



**Framework Convention on
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Administrative, financial and institutional matters

Continuing review of the functions and operations of the secretariat

**Report on planned efficiency gains for the biennium 2012–
2013**

Note by the Executive Secretary

Summary

The secretariat has taken many measures to enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of its services to Parties and observers in recent years. The Executive Secretary will intensify efforts towards a ‘culture of innovation’ in the secretariat. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation may wish to take note of the initiatives taken or planned in order to continuously and systematically enhance efficiency across all secretariat programmes.

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I. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), at its thirty-fourth session, requested the Executive Secretary to provide a report on planned efficiency gains for the biennium 2012–2013 for its consideration at its thirty-fifth session.¹

II. Scope of the note

2. This document contains a report on initiatives planned or taken in order to continuously and systematically enhance efficiency across all secretariat programmes. It highlights some constraints currently faced by the secretariat in achieving the goal of becoming a top-performing organization.

III. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

3. The SBI may wish to take note of the information presented.

IV. Commitment and measures to increase efficiency

4. The Executive Secretary and the secretariat's Management Team are committed to continually enhancing the performance of the secretariat in the most economical and efficient way. Many measures are being taken to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretariat and the delivery of services to Parties and observers, including the following:

- (a) Optimizing the organizational structure in line with the priorities of the intergovernmental process;
- (b) Streamlining procedures;
- (c) Improving the speed and efficiency of internal processes;
- (d) Making the best use of available technology for automation, knowledge management, collaboration and communication;
- (e) Applying best practices in the management of programmes and projects;
- (f) Recruiting and retaining staff with the highest standards of efficiency, technical competence and integrity.

5. The following measures have been taken or systems established over the past two years:

- (a) The online job application system for secretariat posts is operational;
- (b) The online registration system for admitted organizations and media is accepting registrations;
- (c) The online roster of experts is functioning;
- (d) There is an increasing use of virtual participation through videoconferencing, Internet telephony and social media, including for communicating with partner organizations and for recruitment purposes;

¹ FCCC/SBI/2011/7, paragraph 191.

(e) Software development and support for reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and removals by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention and Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention have been consolidated;

(f) Support for the two national adaptation planning processes (national adaptation programmes of action and national adaptation plans) has been consolidated into one subprogramme, which enables lessons learned and good practices to be built upon;

(g) Support for the two adaptation work programmes (the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change and the work programme on loss and damage) has been consolidated into one subprogramme, which allows synergy to be realized in many areas and existing instruments and modalities to be built upon;

(h) Some editorial and logistical services, as well as graphic design, printing, webcast and security services, are outsourced;

(i) Training programmes are coordinated with local United Nations organizations.

6. Recently started initiatives include the following:

(a) Developing an online registration system for Parties;

(b) Enhancing strategic oversight of secretariat activities;

(c) Strengthening the secretariat's role in catalysing action by stakeholders in support of the implementation of the Convention;

(d) Speeding up the review of applications for vacancies through enhancements to the electronic recruitment system;

(e) Making more use of online learning programmes;

(f) Boosting collaboration among secretariat staff as well as with external stakeholders by introducing approaches and systems to make virtual consultation and work projects possible;

(g) Undertaking the first phase of a redesign and restructure of the UNFCCC website in order to enhance the efficient and effective use of available documentation and information by Parties, observers and other stakeholders;

(h) Reviewing the internal process for the preparation of official documents;

(i) Implementing standard project management methods and tools more widely, including training for many team leaders;

(j) Completing the implementation of electronic and physical records management across the secretariat.

V. Developing a framework for continuous improvement and efficiency

7. In the context of increasing resource constraints and a higher workload, the drive for efficiency becomes ever more pressing. The Executive Secretary has therefore decided to intensify efforts to achieve further efficiency gains across all secretariat programmes and to attain an enhanced 'culture of innovation'. This objective will be achieved by applying a systematic approach and by developing a framework for continuous improvement and efficiency enhancement, which will include the following elements:

- (a) Regular reviews of administrative processes;
- (b) The strategic use of information technology, in which the newly established Information Technology Services programme will play a key role;
- (c) Engaging all staff to identify and realize efficiency gains;
- (d) Adopting policies and standards in programme and project management;
- (e) Adopting policies for the monitoring and evaluation of programme performance;
- (f) Developing a methodology for measuring and reporting on efficiency gains, drawing on best practices in other organizations;
- (g) An internal communications programme to facilitate information sharing and collaboration among all programmes, including regular staff meetings, an internal newsletter and a redesigned Intranet.

8. Since the framework for continuous improvement and efficiency is emerging, many individual activities are in their planning stages, including the following:

- (a) The use of web-based meeting tools, which would enable the effective virtual participation of Parties, observers and the media in the UNFCCC process;
- (b) The development of a web portal for submissions by Parties;
- (c) The undertaking of process reviews intended to streamline administrative workflows, including the processes for staff contract extensions and travel claims;
- (d) The implementation of a travel database that allows an efficient tracking of the mode of transport, the costs of tickets, and the purpose and destinations of travel.

9. Efforts by the secretariat aimed at increasing efficiency are based on the premise that this should not result in cuts or reductions in the quality of the secretariat's outputs. Rather, eliminating inefficiencies and/or duplication of effort along the entire spectrum of the secretariat's workstreams will contribute to a higher performance in support of the intergovernmental process.

10. It should be noted that the secretariat faces some constraints in achieving higher levels of efficiency. For example, the secretariat relies on the United Nations Secretariat's Integrated Management Information System to meet its basic requirements and administrative needs in personnel management, budget implementation, treasury, accounting, payroll, procurement and travel. The secretariat's ability to implement pragmatic efficiency measures in the processing of administrative, human resources and financial transactions will be greatly enhanced through the planned introduction of a modern enterprise resource planning system by the United Nations Secretariat, which is scheduled for 2014.

11. A significant constraint to using resources more efficiently results from late agreement among Parties on the dates of sessional meetings. A significant lead time for the dates of sessions would enable the secretariat to negotiate the most economical venue arrangements. Further cost and staff-time savings can be realized by holding meetings at the seat of the secretariat, in Bonn, Germany, which also requires early decisions on meeting dates.

12. The Executive Secretary notes that making the secretariat a top-performing organization requires sustained effort and investment, including in the training of managers and other staff. The learning and communication process has started and is expected to result in a shift in organizational culture over the coming years. Best practices in United Nations organizations as well as in the private sectors of various countries are being

identified, and practical suggestions from staff are being solicited. A variety of methods and tools is available; the most suitable are being, or will be, adopted and implemented.
