) Promoting and improving coherence and coordination of capacity-building at the national and international level to enhance support for implementing the ETF.

25. In line with its overarching theme and subtopics, the meeting was guided by the following objectives:

- (a) Exploring lessons learned from capacity-building for implementing the existing MRV arrangements under the Convention;
- (b) Identifying remaining capacity needs and gaps, and ways and means of improving the effectiveness of transparency-related capacity-building in developing countries;
- (c) Providing a platform for stakeholders to share experience, lessons learned and knowledge;
- (d) Providing insights for partners with a view to better aligning the support provided for capacity-building for implementing the ETF with developing countries' needs;

⁵ Decision 1/CP.21, para. 79.

⁶ See <https://unfccc.int/pccb4>.

⁷ <https://unfccc.int/durbanforum9>.

⁸ FCCC/SBI/2020/2 and Add.1.

⁹ FCCC/SBI/2020/5.

(e) Informing related thematic discussion under the PCCB in the context of its focus area for 2020.

C. Proceedings

26. The 9th Durban Forum was held on 5 June 2020 as part of the June Momentum for Climate Change. Owing to the circumstances related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (such as restrictions on travel and meeting in large numbers), the meeting was held in a virtual setting. The Chair of the SBI and the Durban Forum, Marianne Karlsen, opened the meeting. Roberta Ianna, co-facilitator of the meeting, and Arif Goheer, CGE Chair, provided introductory remarks.

27. A keynote address on the transition to the ETF under the Paris Agreement was delivered by representatives of the secretariat, followed by an address on emerging needs and gaps in developing countries in the transition to the ETF by Alyssa Ng, representative of the CGE. The subsequent discussion panel, moderated by meeting co-facilitator Edith Ofwona Adera, consisted of:

- (a) Clifford Mahlung, representative of SIDS;
- (b) Sandra Motshwanedi, representative of the Government of South Africa;
- (c) Juliet Meredith, representative of the COP 26 Presidency;
- (d) Damiano Borgogno, representative of UNDP;
- (e) Fabian Klemme, representative of the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement.

28. The panellists engaged in an interactive discussion on different aspects of the meeting's overarching theme. This was followed by four parallel breakout group discussions dedicated to the four subtopics referred to in paragraph 9 above, facilitated by, respectively:

- (a) Damiano Borgogno, representative of UNDP and CGE;
- (b) Henning Wuester, representative of the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency;
- (c) Chisa Umemiya, representative of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies;
- (d) Yamide Dagnet, representative of the World Resources Institute.

29. A representative of the secretariat and Ms. Ianna provided closing remarks to conclude the meeting.

30. The meeting agenda, presentations, biographies of resource persons, and guiding questions and report for the breakout group discussions are available on the Durban Forum web pages.

IV. Summary of keynote addresses and panel and breakout group discussions

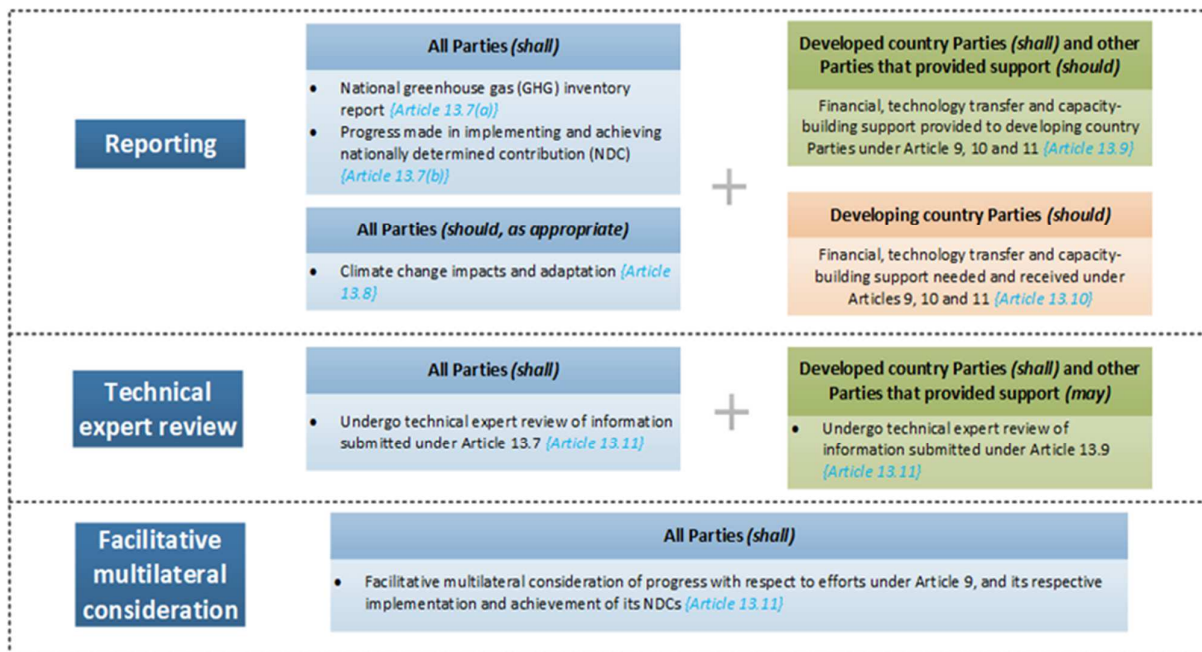
A. Keynote addresses

31. The keynote addresses focused on transparency in the new climate change regime. Under the existing transparency arrangements, developing country Parties have to submit a national communication every four years and a BUR every two years. The ETF establishes the use of common modalities, procedures and guidelines, and, recognizing that Parties have varying degrees of capacity, accords flexibility to developing country Parties that need it.

32. The transparency requirements under the ETF are not fundamentally different from those under the Convention, including reporting (focusing on climate action and support), technical expert review and multilateral consideration of progress. Figure 1 gives an overview of the ETF under the Paris Agreement.

Figure 1

Overview of the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement



Notes: Article 13 of the Paris Agreement provides flexibility in the implementation of the transparency framework to those developing countries Parties that need it in the light of their capacities (para. 2) and recognizes the special circumstances of the least developed countries and SIDS (para. 3).

33. Given their fundamental similarity, existing MRV systems and the ICA process can serve as the basis for transition to the ETF. Domestic MRV systems already established need to be enhanced and strengthened, which the ICA process can help with.

34. The ICA process includes a strong capacity-building element: Parties identify and prioritize their capacity-building needs, which leads to better targeting of financial support for technology transfer and capacity-building; and the technical analysis of BURs itself presents an opportunity for capacity-building.

35. In her address, Ms. Ng provided a brief overview of the work of the CGE,¹⁰ focusing on the survey conducted by the CGE in 2019 on emerging needs in preparing for transition to the ETF.

36. According to the survey, fewer than half of the Parties represented had begun planning for transition to the ETF. Although more than half of the represented Parties were familiar with the reporting guidance, only around a quarter considered themselves to have the knowledge and understanding necessary to start preparing for implementing the ETF.

37. Key capacity-building needs have been identified for preparing and reporting information in the thematic areas of the BTR: national GHG inventory, tracking progress of implementation and achievement of NDCs, climate change impacts and adaptation, and support needed and received. Further capacity-building needs have also been identified in more specific areas, including:¹¹

¹⁰ See <https://unfccc.int/CGE>.

¹¹ See document FCCC/TP/2019/4.

- (a) Methods or practical guidelines for tracking progress of implementation and achievement of NDCs;
- (b) Understanding the relationship between MRV and transparency of climate action;
- (c) Support and tracking or monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;
- (d) Indicators and formalizing a data collection and management process.

B. Panel discussion

38. Addressing the subtopics referred to in paragraph 9 above, the panellists responded to the following questions:

- (a) What major lessons learned from MRV, including from the ICA process, could be drawn on in implementing the ETF?
- (b) How can we benefit from South–South cooperation in the transition period?
- (c) What are the essential elements of promoting and improving coherence and coordination of capacity-building, and how can these elements be incorporated into supporting the ETF?
- (d) What could be done and by whom to assess and improve the effectiveness of capacity-building action and support?

39. On lessons learned, the representative of the Government of South Africa emphasized the importance of starting the MRV process early and establishing institutional systems. This enabled South Africa to effectively prepare its BURs. To date South Africa has submitted three BURs and three national inventory reports. The representative of the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement referred to the need to focus on explaining the national benefits of an MRV and transparency system in order to achieve the necessary political buy-in, and to address the basics such as data collection and long-term institutional arrangements first. He mentioned the main pillars of the work of the Partnership and that 150 countries already participate in it.

40. On how to benefit from South–South cooperation in the transition period, the representative of UNDP shared its experience of how such cooperation can enhance national capacity by enabling countries to showcase to others what has and has not worked in building capacity for transparency, which can also help countries to save resources.

41. The panellists spoke at length on the essential elements of promoting and improving coherence. The representative of the COP 26 Presidency stressed that capacity-building should be demand driven and that capacity-building providers, such as CBIT and the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency, need to enhance their coordination. She added that coordination at the national level is essential, and that reporting itself provides an opportunity to build capacity and identify and communicate capacity-building support required. She mentioned the role of the PCCB in enhancing coherence and coordination of capacity-building, and that initiatives such as the PCCB Network, the Capacity-building Hub and the Durban Forum provide a platform for stakeholder engagement.

42. On assessing and improving the effectiveness of capacity-building, the representative of SIDS stressed that capacity-building is crucial for implementation of the Paris Agreement and particularly for reporting. He added that, for Parties' reports to reflect national circumstances, there has to be a local expert involved, and relying on "international" consultants does not help to build national capacity.

43. Adding to this, the representative of the COP 26 Presidency mentioned that capacity-building is essential under the Paris Agreement and that the ETF is a cornerstone thereof, and that Parties' different capacities have to be acknowledged.

44. Each panellist also addressed questions from meeting participants:

(a) On the key challenges faced by SIDS in implementing the ETF, the representative of SIDS identified collecting data and establishing hydrological services;

(b) On moving on to preparing BTRs, the representative of UNDP stated that 57 Parties had submitted BURs and that the shift to the BTR process should start soon. There are elements still under negotiation, but this should not impede the transition process;

(c) On capacity-building support received by South Africa, the representative of the Government of South Africa mentioned that support has been provided by various organizations through regional MRV networks led by UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme, and that the support was targeted at training national experts, particularly in preparing GHG inventories;

(d) On ensuring best practice in building capacity, the representative of the COP 26 Presidency stressed that support should be country driven, that any action should have a long-term and transformational impact and that existing partnerships and initiatives such as the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement and CBIT are vital.

C. Breakout group discussions

1. Readiness for biennial transparency reporting

45. The following questions guided the discussion of the first breakout group:

(a) How can the experience and expertise developed through preparation and technical analysis of BURs support developing countries in preparing for the ETF?

(b) How can the existing national MRV and transparency process be linked to national planning and development processes so that it becomes an integral part of the whole-of-government approach?

(c) How can Parties and regional centres and organizations use existing individual, institutional and systemic capacity to support preparation and reporting in relation to BTRs, and to ensure that the capacity and expertise built is sustainable?

(d) What key areas of capacity-building may require more attention given the enhanced transparency requirements?

(e) What role do you expect CBIT to play in supporting Parties in the transition to the ETF?

46. The group reported that, for continuous improvement in reporting and effective transition to the ETF, it is important to retain human resources at the national level, especially qualified experts with experience with existing arrangements. Existing processes, including ICA, help Parties to increase their national capacity over time: after successfully completing their first cycle of ICA, Parties are making improvements in their reporting in subsequent BURs.

47. Platforms such as the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement, MRV Group of Friends and CBIT Global Coordination Platform can facilitate continuous communication among support providers and provide a useful space for networking. Such initiatives can play a role in providing a broad umbrella of long-term support, which must build on national efforts in developing and strengthening domestic MRV systems.

48. Challenges identified in relation to the transition to the ETF include the need to streamline processes and efforts; and the need to develop tools tailored to the circumstances of developing countries. Identified areas of capacity-building needs include GHG inventory data management systems, institutional arrangements, building capacity at the subnational level, and understanding localized impacts in order to improve projections and modelling.

2. Lessons learned regarding capacity-building for measurement, reporting and verification that could be useful in implementing the enhanced transparency framework

49. The following questions guided the discussion of the second breakout group:

(a) What lessons have been learned from ICA, and how can the capacity-building needs identified through that process inform the strengthening of capacity-building for MRV?

(b) What key lessons have been learned in relation to ensuring that support is targeted and responds to actual challenges and needs?

(c) What institutional arrangements and processes, at the regional and national level, are effectively supporting the current MRV arrangements, and what are good examples of capacity-building support for transparency? How could these be used to inform work under the ETF?

50. The group reported that lessons learned include that reporting improves over time with each submission; learning-by-doing is key to capacity-building; the non-punitive, facilitative nature of evaluation processes allows countries to learn how to move forward; and existing MRV systems are a strong foundation for biennial transparency reporting.

51. The group stressed the importance of having adequate institutional arrangements in place for implementing the ETF, such as ensuring data collection by establishing interministerial coordination mechanisms, and that systemic and institutional capacity must be built by investing in and leveraging existing institutions.

52. In terms of good practice examples, regional and subregional MRV hubs established for sharing expertise and supporting development and enhancement of capacity have proven very useful.

3. Assessing and improving the effectiveness of capacity-building

53. The following questions guided the discussion of the third breakout group:

(a) What elements should be explored in assessing the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building in both long- and short-term projects that support the ETF?

(b) Which parameters can be used to provide a good sense of how effective and impactful capacity-building is in the areas of MRV and the ETF?

(c) Are there any existing methodologies for assessing the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building?

(d) How can retention of national capacity be improved and available support be matched with needs on the ground?

54. The group reported that capacity-building support needs to be targeted and demand driven and there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. All stakeholders need to be involved in defining what is required to address actual capacity-building challenges. It must also be taken into account that capacity-building is a continuous process as evolving capacity gaps and needs necessitate new and flexible solutions.

55. Capacity assessment methodologies do exist, but they need to be versatile enough to be applied in different country contexts and to be used for assessing the efficacy of capacity-building, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the long term. Lack of available data was mentioned as a common challenge.

56. Different institutions shared examples of existing methodologies for assessing progress of capacity-building. The discussions highlighted the need for more space for sharing experience and exchanging knowledge in order to reach common understanding and agreement on how to assess the effectiveness of capacity-building. Figure 2 is presented as an example of elements to be examined when assessing capacity-building.

Figure 2
Example of a methodology for assessing progress of capacity-building



Source: Umemiya C and White MK. 2020. *Global Database of National GHG Inventory (GHGI) Capacity in Developing Countries*. Available at <https://www.un-gsp.org/global-database-national-ghg-inventory-ghgi-capacity-developing-countries>.

4. Promoting and improving coherence and coordination of capacity-building to enhance support for implementing the enhanced transparency framework

57. The following questions guided the discussion of the fourth breakout group:

(a) For transition to the ETF, which existing tools, mechanisms or approaches can be used to improve coordination among recipients and providers of capacity-building support at the national and international level?

(b) A key element of implementation of the ETF is capacity-building support, which is currently provided by different organizations. How can coherent provision of support be ensured in order to enhance its impact? How can improvement of coherence and coordination of capacity-building support be incentivized under the UNFCCC?

58. The group reported that, although different channels of support and resources are available, more needs to be done on addressing the needs of developing countries. The landscape of capacity-building and support is complex owing to the difficulty of reporting on support provided and needed.

59. The group also reported the need to pay more attention to institutional capacity-building, as the current focus on individual capacity-building is not sufficient to address capacity-building needs.

60. The PCCB, with its convening power, is well positioned to communicate capacity-building needs and has set up excellent initiatives in this regard, including the Capacity-Building Hub and the PCCB Network. Its work on enhancing coherence and coordination of capacity-building by cooperating with other bodies, such as the Standing Committee on Finance and the CGE, was considered valuable.

61. South-South cooperation was highlighted as an effective approach to enhancing national capacity as it enables countries to share lessons learned in building capacity for transparency. As a result, countries can save resources and replicate action that has already quickly achieved results.

V. Conclusions

62. The 9th Durban Forum offered a broad range of Parties and non-Party stakeholders an opportunity to constructively discuss **capacity-building to support implementation of**

the ETF under the Paris Agreement – ensuring coherence and coordination of action and support and allowed for key messages on important aspects thereof to be delivered.

63. Several participants expressed their appreciation that the importance of capacity-building in developing countries for transition to the ETF was stressed at the meeting. Moreover, participants appreciated the effectiveness of the virtual meeting arrangements.

64. Furthermore, the Forum’s thematic alignment with the annual focus area of the PCCB helped the PCCB to leverage the outcomes of the Forum effectively. After actively engaging in the Forum, the PCCB took stock of the outcomes at its 4th meeting and agreed to consider them intersessionally.
