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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 fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, and the conducting of the 10th meeting of lead reviewers and the training for reviewers of biennial reports and national communications. Information on the status of submission and review of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2023/INF.8.



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
LR	lead reviewer
MRV	measurement, reporting and verification
NC	national communication
non-Annex I Party	Party not included in Annex I to the Convention
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
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 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.¹
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 greenhouse gas inventories, BRs and NCs.²

B. Scope

3. This report describes activities relating to the technical review of information reported under the Convention in the BR5s and NC8s of Annex I Parties and conducting the 10th 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. Composition of expert review teams and review of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications

5. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines,³ ERTs shall be composed of eligible experts selected on an ad hoc basis from the UNFCCC roster of experts, nominated by Parties and, as appropriate, by intergovernmental organizations. Participating experts shall have recognized competence in the area to be reviewed and shall neither be nationals of the Party under review nor be nominated or funded by that Party. The experts must have undertaken the necessary training and passed examinations as part of the training programme for review experts for the technical review of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties⁴ or have experience in the relevant reviews and therefore be eligible to serve as reviewers of BRs and/or NCs.
6. ERTs may vary in size and composition, considering the national circumstances of the Party under review,⁵ and the review experts shall be selected in such a way that the collective skills and competences of ERTs address all areas under review. For the review of BRs, competence in reviewing policies and measures, greenhouse gas emission trends and projections, and the provision of financial, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building support, as well as an understanding of the Party's quantified economy-wide emission reduction target and the progress towards achieving it, are required. For the review of NCs, additional competence in reviewing information reported on vulnerability, adaptation, and research and systematic observation is required.

¹ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paras. 36, 37 and 40.

² Decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 44.

³ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, paras. 26 and 28–30.

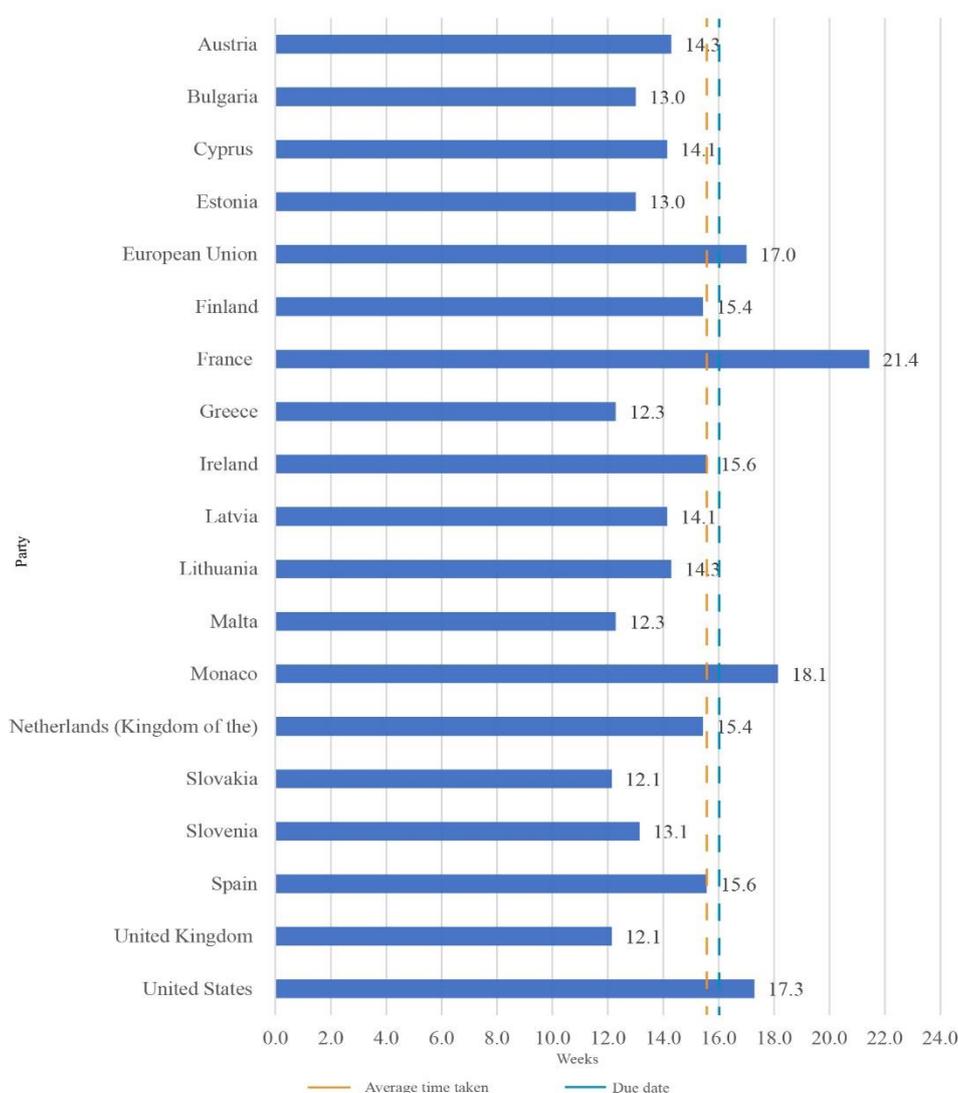
⁴ “Training programme for review experts for the technical review of biennial reports and national communications of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention” (decision 15/CP.20, annex). To be eligible to conduct the reviews, an expert must successfully complete the training programme by passing examinations for the course on general and cross-cutting matters and for at least one sectoral course.

⁵ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 26.

7. Teams composed of four to seven experts reviewed the BR5 and NC8 of each Party concerned.⁶ A total of 12 Parties were reviewed in in-country reviews and 7 in centralized reviews. Typically, with regard to the division of tasks within an ERT, one or two experts were assigned per Party to review the information provided in each of the following parts of the BR and NC: (1) generalist matters, including education and public awareness; (2) mitigation actions, policies and measures, and the economy-wide emission reduction target and progress towards achieving it; (3) projections; (4) the provision of support to developing country Parties; and (5) vulnerability, adaptation, and research and systematic observation.

8. At the time of preparation of this report, the secretariat had coordinated the reviews, which took place between February and May 2023, of the BR5s and NC8s of 19 Parties, and the technical review reports for all 19 Parties had been completed and published. Of those technical review reports, 15 were completed by the due date of 16 weeks after the review week, despite the additional efforts required to review the resubmissions received after the review week. The average time taken to complete the 19 technical review reports was 15.6 weeks (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Time taken to complete the technical review reports of the fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications



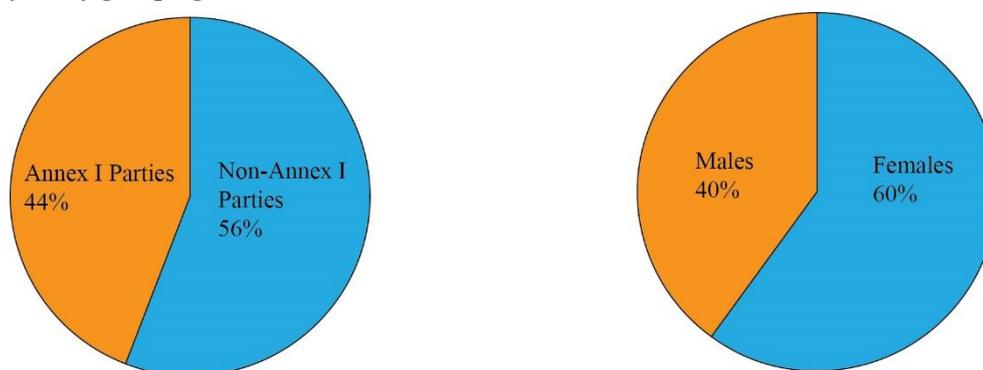
⁶ A Party's BR shall be reviewed in conjunction with its NC in the years in which both the BR and the NC are submitted (decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 101).

9. Pursuant to the UNFCCC review guidelines, the secretariat shall select the members of an ERT with a view to achieving both a geographical balance and a balance between experts from Annex I Parties and non-Annex I Parties in the overall composition.⁷ To this end, the composition of the ERTs for the BR5s and NC8s reviewed between February and May 2023 was broadly balanced, taking into account the areas of expertise and the gender balance needed in the teams and the experience in reviews and language proficiency of the experts in them.

10. A total of 95 experts from 61 Parties were involved in the BR5 and NC8 reviews conducted between February and May 2023. The composition of the ERTs for the reviews was largely balanced in terms of gender and Party grouping (non-Annex I and Annex I Parties) (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Distribution of experts participating in the technical review of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications between February and May 2023 by gender and by Party grouping



11. Of the 95 experts, 37 (39 per cent) were participating in the process for the first time, of whom 23 (62 per cent) were from non-Annex I Parties.

12. As in previous review cycles, the number of participating experts from the five United Nations geopolitical regional groups was fairly balanced, with 29 experts from Western European and other States, 24 from African States, 15 from Eastern European States, 15 from Latin American and Caribbean States and 12 from Asia-Pacific States (see figure 3).

13. In composing the ERTs, efforts were made to involve experts from small island developing States and the least developed countries. A total of 11 (12 per cent) such experts from 10 Parties⁸ participated in the reviews of BR5s and NC8s. The practice of involving new experts helps to increase the pool of experienced reviewers and provides opportunities for a larger number of experts to build their capacity in relation to MRV systems and contribute to implementation of the ETF.

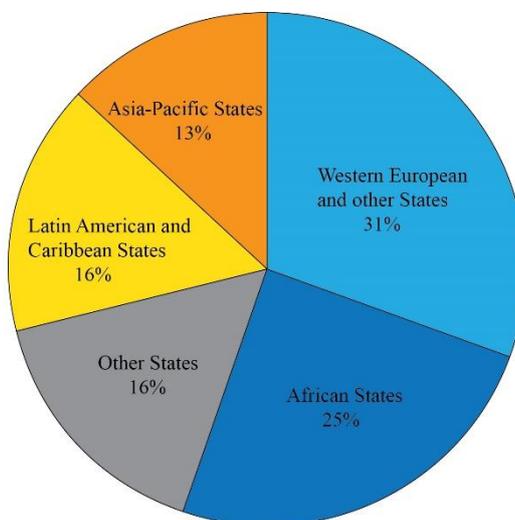
14. All but four Annex I Parties submitted their BR5s and NC8s either in English or accompanied by an English translation. One Party submitted its BR5 and NC8 in Spanish only, one Party in French only and two Parties in Russian only; ensuring the balanced composition of the ERTs reviewing those submissions was challenging.

⁷ Decision 13/CP.20, annex, para. 37.

⁸ Benin, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guyana, Liberia, Malawi, Saint Lucia, the Sudan and Zambia.

Figure 3

Distribution of experts participating in the technical review of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications between February and May 2023 by United Nations geopolitical regional group



III. Meeting of lead reviewers of biennial reports and national communications⁹

15. The 10th meeting of LR of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties was held in Bonn from 15 to 16 February 2023. A total of 113 experts were invited to the meeting, of whom 78 attended: 38 from non-Annex I Parties and 40 from Annex I Parties. A total of 17 co-leads of the technical analysis of biennial update reports of non-Annex I Parties participated in the meeting as observers.

16. In accordance with the UNFCCC review guidelines, both procedural and technical issues relating to the review of BRs and NCs were addressed at the meeting with a view to facilitating the work of the LR to ensure the consistency of reviews across Parties.

A. Approach and planning for the reviews of fifth biennial reports and eighth national communications

17. The LR noted the action taken by the secretariat to prepare for the review of the BR5s and NC8s and the review and multilateral assessment schedule for 2023–2024.¹⁰

18. The LR noted the improvements made to the BR5 and NC8 review process, namely shifting review efforts to the pre-review week to ensure timely delivery of review reports, using a single integrated review report template for BR5s and NC8s with assessment tables included in annexes, and providing preliminary findings to Parties on Tuesday of the review week. The LR requested the secretariat to collect and analyse experts' feedback on the review process and the improvements made and to present its analysis at the next annual

⁹ This section of the report is based on the conclusions of the 10th meeting of LR of BRs and NCs of Annex I Parties was held in Bonn from 15 to 16 February 2023.

¹⁰ The Annex I Parties reviewed from February to March 2023 will undergo multilateral assessment at SBI 59. The Parties that have been reviewed from September to November 2023 will be subject to multilateral assessment at SBI 60, and the Parties that will be reviewed from January to April 2024 will be subject to multilateral assessment at SBI 61.

meeting of LRs, including the analysis of potential for replicating the review practices in the reviews of biennial transparency reports, where relevant.

B. Improvements in the consistency of reviews

19. The LRs welcomed the enhanced tools for the technical review of BR5s and NC8s, including an integrated review report template for the reports on these technical reviews and a review checklist. The use of these tools will further improve the consistency and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the reviews. To facilitate the effectiveness of the BR5 and NC8 reviews, the LRs encouraged ERTs to allocate sufficient time for the reviews and to make extensive use of the tools so ERTs could benefit from them.

20. The LRs noted that in the integrated review reports for NC8s and BR5s the ERTs continue providing recommendations and encouragements to the Parties. Parties may find these recommendations and encouragements relevant, as appropriate, when preparing their first biennial transparency reports under the ETF. The LRs requested the secretariat to update the integrated review report template and the checklist for the review of NC8s and BR5s accordingly.

21. The LRs requested the secretariat to continue assessing the consistency of assessments and improvements in reporting across the review of BR5s and NC8s, as well as how reporting and review practices under the existing MRV arrangements have evolved through the BR review cycles and how these review practices can inform the reporting and technical expert review processes under the ETF, and present the assessment in the next meeting of LRs.

22. The LRs acknowledged the importance of the refresher seminar organized by the secretariat, including the hands-on practice in using the review report template for reports on the technical reviews of BR5s and NC8s and the review checklist, and the virtual team room for BRs, as well as in addressing the challenges that arise in the reporting and review process. The LRs welcomed this opportunity to exchange knowledge and share review skills among peers.

23. The LRs also welcomed the panel discussion on possible improvements to and optimizations of the review process, which covered both process- and substance-related topics.

24. The LRs request the secretariat to continue collecting information on and analysing the review-related issues raised by the ERTs during the review of BR5s and NC8s with a view to presenting its analysis for discussion at future meetings of LRs and to inform the review practice under the ETF, as appropriate.

IV. Training for reviewers of biennial reports and national communications

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

26. Since the previous of these annual reports was published,¹¹ one round of the training programme has been implemented and 215 nominated experts have registered for the training. Online examinations were held from 17 to 19 April 2023, resulting in 53 experts newly qualified to take part in the review of BRs and NCs (22 experts from Annex I Parties and 31 from non-Annex I Parties). Additionally, nine experts (six from Annex I Parties and three from non-Annex I Parties) expanded on or refreshed their knowledge by passing additional examinations.

¹¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2022/INF.2.