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## **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice**

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Item 18(a) of the provisional agenda

### **Annual reports on technical reviews**

**Technical review of information reported under the Convention by  
Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in their biennial  
reports and national communications**

## **Technical review of information reported under the Convention by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention in their biennial reports and national communications**

### **Report by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

This report describes activities relating to the technical review of information reported under the Convention in the fourth and fifth biennial reports of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, including preparing for the reviews of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications, and conducting the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of lead reviewers and the training for reviewers of biennial reports and national communications. Information on the status of submission and review of fourth and fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2022/INF.14.



## Abbreviations and acronyms

Annex I Party	Party included in Annex I to the Convention
BR	biennial report
ERT	expert review team
ETF	enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement
GHG	greenhouse gas
LR	lead reviewer
MRV	measurement, reporting and verification
NC	national communication
non-Annex I Party	Party not included in Annex I to the Convention
PaMs	policies and measures
RPG	Review Practice Guidance
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
UNFCCC reporting guidelines on NCs	“Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part II: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on national communications”
UNFCCC review guidelines	“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”

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Mandate**

1. The UNFCCC review guidelines<sup>1</sup> stipulate that the secretariat shall prepare an annual report to the SBSTA on the composition of the ERTs reviewing NCs and BRs, including on the selection of experts, the LRs and action taken to ensure application of the selection criteria defined in the guidelines.<sup>2</sup>
2. The UNFCCC review guidelines also stipulate that the LRs shall collectively prepare an annual report to the SBSTA as part of the report referred to in paragraph 1 above, containing suggestions on how to improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of the reviews of GHG inventories, BRs and NCs.<sup>3</sup>

### **B. Scope**

3. This report describes activities relating to the technical review of information reported under the Convention in the BR4s and BR5s of Annex I Parties, including preparing for the BR5 and NC8 reviews, and conducting the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of LRs and the training for reviewers of BRs and NCs.

### **C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice**

4. The SBSTA is invited to take note of the information contained in this report.

## **II. Preparing for the reviews of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications**

5. BR5s and NC8s are due for submission no later than 31 December 2022.<sup>4</sup> As at the time of preparation of this report, two Parties had submitted their BR5 and NC8.<sup>5</sup>
6. The BR5 and NC8 reviews will be conducted following the UNFCCC review guidelines.
7. In years when NCs and BRs are submitted together, they are subject to in-country review.<sup>6</sup> Annex I Parties with total GHG emissions of less than 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (excluding land use, land-use change and forestry) according to their most recent GHG inventory submission, with the exception of Parties included in Annex II to the Convention, may choose for their NC to undergo a centralized review.<sup>7</sup> According to the latest available GHG inventory data for 2020, this applies to 11 Annex I Parties.<sup>8</sup>
8. The secretariat is preparing procedures and updating tools for conducting the BR5 and NC8 reviews, which are planned to take place between February 2023 and April 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paras. 36, 37 and 40.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Decision 6/CP.25, para. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

<sup>6</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paras. 114–115.

<sup>7</sup> Decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Slovakia and Slovenia.

## Availability of experts

9. Securing the engagement of qualified and experienced experts is not only critical for the reviews under the current MRV arrangements under the Convention, but also important for establishing sufficient expertise and capacity for the technical expert review under the ETF as of 2025.

10. To facilitate planning the BR5 and NC8 reviews, the secretariat reached out to all 543 (as at 18 July 2022) experts eligible for BR and NC reviews via a survey sent on 24 June 2022 asking them to confirm their availability for the reviews. Of those experts, 60 per cent (325) responded positively, of whom even experts from Annex I Parties expressed concern about lack of funding from their nominating Parties.

11. As presented in figure 1, the number of experts available and willing to participate in the BR5 and NC8 reviews is not balanced in terms of Annex I and non-Annex I Parties, gender and experience: of the 325 experts, 62 per cent come from non-Annex I Parties, 58 per cent are male and 31 per cent do not have experience in BR and NC reviews. This imbalance may make it challenging for the secretariat to compose ERTs in line with the UNFCCC review guidelines.

Figure 1

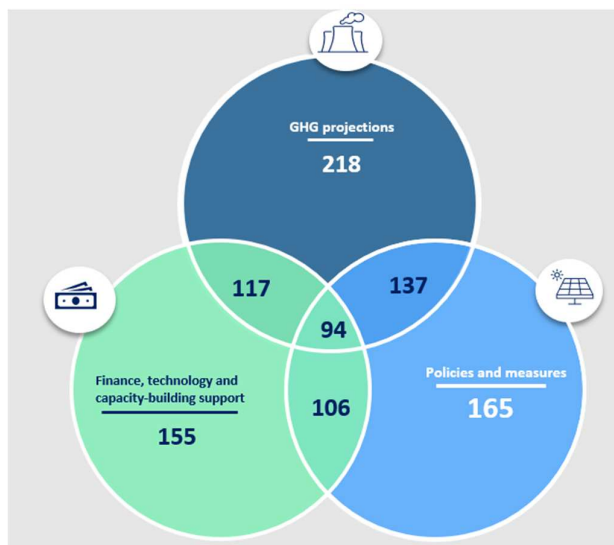
### Number of experts available to participate in the reviews of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications in 2023–2024



12. The expertise of those available covers PaMs (165 experts); finance, technology and capacity-building support (155 experts); and GHG projections (218 experts). While some experts have specialized in one sector only (16 in PaMs; 26 in finance, technology and capacity-building support; and 59 in GHG projections), a larger number of experts are qualified for reviewing two BR sections (137 in GHG projections and PaMs; 117 in GHG projections and finance, technology and capacity-building support; and 106 in finance, technology and capacity-building support and PaMs) and 94 experts have passed exams in all three sectors and can contribute to the review of all sections of a BR or NC (see figure 2).

Figure 2

### Specialization of available experts



### III. Meeting of lead reviewers of biennial reports and national communications

13. The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of LRs of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties was held virtually on 2 March and from 7 to 9 March 2022. A total of 125 experts were invited to the meeting, of whom 98 attended: 41 from non-Annex I Parties and 57 from Annex I Parties. Eight co-leads of the technical analysis of biennial update reports of non-Annex I Parties participated in the meeting as observers.

14. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, both procedural and technical issues relating to BR and NC reviews were addressed at the meeting with a view to facilitating the work of the LRs to ensure consistency of review across Parties.

15. The LRs noted the decision on the ETF adopted at the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement<sup>9</sup> and the secretariat's update on and plans for transition from the existing MRV arrangements to the ETF.<sup>10</sup>

16. The LRs took note of the information provided by the secretariat<sup>11</sup> on progress in implementing the international consultation and analysis process, which helps developing country Parties to gain experience as they move towards implementing the ETF.

#### A. Experience from the fourth round of international assessment and review

17. The LRs acknowledged that the review of BRs and the multilateral assessment process provide opportunities for testing approaches and tools, such as the virtual team room, multilateral assessment portal, review report template and checklist, Review Practice Guidance and review planning, that will facilitate the technical expert review under the ETF.

18. The LRs also acknowledged the experience from conducting the BR4 reviews remotely in 2020–2021 and the extra efforts of the experts who participated, whose contribution has been acknowledged on the UNFCCC website.<sup>12</sup> The LRs noted the background paper prepared by the secretariat on the remotely conducted BR4 reviews,<sup>13</sup> and also noted that conducting reviews remotely presents both advantages and disadvantages for the participating experts, depending on their personal circumstances (e.g. managing routine official work and maintaining work–life balance alongside the review work), among other issues. Challenges faced by experts participating in remotely conducted reviews should be considered in planning review modalities in the future.

19. The LRs further acknowledged the background paper prepared by the secretariat providing an update on the assessment of completeness and transparency of information in BRs,<sup>14</sup> and requested the secretariat to continue to evaluate consistency of assessment across the BR5 reviews and improvements in reporting in the BR5s, as well as to assess how reporting and review practices under the existing MRV arrangements have evolved and how they can inform the reporting and technical expert review processes under the ETF.

20. The LRs noted that the completeness of the information reported improved while transparency remained at the same level in the BR4s compared with the BR3s, and that the high level of consistency of the reviews was maintained. The LRs also noted that some Parties further improved their reporting by resubmitting their BR4 during the review process,<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Decision 5/CMA.3.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://unfccc.int/documents/461023>.

<sup>11</sup> Available at [https://unfccc.int/event/9th\\_BRNC\\_LRMeeting2022](https://unfccc.int/event/9th_BRNC_LRMeeting2022).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/transparency-and-reporting/training-programmes-for-experts/celebrating-technical-experts#eq-19>.

<sup>13</sup> Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/460813>.

<sup>14</sup> Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/460812>.

<sup>15</sup> In total, 22 of the 40 reviewed Parties resubmitted their BR4 as a result of preliminary findings of the ERT communicated during the review.

although ERTs faced challenges in responding to the resubmissions within the mandated timeline for review report preparation.

## **B. Preparing for the reviews of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications**

21. The LRs noted that the BR5 and NC8 reviews are planned for 2023–2024, with multilateral assessment to take place at the sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation in the second half of 2023, in 2024 and possibly in the first half of 2025.

22. The LRs also noted that in 2021, 67 per cent of the experts nominated for the review of BRs and NCs on the UNFCCC roster of experts are not yet trained and certified as reviewers.<sup>16</sup> The LRs encourage those experts to enrol in the training programme at their earliest opportunity.<sup>17</sup> The LRs further noted that new experts should be included in the ERTs for the BR5 and NC8 reviews, carefully allocating tasks among the experienced and new experts so that LRs are empowered to support new experts. The LRs encourage all eligible experts to prepare for and participate in the upcoming BR5 and NC8 reviews.

23. Acknowledging the background paper referred to in paragraph 18 above on the remotely conducted BR4 reviews and implications for future BR and NC reviews, the LRs noted that in-person in-country reviews with a virtual component may be conducted in the upcoming BR5 and NC8 review cycle with the agreement of Parties and ERTs.

24. The LRs acknowledged the two background papers prepared by the secretariat as inputs to the discussions on the RPG, on approaches to the technical assessment of the achievement of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets in 2020<sup>18</sup> and on reporting requirements for developed country Parties: comparison of the BR, NC and biennial transparency report.<sup>19</sup>

25. The LRs requested the secretariat to prepare the RPG for 2022,<sup>20</sup> including incorporating the approaches discussed and agreed at the meeting. The LRs agreed that the approaches presented in the RPG 2022 should be applied by the ERTs in the BR5 and NC8 reviews. The approaches agreed at the meeting relate to:

- (a) Noting recurring reporting issues;
- (b) Technical assessment of the achievement of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets in 2020;
- (c) The updated scoreboard for assessing the completeness and transparency of the information reported in NCs in line with the revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on NCs.<sup>21</sup> The LRs noted that the ERTs should continue to apply a qualitative assessment in their expert judgment in order to make a final determination on the level of completeness and transparency of the reporting.

26. The LRs also requested the secretariat to continue collecting information on and analysing the review-related issues raised by the ERTs during the BR5 and NC8 reviews with a view to presenting them for discussion at future meetings of LRs, as needed.

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<sup>16</sup> As at 20 October 2021, 514 experts had successfully completed the BR and NC reviewer training programme of the 1,534 experts nominated on the UNFCCC roster of experts for the review of BRs and NCs.

<sup>17</sup> The most recent online training for BR and NC review experts was launched on 29 August 2022, with examinations to take place in the week of 10 October 2022; see <https://unfccc.int/process/transparency-and-reporting/reporting-under-the-convention/training-of-review-experts/training-programmes-for-the-review-of-information-submitted-by-annex-i-parties>.

<sup>18</sup> Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/461000>.

<sup>19</sup> Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/460811>.

<sup>20</sup> Available at <https://unfccc.int/RPG>.

<sup>21</sup> Decision 6/CP.25, annex.

27. The LRs further requested the secretariat to update the tools to be used for the NC8 reviews (e.g. review report template, checklist and RPG) in line with the revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on NCs.

28. The LRs acknowledged the concept for developing the combined NC8 in-depth review and BR5 technical review report template and checklist, and requested the secretariat to present the review report template, the checklist and other review tools at the next meeting of LRs and to organize activities to facilitate practical use of such tools and approaches for addressing review challenges such as estimating mitigation impacts of policies and measures, assessing achievement of 2020 targets, and treatment of recommendations and encouragements for the BR5 technical review reports.

#### **IV. Training for reviewers of biennial reports and national communications**

29. In order to prepare for the BR5 and NC8 reviews, both new and experienced expert reviewers have been invited to participate in the relevant training courses and to take the final examinations.

30. Since the previous of these annual reports,<sup>22</sup> one round of the training programme has been implemented and 250 nominated experts have registered for the training. Online examinations were held from 11 to 14 October 2022, resulting in 48 experts newly qualified to take part in the review of BRs and NCs (17 experts are from Annex I Parties and 31 from non-Annex I Parties). Additionally, 14 experts expanded on or refreshed their knowledge by passing additional examinations.

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<sup>22</sup> FCCC/SBSTA/2021/INF.3.