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SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Twenty-first session

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Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda

Methodological issues

Issues relating to greenhouse gas inventories

Synthesis of views on options for the development of a data interface

Note by the secretariat

Summary

A synthesis of Parties' views on a possible data interface, compiled in document FCCC/SBSTA/2004/MISC.11 and Add.1, is presented. Two of the options previously considered by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (see FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9) have been revised, and issues for possible consideration by Parties have been identified. Parties may wish to consider the issues identified in this document and provide additional guidance to the secretariat, if needed.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its nineteenth session, invited Parties to submit to the secretariat their views on a possible data interface and other issues raised in document FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9. It requested the secretariat to provide a synthesis of the views of Parties and decided to continue consideration of this matter at its twenty-first session.¹

B. Scope of the note

2. This note is based on views submitted as of 30 August 2004 by Australia, Japan, Netherlands on behalf of the European Community and its member States, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United States of America and Uzbekistan (FCCC/SBSTA/2004/MISC.11 and Add.1). These submissions were used to update options 1 and 3 for a possible data interface, as described in document FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9 (see chapter III) and to compile a list of issues that could be considered by the SBSTA (see chapter IV).

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

3. The SBSTA is invited to consider the information in this document and to decide on further steps on this matter.

II. Background

4. The SBSTA, at its nineteenth session, considered the report, contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9, on the availability, accessibility and comparability of existing sources of emissions data and relevant socio-economic data, including options for the development, hosting and management of a data interface and associated cost implications. In summary, the four options identified in that document were:

- (a) **Option 1: Improve Internet links to external data sources.** The UNFCCC web site could provide links to external sources of emissions and socio-economic data. Parties could go directly to various web sites, pay for the data, as applicable, and do their own analyses
- (b) **Option 2: Develop software to search external data sources.** The secretariat could develop and host a software program to search for specific emissions and socio-economic data on pre-specified sites. Parties could go to UNFCCC web site, specify and search for data, and do their own analyses
- (c) **Option 3: Improve data and analyses on the UNFCCC web site.** The amount of data on the UNFCCC web site could be expanded; a simple tool could be provided to analyse data
- (d) **Option 4: Data and analytical tools on an external web site.** An external source could be authorized to collect and maintain data and provide tools to analyse data.

¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2003/15, paragraph 14 (e).

5. At the same session, the SBSTA:²
- (a) Reaffirmed the importance of reliable information relevant to climate change and recognized that the secretariat's Greenhouse Gas Information System is the authoritative repository of greenhouse gas (GHG) data reported by Parties to the Convention. It requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to improve access to GHG data and other relevant information on the UNFCCC web site and through other means;
 - (b) Noted the need to improve access by Parties to existing data and analytical tools, with a view to, inter alia, assisting Parties to build their capacity for analysis and decision-making and to implement their commitments under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. It recognized that the development of a data interface could be an important approach to meeting this need;
 - (c) Requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to initiate a scoping phase for consideration of a data interface and to facilitate this by providing links on the UNFCCC web site to the sources of data referenced in document FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9.

III. Synthesis of views of Parties

A. General

6. The secretariat received eight submissions from Parties, which are included in document FCCC/SBSTA/2004/MISC.11 and Add.1. Generally, all Parties support the efforts of the secretariat to provide access to emissions and socio-economic data. There is general agreement that the data reported by Parties in their GHG inventories and national communications constitute the official information that is to be used for the purposes of the Convention process. These data cannot and should not be replaced by any information external to the UNFCCC process. In addition, Parties call for ensuring that any work undertaken should not duplicate existing efforts and should be done in a cost-effective manner.

7. Based on the views of Parties, options 1, 3 and 4 of document FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9 could be considered further. In this document, options 1 and 3 are revised based on proposals by Parties. For completeness, the description of option 4, as presented in FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9, is also included here. Issues for possible further consideration are listed in chapter IV.

8. Parties should note that the implementation costs of the options for a possible data interface vary depending on the requirements for software and data maintenance and none of the options is reflected in the secretariat's programme budget for the biennium 2004–2005.

B. Option 1: Improve Internet links to external data sources

9. Responding to the request by the SBSTA, at its nineteenth session,³ the secretariat provided links on the UNFCCC web site to those external sources of emissions and socio-economic data that were listed in FCCC/SBSTA/2003/INF.9.⁴ These links are primarily to so-called 'primary' sources (i.e. the original source of data) and do not include links to those sites which reproduce data or provide only national data (such as national climate change web sites), or those of estimates of corporate emissions data. However, a few secondary sources, which are noteworthy for compiling and presenting large quantities of data, have also been included.

² FCCC/SBSTA/2003/15, paragraph 14 (c)–(e).

³ FCCC/SBSTA/2003/15, paragraph 14 (e).

⁴ See <http://unfccc.int/methods_and_science/other_methodological_issues/items/3170.php>.

10. The secretariat would continue to maintain this web page, would make every effort to ensure that these Internet links are regularly verified and updated and, if needed, delete links to web sites that are no longer active. Parties could propose additional links to web sites that are maintained by international and non-governmental organizations or use data reported by Parties.

11. The resource requirements for this option would be staff time to maintain general information on the contents of the data sources and ensure that links are up to date. By holding to the current number of data sources on the UNFCCC web site, and provided that no further research work is required, the web site could be maintained at no additional cost.

12. This option improves Parties' awareness of data and data sources, but it does not necessarily improve access to these data. Because the data are not maintained by the secretariat, access is determined by any restrictions and fees imposed by the data source. Parties are not able to search for specific data through the UNFCCC web site, but have to search the web sites directly.

C. Option 3: Improve data and analyses on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change web site

13. Expanding the amount of data available on the UNFCCC web site and providing a tool to analyse these data was identified as a preferable option by some Parties. Two alternatives for this option are presented here: use of **United Nations data only** and use of **United Nations and other international data**.

14. For both alternatives, the secretariat would have to formalize data cooperation with several organizations. Currently, data are provided directly to the secretariat, for example from the United Nations Statistics Division and the Energy Statistics Division of the International Energy Agency (IEA), through informal data-sharing arrangements. Efforts to date have focused solely on data sharing, so the secretariat would need to explore options for reproducing data on the UNFCCC web site.

15. To enable Parties to perform analyses on the UNFCCC web site, a web-based software tool would need to be developed to allow users to sort and view the data in different ways. The desired capabilities and features of such a tool would affect the cost implications of this option.

1. United Nations data only

16. The GHG data available on the UNFCCC web site would be supplemented by:

- (a) Other information available within the UNFCCC process, for example information from national communications, reports on global climate observing systems, and national adaptation programmes of action
- (b) Socio-economic data, which are reported by governments and are collected, maintained and distributed within the United Nations system, for example data from the United Nations Statistics Division, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), etc.

17. Because of extensive analyses and processing by the relevant collecting organizations, data sets from other United Nations bodies are comprehensive, comparable across countries and consistent across time. Any gaps in the available data would not be filled in by using data from non-United Nations sources.

2. United Nations and other international data

18. In addition to the United Nations data mentioned above, information from other international organizations, for example the IEA, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Bank would be used. If the same type of data is available from more than one source, selection criteria would be needed to decide on which source should be used. Because, in most cases, external emissions data are not directly comparable to UNFCCC data, they would have to be kept completely separated from reported emissions data. Further consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of providing non-UNFCCC data on the UNFCCC web site, vis-à-vis quality and credibility of emissions estimates.

19. In addition to the issues mentioned in paragraph 14, there could be administrative and legal hurdles involved in negotiating cooperative data arrangements with organizations outside the United Nations system. Although most organizations will provide data on a subscription basis, use and further publication may be restricted by copyright and licensing agreements. The secretariat may require the explicit consent of the source organization in order to reproduce data on the UNFCCC web site.

3. Cost implications

20. Some work to expand the quantity of data and analytic features available through the UNFCCC Greenhouse Gas Information System is planned (for which supplementary funding is sought), but additional resources would be needed to implement this option. The level of resources required would depend on the quantity of additional data requested, the extent of data processing and the type of analyses to be conducted.

21. Assuming that formal cooperative data-sharing arrangements could be established with external data sources so that minimal data processing is required by the secretariat, about USD 15,000 per year would be required for staff time to maintain the additional data sets. Similarly, if only simple data analyses, such as presentation of data on emissions intensity or side-by-side country comparisons, are required, the incremental costs for the development of the information system would be minimal. However, if large quantities of data are added, extensive data processing is required, and more complicated analyses are desired, additional resources would be required for software development and maintenance and data management. A conservative estimate would be about USD 150,000 for software development and USD 50,000 annually for database management. The cost estimates mentioned here do not include costs for acquiring data from other organizations.

D. Option 4: Data and analytical tools on an external web site

22. Under this option, Parties would select and authorize an external organization to make existing data and an analytical tool available through a link with the UNFCCC web site. Responsibility for the type, quality and format of the data would rest with the external organization. The design, development and maintenance of any analytical tools, and all administrative, legal and financial arrangements, would also be the responsibility of the external organization. The web site and analytical tools would be the property of the external organization, and the secretariat would exert no control over the content. Given that several external sources already provide fairly comprehensive data interfaces, selecting one or more of these organizations would avoid the need for data collection and/or new software development, and thus may be relatively low cost in the short term. However, the implications, including financial ones, of such an arrangement for the long term would require careful consideration.

E. Other issues

23. One Party raised the issue of common but differentiated responsibilities, transfer of technology for use in a data interface and the need for resources for improvement in the institutional capacity of developing countries with regard to data access and management. This Party indicated that there is a link between the possible development of a data interface and the development of win-win policies and measures that would meet both the need to reduce emissions and the need to minimize adverse social, environmental and economic impacts on developing countries, especially those identified in Article 4.8 and 4.9 of the Convention. It also mentioned that there are links between the development of methodologies for such policies and measures and development of methodologies to assist developing countries to examine their vulnerability to terms of trade and socio-economic impacts, including factors such as market approaches (taxes, subsidies, and cap-and-trade), regulations and research and development. Furthermore, it indicated that emphasis should be given to the potential spillover effects due to response measures taken by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties).

IV. Issues for possible consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

24. **Maintenance of existing web site.** Advice from Parties on the usefulness of maintaining the existing list of links to external web sites would be valuable. Parties may wish to consider whether links to other web sites should also be included and, if so, whether criteria need to be defined for the inclusion of any such new links.

25. **Availability of UNFCCC information.** The secretariat provides access to GHG data through the UNFCCC web site.⁵ The available information is limited to emissions data from the source/sink categories listed in Table 7A of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*. Parties may wish to consider whether more detailed information from the GHG inventory submissions by Parties should be made available on the UNFCCC web site. Parties may also wish to consider what other numerical information (e.g. information on projections or other country-specific socio-economic data from national communications)⁶ could also be made available.

26. **Option for further development.** Advice from Parties is needed on which of options 3 and 4, if any, should be further pursued. If any of the two options is preferred, the following issues should be addressed:

(a) For option 3:

- (i) **Use of United Nations data.** Taking into account that the United Nations Statistics Division collects and publishes regularly a large amount of statistical socio-economic information, consideration should be given to what type of data and the level of detail/disaggregation would be reproduced on the UNFCCC web site
- (ii) **Use of non-United Nations data.** Criteria may need to be developed for the selection of data from various sources (e.g. credibility and reliability of source, regularly updated information). If GHG emissions data are available from

⁵ <<http://unfccc.int/ghg>>.

⁶ Exchange of information on policies and measures will be considered under item 7 of the provisional agenda for SBSTA 21.

external sources, guidance on how this information should be treated would be useful

- (iii) **Time frame and resource implications.** Parties would need to consider a realistic schedule for this work, taking into account the current resource limitations of the secretariat and the fact that this work is not included in the programme budget for the biennium 2004–2005
- (b) For option 4:
 - (i) **Selection of an external organization.** Parties may wish to agree upon terms of reference and selection criteria to be applied when deciding on an external organization and consider the financial implications of this option
 - (ii) **Role of the secretariat.** Parties should provide guidance on the role of the secretariat during the development of the data interface, including on what UNFCCC data should be provided to the external organization
- (c) **Analytical software tool.** Parties would need to agree upon the general features of the analytical tool to be developed, such as web-based only or web-based and CD-ROM, level of data disaggregation (i.e. country totals or sector- and source-specific information), pre-defined or user-specific queries, search engine, and possibly an on-line training/help manual
- (d) **Policies and measures, impacts and methodologies.** In relation to the issues mentioned in paragraph 23, it appears that policies and measures and impacts and methodologies would relate to how available information could be used by Parties. During SBSTA 21, a discussion will take place (agenda item 7 of the provisional agenda) on options for approaches to sharing experiences and exchanging information on “good practices” in policies and measures, including the possible development of a web-based tool for policies and measures.⁷ Parties may wish to consider the issues relating to policies and measures and relevant methodologies under that agenda item. Under item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda, Parties may wish to consider what information from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) would be needed to enable Annex I Parties to undertake an assessment of possible social, environmental and economic impacts on non-Annex I Parties.

⁷ See FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.10.