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Subsidiary Body for Implementation

2020 secretariat activities, programme delivery highlights and financial performance

Annual report by the secretariat

Summary

The secretariat's 2020 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 2020. The full publication is available at <https://unfccc.int/annualreport>.



Abbreviations and acronyms

AC	Adaptation Committee
CDM	clean development mechanism
COP	Conference of the Parties
ETF	enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement
NAP	national adaptation plan
NAP Global Network	National Adaptation Plan Global Network
NDC	nationally determined contribution
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)
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation

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 SBI 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. SBI 49 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 2020 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 2021 onward.

II. Secretariat activities and key achievements in the UNFCCC process in 2020

A. Overview

3. The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic had significant implications for the UNFCCC calendar of events in 2020. However, the secretariat provided support to the COP 25 Presidency, the incoming COP 26 Presidency, the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and the Bureau of the governing bodies for maximizing progress in the intergovernmental process and minimizing delays towards achieving the objectives of the Convention and the Paris Agreement despite the pandemic.

4. The secretariat provided substantive, legal and procedural support to the Bureau in order to assist Parties in advancing work under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. To facilitate interaction among Parties, between Parties and non-Party stakeholders and across the United Nations system, the secretariat organized 473 virtual meetings and supported the work under the 13 constituted bodies and numerous work programmes, forums, panels and task forces under the UNFCCC. It processed 171 official documents and submissions, maintained its data portals and launched a new online calendar of events, Climate Hub 360.³

5. The Doha Amendment,⁴ whereby the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol was established in 2012, entered into force in 2020. The Amendment sets out strengthened emission limitation and reduction commitments for developed countries, including those with economies in transition, towards an overall goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 18 per cent compared with the 1990 level in 2013–2020.

6. Highlights of the work referred to in paragraphs 3–4 above are presented in chapter II.B below.

¹ Decision 21/CP.23, para. 18.

² FCCC/SBI/2018/22, para. 114.

³ <https://unfccc.int/calendar/dashboard>.

⁴ Decision 1/CMP.8.

B. Supporting the intergovernmental process

7. To maintain Party and stakeholder engagement in the intergovernmental process despite the postponement of the in-person sessions, two virtual event series, which did not include any formal negotiations or decision-making, were conducted under the guidance of the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies in collaboration with the COP 25 and 26 Presidencies and with the support of the secretariat. The UNFCCC June Momentum for Climate Change,⁵ held from 1 to 10 June 2020, featured 23 events for showcasing progress of climate action and provided a platform for information exchange and engagement among participants on a wide variety of topics. The UNFCCC Climate Dialogues 2020,⁶ held from 23 November to 4 December 2020, was one of the largest virtual United Nations events in 2020, with 83 meetings and over 8,000 registered participants.

8. The secretariat designed and facilitated more specific, visible and impactful ways than previously of engaging non-Party stakeholders, including observer organizations, in the UNFCCC process. Key initiatives include the Race to Zero campaign,⁷ launched by the current high-level champions, the *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2020*⁸ and the revised Climate Action Pathways⁹ under the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action; Climate Neutral Now;¹⁰ the United Nations Global Climate Action Awards;¹¹ and Action for Climate Empowerment.¹²

9. The secretariat continued to support countries in preparing their NDCs. As at 31 December 2020, 48 updated or new NDCs (38 updated and 10 new) had been received from 75 Parties.¹³ Owing to delays in Parties submitting their NDCs as a result of the impacts of the pandemic, the secretariat decided to publish two editions of the NDC synthesis report: an initial version in February 2021¹⁴ and a final version before COP 26. In addition, as at 31 December 2020, 28 Parties had submitted long-term low-emission development strategies.

10. The regional collaboration centres, operated by the secretariat with partner organizations, were instrumental in supporting Parties' adaptation and mitigation efforts thanks to their organization of small region-specific virtual events. In the light of the pandemic, a regional virtual platform¹⁵ was launched that provides information and resources relevant to such events. Meanwhile, the focus of the Nairobi Framework Partnership, in which the secretariat is a partner, was on enhancing the capacity of designated national authorities to become fully operational; building the capacity of project developers to implement CDM activities; promoting opportunities for project developers and investors to invest in CDM activities; improving information-sharing, outreach and training in relation to CDM stakeholders, including designated national authorities; and strengthening inter-agency coordination in carrying out these activities.

11. In relation to the constituted bodies, the secretariat supported the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures in holding a virtual meeting to initiate implementation of its workplan and define a strategy for delivering the activities.

12. With regard to adaptation, the secretariat also supported the Least Developed Countries Expert Group in directly engaging with Parties through virtual dialogues in order to monitor progress, identify challenges and provide targeted technical assistance in the area

⁵ See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/june-momentum-for-climate-change>.

⁶ See <https://unfccc.int/cd2020>.

⁷ See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign>.

⁸ UNFCCC. 2020. *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2020*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/267246>.

⁹ See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate-action-pathways>.

¹⁰ See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/climate-neutral-now>.

¹¹ See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/GCA-awards-2021>.

¹² See <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/the-big-picture/what-is-action-for-climate-empowerment>.

¹³ The NDC of the European Union was submitted on behalf of its 27 member States.

¹⁴ FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/2 and Add.1–3.

¹⁵ <https://unfccc.int/about-us/partnerships/current-calls-for-partnerships/regional-collaboration-centres/regional-virtual-platform>.

of adaptation. The Group published its 2020 report on progress in the process to formulate and implement NAPs.¹⁶

13. With the support of the secretariat and in collaboration with the NAP Global Network, the AC published a toolkit for engaging the private sector in NAPs¹⁷ and delivered its first two outputs in support of implementation of the Paris Agreement, namely a synthesis report on how developing countries are addressing climate hazards as part of their adaptation efforts¹⁸ and an online inventory of methodologies for assessing adaptation needs.¹⁹ The AC also published a technical paper on data for adaptation at different spatial and temporal scales.²⁰ Meanwhile, the technical examination process on adaptation under the UNFCCC concluded in 2020 after five years, ending with a visual art competition for participants aged 17 or under.

14. An important focus of the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change was on collaboration with researchers and students from academic institutions on developing climate scenarios to support national decision-making. Furthermore, the secretariat is working under the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative on closing priority adaptation knowledge gaps in the West Asia/Gulf Cooperation Council and North Africa subregions and was involved in launching the Initiative in the Pacific small island developing States subregion.²¹

15. In addition, the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts focused on providing information and enhancing understanding of risk management approaches and climate-related human mobility. Furthermore, the secretariat supported the Executive Committee in launching three expert groups to increase cooperation for relevant action and support, slow onset events and non-economic losses.

16. The secretariat supported the Technology Executive Committee in hosting three events for Parties at the June Momentum and the Climate Dialogues, four virtual regional technical expert meetings and a session as part of the 2020 Global Sustainable Technology and Innovation Community conference. The secretariat continued to support implementation of the global technology needs assessment project, whereby developing countries are assisted in assessing their climate technology needs and the implementation of their technology action plans is monitored.

17. The secretariat supported the PCCB in successfully delivering the activities in its first workplan and preparing its second workplan. The PCCB Network²² was launched in 2020 to increase the reach and impact of capacity-building efforts under the Paris Agreement. In addition, the secretariat co-created an online course on the Paris Agreement as a development agenda²³ for development practitioners and conducted capacity-building related to legal aspects of the UNFCCC process.

18. The secretariat supported the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform in implementing the workplan of the Platform for 2020–2021, developing a dedicated web portal and organizing virtual events.

19. With regard to climate finance, the secretariat supported both a virtual meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board, which increased the flexibility of its process in the light of the

¹⁶ FCCC/SBI/2020/INF.13.

¹⁷ Crawford A, Church C and Ledwell C. 2020. *Toolkit for Engaging the Private Sector in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs): Supplement to the UNFCCC Technical Guidelines for the NAP Process*. NAP Global Network and UNFCCC. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development. Available at <https://napglobalnetwork.org/resource/toolkit-for-engaging-the-private-sector-in-national-adaptation-plans-naps/>.

¹⁸ AC. 2020. *How developing countries are addressing hazards, focusing on relevant lessons learned and good practices*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/267818>.

¹⁹ <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/SearchAsses.aspx>.

²⁰ AC. 2020. *Data for adaptation at different spatial and temporal scales*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/267555>.

²¹ See <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/laki.aspx>.

²² See <https://unfccc.int/pccb-network>.

²³ See <https://www.unssc.org/courses/paris-agreement-climate-change-development-agenda-2/>.

pandemic by approving and monitoring projects virtually; and the consultations of the Standing Committee on Finance on the key themes of its 2021 Forum. Lastly, the secretariat supported the assessment under the Needs-based Finance project of climate finance needs and flows in more than 100 participating countries.

20. The secretariat continued to assist Parties in implementing the existing measurement, reporting and verification arrangements under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, including by coordinating reviews and technical analyses and organizing meetings of lead reviewers, and in preparing for implementation of the ETF. It provided training on transparency to 1,147 developing country experts and published a reference manual for the ETF.²⁴ The secretariat completed 91 technical reviews, analyses and assessments of annual greenhouse gas inventory submissions, biennial reports, biennial update reports, and submissions on REDD+ forest reference emission levels and results; and prepared and published 112 reports thereon. The international assessment and review of fourth biennial reports was launched in 2020, with 124 experts from 66 Parties participating in the review of the 30 biennial reports submitted. The secretariat also continued to support the Consultative Group of Experts in implementing its workplan and publishing resources. In addition, the secretariat is supporting the development of an initiative to promote universal participation in relation to the ETF.²⁵

21. A total of 70.9 million certified emission reduction (or carbon) credits were issued to developing countries hosting CDM projects – the highest volume since 2013 and a 40 per cent increase since 2019. Voluntary cancellations of carbon credits increased by 80 per cent compared with the 2019 level, attributable to private companies' corporate social responsibility programmes, citizens' climate action and the conversion of certified emission reductions in other schemes. The secretariat continued to support the CDM, proactively reaching out to entrepreneurs, project developers and the public to help them understand the carbon credit market. Consequently, the United Nations carbon offset platform cancelled over a million carbon credits in 2020, which is the equivalent of reducing the collective carbon footprint by 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

22. The secretariat continued to support knowledge-sharing in the areas of science and policy, including by collating updates on the state of the global climate system and obtaining inputs from the systematic observation community and climate services in order to support mitigation and adaptation action and reporting. In addition, it provided inputs for the second periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and the global stocktake.

23. Continuing its efforts to mainstream gender considerations in all aspects of its work, the secretariat disseminated the toolkit for a gender-responsive process to formulate and implement NAPs²⁶ among Parties and supported the Technology Executive Committee in mainstreaming gender considerations in its work. It also supported the five-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan by organizing a series of five regional workshops, five advocacy, communication and networking skills workshops and two global events in collaboration with United Nations entities and other organizations actively working on gender and climate change issues.

24. Being more flexible, agile and service-oriented following its structural review proved effective for the secretariat in addressing the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Its digital work environment – which includes a cloud-based data centre, robust data collection, storage and dissemination systems, trained staff, a virtual and broadcasting production team, and meeting rooms equipped to accommodate hybrid online and on-site meetings – had already been set up, enabling continued high-quality service provision and continuity in the processes supported by the secretariat.

²⁴ UNFCCC. 2020. *Reference Manual for the Enhanced Transparency Framework under the Paris Agreement*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/268136>.

²⁵ See <https://unfccc.int/initiative-of-universal-participation-in-the-etf>.

²⁶ NAP Global Network and UNFCCC. 2019. *Toolkit for a Gender-Responsive Process to Formulate and Implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)*. A Dazé and C Church (eds.). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development. Available at <http://www.napglobalnetwork.org/resource/toolkit-for-gender-responsive-national-adaptation-plans/>.

25. The secretariat worked closely with any representatives of Parties, review experts or other participants who experienced connectivity issues during virtual events to find solutions on a case-by-case basis.

26. The secretariat also worked on improving the UNFCCC website and launched a series of online videos to highlight and explain key concepts of the UNFCCC process to the public. Its outreach through social and digital media led to an all-time high of 3 million website users and 2 million followers on social media.

C. Financial performance

27. The annual report provides key financial results for 2020, 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 documents on the status of contributions and fees as at 31 December 2020²⁷ and the programme budget for the biennium 2020–2021.²⁸

D. Secretariat staff

28. The secretariat maintains a diverse and balanced workforce that is representative of the Parties it serves. At the end of 2020, the secretariat workforce comprised 381 fixed-term and temporary staff. The annual report outlines the staff composition by gender, geography, level and funding source.

III. Outlook for 2021 onward

29. In 2021, the secretariat is focusing on raising the ambition of reducing greenhouse gas emissions for addressing climate change, building climate resilience on the basis of the best available science and ensuring the availability of climate financing. It will support the launch of the Race to Resilience campaign,²⁹ the aim of which is to facilitate investment in resilience by businesses, investors, cities and civil society. The secretariat will continue to broaden its stakeholder engagement, step up its outreach to Parties and expand its collaboration with United Nations entities, academic institutions, research organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses and civil society.

30. The secretariat will also continue to support the transition to the ETF, in particular by helping to build the capacity of national experts to undertake the mandated technical reviews. The secretariat reminds Parties of the increased demand for qualified and available experts, especially from developed country Parties, to undertake the reviews, and encourages them to consider nominating additional experts for this purpose as soon as possible.

31. Finally, the secretariat is working closely with the COP 25 and 26 Presidencies, the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and the Bureau to ensure the success of COP 26 on the basis of collaboration, honoured commitments and high levels of ambition.

²⁷ FCCC/SBI/2021/INF.1.

²⁸ FCCC/SBI/2019/4 and Add.1–2.

²⁹ <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/system/resilience/>.