



## Understanding transparency and accountability

Reporting is one of the cornerstones of the UN climate change regime: it provides transparency and is the basis for understanding and gauging the implementation of the [Convention](#), the [Kyoto Protocol](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#).

To achieve the objective of the Convention, Parties need accurate, consistent and internationally comparable data on trends in GHG emissions and on efforts to change these trends. Communicating information on the most effective ways to reduce emissions and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change also puts the world collectively on the path towards more sustainable forms of development.

Under the Convention, all Parties must communicate certain information to the COP, through the secretariat, within agreed time lines. The two main elements of this information are the details on their activities to implement the Convention—that is, their climate change policies and measures—and their [national inventories of GHGs](#). The required contents of national reports and the timetable for their submission are different for [Annex I Parties](#) and [Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention](#) (non-Annex I Parties), in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Annex I Parties are required to include supplementary information relating to their implementation of the protocol.

All Parties to the Paris Agreement will report under its enhanced transparency framework for action and support.

## What types of reports does the UNFCCC use?

### National communications

All Parties are committed to submitting reports—known as [National Communications \(NCs\)](#)—on the actions that they are taking to implement the Convention. The COP provides the guidelines for Parties to use for reporting. Since 1995, these guidelines have been revised and improved based on Parties' experiences of using them.

[Annex I Parties must report more often and in more detail](#). The secretariat compiles a summary of the information in these reports, which are often hundreds of pages long. Both the [individual NCs](#) and the secretariat summaries are available on the UNFCCC website. NCs from Annex I Parties provide information on: emissions and removals of GHGs; national circumstances; policies and measures; vulnerability assessment; financial resources and transfer of technology; education, training and public awareness; and any other activities undertaken to implement the Convention.

Annex I Parties that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol must also include supplementary information in their NCs and their annual inventories of emissions and removals of GHGs to demonstrate compliance with the Kyoto Protocol commitments.

With respect to non-Annex I parties, the information required is less detailed than for Annex I Parties. [NCs](#) from developing countries provide information on GHG inventories, measures to mitigate emissions and efforts to facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change. Developing country Parties are required to submit their first NC within three years of entering the Convention, and every four years thereafter. For some non-Annex I Parties, the preparation of NCs depends on the receipt of funding. The LDCs may prepare one at their discretion.

### Biennial reports

[Biennial reports \(BRs\)](#) outline the progress of Annex I Parties in achieving emission reductions and the provision of financial, technology and capacity-building support to non-Annex I Parties. The first BRs were submitted in January 2014, and the second and subsequent ones are due two years after the due date of a full NC (i.e. 2016, 2020, etc.).

### Biennial update reports

**Biennial update reports (BURs)** are submitted by developing country Parties and provide an update of the information presented in **NCs**, in particular, on national GHG inventories, mitigation actions, constraints and gaps, including support needed and received. The first BURs were submitted in December 2014 and every two years thereafter. LDC Parties and small island developing States may submit BURs at their own discretion.

### What are greenhouse gas inventories?

All Parties are committed to compiling inventories of GHG emissions. **The IPCC has developed inventory methodologies for the national reporting of GHG emissions** that countries use to develop their national inventories. [Annex I Parties](#) are required to submit a separate inventory of their GHG emissions every year, covering emissions and removals of direct GHGs from sectors such as: energy; industrial processes and product use; agriculture, forestry and land use; and waste sectors. [Non-Annex I Parties](#) compile these as part of their [National Communications](#) (NCs) and are not required to submit a separate annual emissions inventory.

### How are the reports reviewed?

**NCs and GHG inventories from Annex I Parties undergo an in-depth review by teams of independent experts.** This process provides a thorough technical assessment of each Party's commitments and the steps taken towards implementation. Teams are selected from a roster of experts nominated by Parties and coordinated by the secretariat. The [in-depth reviews](#) typically draw on findings from visits to the country concerned, as well as desk-based studies. In addition to assessing the implementation of commitments by Annex I Parties, the in-depth reports allow easier comparison of information between the NCs of Parties, although no common indicators are used.

### What are the latest reporting developments under the Convention?

At the climate change conferences in Cancun, in 2010, and Durban, in 2011, Parties took steps to improve the system of reporting and verification under the UNFCCC. They decided to enhance reporting for all countries and to conduct [international assessment and review](#) (IAR) of information in [biennial reports](#) (BRs) from developed countries and [international consultation and analysis](#) (ICA) of [biennial update reports](#) (BURs) from developing countries.

This marked a major change from the existing reporting and review system, particularly for developing countries, because information from these countries has largely been reported on an infrequent basis and has not been reviewed. Establishing a system that combines improved reporting with some form of international verification process could improve the quality of information available internationally and increase confidence in the integrity of the information reported. This would help to build trust between countries and potentially also increase the level of ambition of mitigation actions.

#### **International assessment and review**

The IAR process aims to promote the comparability of efforts among all developed country Parties with regard to their quantified economy-wide emission limitation and reduction targets. Parties adopted detailed guidelines for the preparation of BRs and modalities and procedures for IAR. The process includes two steps: a technical review of BRs, where relevant, in conjunction with a review of annual GHG inventories and NCs of developed country Parties, which will result in an individual review report for each developed country Party; and a multilateral assessment of developed country Parties' progress in implementation. The multilateral assessment will be conducted under a working group session of the SBI for each developed country Party, with the participation of all Parties. The Party under review may make a brief oral presentation, followed by oral questions from other Parties and responses by the Party under review.

#### **International consultation and analysis**

The ICA process aims to increase the transparency of mitigation actions and their effects. It includes a technical analysis conducted by a team of technical experts and a facilitative sharing of views in the form of a workshop, where Parties will exchange information and experiences on the BURs and the summary reports.

#### **Biennial assessment and overview of financial flows**

This relatively new reporting process focuses on climate finance. The [Standing Committee on Finance](#) (SCF), established in 2010, aims to assist the COP in guiding the financial mechanism and in improving transparency in terms of measurement, reporting and verification of support. A key activity is the preparation of a biennial assessment and overview of climate finance flows. The SCF has established a dedicated working group for these reports, which will also work between the COP and CMP sessions and serve as liaison between the SCF and external stakeholders, with whom the SCF engages in extensive outreach activities. This aspect of the work of the SCF is strongly linked with the work of other bodies, most notably the SBI and the

SBSTA. Close cooperation and liaison with all stakeholders involved will be essential for the work of the SCF on the biennial assessments and overview of climate finance flows.

## What are the mechanism for reporting and compliance under the Kyoto Protocol?

### Supplementary reporting

[Annex I Parties](#) that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol are also required to report supplementary information required under Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Kyoto Protocol, with the inventory submission due under the Convention, in accordance with paragraph 3(a) of decision 15/CMP.1.

The reports of Annex I Kyoto Protocol Parties are subject to review by international expert review teams (ERTs), which prepare review reports and, under certain circumstances, may also identify questions of implementation or recommend adjustments.

### The Kyoto Protocol compliance mechanism

In addition to the reporting and review arrangements, the Kyoto Protocol also established a [Compliance Committee](#), which is designed to strengthen the Kyoto Protocol's environmental integrity, ensure the transparency of Parties' accounting and reporting, and support the credibility of the carbon market. Its objective is to facilitate, promote and enforce compliance with the commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. It is among the most comprehensive and rigorous compliance systems for a multilateral environmental agreement. The Compliance Committee has two branches – the enforcement branch and the facilitative branch – each of which is composed of 10 members and has a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Committee also meets as a Plenary, usually twice a year. The branches meet as often as required. The Compliance Committee reports annually to the CMP. More information is available [here](#).

## Transparency and accountability under the Paris Agreement

### Enhanced transparency framework for action and support

The Paris Agreement establishes an enhanced transparency framework for action and support for all Parties, but affording flexibility to those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities. The enhanced framework provides for reporting, which includes provision of national GHG inventory reports, information to track progress of Parties' implementation of NDCs, information on climate change impacts and adaptation, as well as on financial, technology and capacity-building support that a Party has provided or, respectively, that it has received. The information submitted by each Party will also undergo a technical expert review.

The APA is tasked to develop, by 2018, common modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs) for the framework, building on experience from the Convention's transparency arrangements and allowing for the afore-mentioned flexibility. These MPGs will eventually supersede the measurement, reporting and verification system established by the COP decisions of Cancun and Durban, in 2010 and 2011. .

### Facilitating implementation and promoting compliance

The Paris Agreement also establishes a mechanism to facilitate implementation of and promote compliance with the provisions of the Agreement. The mechanism will consist of a committee of 12 members (to be elected by the CMA on the basis of equitable geographical representation). The committee shall be expert-based and facilitative, functioning in a transparent, non-adversarial, non-punitive manner. It shall pay particular attention to the respective national capabilities and circumstances of Parties and will report annually to the CMA.

Again, Parties agreed to elaborate modalities and procedures for the effective operation of the Committee. These are being developed under the APA for consideration and adoption by the CMA, latest by 2018.