

**CDM-EB87-AA-A04**

## Concept note

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# Further development of the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centres

Version 01.0



**United Nations**  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change

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## 1. Procedural background

1. The Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC) initiative was established by the UNFCCC secretariat in response to mandates it received from the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP). Since the adoption of decision 1/CMP.2, the CMP has emphasized the need to address the issue of inequity in the regional and sub-regional distribution of CDM projects and has mandated the secretariat with a number of tasks related to the enhancement of capacity of, and direct assistance to, stakeholders in the CDM. The CMP subsequently reiterated and updated these mandates (decisions 3/CMP.6, 8/CMP.7 and 5/ CMP.8), indicating the urgency to provide direct support to countries underrepresented in the CDM, in particular Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African countries for, inter alia, skills enhancement, institutional strengthening and the development of standardized baselines.
2. The secretariat initially responded to these mandates through a variety of activities, including regional carbon forums, DNA regional and global meetings and training, and activities under the Nairobi Framework partnership. These activities yielded some impact, however the stakeholders and Parties concerned still lacked sufficient tangible support, on the ground to support them in upskilling and the implementation of projects and programmes of activities (PoAs).
3. The secretariat followed these activities in 2013 with the establishment of the RCCs, which were conceived as a cost-effective way to engage and support Parties and stakeholders in a more active, concrete and continuous manner. CMP 8 and subsequent sessions welcomed the establishment of the RCCs “to promote the CDM in regions underrepresented in the CDM and to support stakeholders at the regional and national levels” (decision 5/CMP.8).
4. As part of its management plan for 2015, the Board initiated an independent third-party evaluation of the work conducted by the RCCs with regard to their overall effectiveness and efficiency of operations. This evaluation was conducted between May and September 2015 and the report was presented by the consultant to EB 86. The report contained analysis of the work undertaken by the four RCCs and, at the overall level of the RCC initiative, proposed several areas of improvement and explored possible future directions. Furthermore, as part of Board’s workplan for 2015, the Board requested a report on the operations of the RCC, for consideration at EB 87.
5. Also at EB 86, after considering the evaluation report, the Board requested the secretariat to prepare a concept note on plans for the future of the RCCs initiative, if possible for consideration by the Board at EB 87, in particular with regard to:
  - (a) Prioritization of CDM-related activities in countries underrepresented in the CDM;
  - (b) An expansion of the scope of RCC activities beyond the CDM, in conjunction with securing sources of funding other than the CDM MAP to cover these activities;
  - (c) Plans for the current RCCs and long-term strategies to build appropriate capacity within the network of RCCs, with a view to enabling the withdrawal or reallocation of resources within the RCC initiative;
  - (d) Specific measures to respond to the findings of the third-party evaluation.

## **2. Purpose**

6. This note provides an assessment by the secretariat of the activities to date under the RCC initiative, most recently in 2015, and explores ways in which the initiative may be further developed, taking into account the experience with the centres so far, the third-party independent evaluation, the responses received from stakeholders, and calls for a broadening of the scope of activities offered through the initiative.

## **3. Key issues and proposed solutions**

### **3.1. RCC activities up to 2015**

7. Activities under the initiative have continued apace up until now in the four established RCCs. With the commencement of activities through the new centre in Asia in September this year, RCCs are now operational from the following locations:
  - (a) Lomé, Togo, since January 2013, in collaboration with the West African Development Bank (BOAD);
  - (b) Kampala, Uganda, since May 2013, in collaboration with the East African Development Bank (EADB);
  - (c) Bogotá, Colombia, since August 2013, in collaboration with the Andean Development Corporation (CAF);
  - (d) St. George's, Grenada, since August 2013, in collaboration with the Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation (WINDREF);
  - (e) Bangkok, Thailand, since September 2015, in collaboration with the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).
8. The RCCs have been very active across a spectrum of activities to support the implementation of the CDM in the last two years. The RCCs have been particularly successful in their primary function, with contact being maintained with representatives of over 1000 projects and PoAs. The RCCs have provided direct support to representatives of more than 320 projects and PoAs, resulting in 114 such activities moving forward by at least one stage in the project cycle (56 of these in 2015). A total of 127 potential additional activities ("leads") have also been identified whose participants wish to bring new activities to the CDM (36 of these identified in 2015). Follow-up actions have so far resulted in 68 activities entering the prior consideration stage.
9. Support to the development and submission of standardized baselines has been a further key area of focus, in keeping with approvals of standardized baselines and the growing interest of DNAs and donors in developing and submitting them. The technical support and capacity building has proven to be key in this, as demonstrated by around 110 proposed standardized baselines currently being developed, nearly 22 having already been submitted to the Board, and 16 recently being approved. The RCCs are helping also in identifying financial resources to broaden the coverage of the CDM to other sectors, such as transport (Ecuador) and cement (Peru). The demand for support in this work area is high across all four centres. In some cases, such standardized baselines are of interest to Parties and stakeholders for their use in nationally

appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) activities.

10. All RCCs have been active in promoting the CDM among stakeholders in the region. This has been implemented by attending regional and national events and by developing new communication channels through emails, newsletters and articles in the local media. Stakeholders have welcomed the RCC outreach initiatives positively, taking them as an important message that the secretariat and the Board are proactively supporting them in a period of uncertainty. These efforts are preserving the perception of the CDM as a viable carbon market mechanism, raising interest on climate change issues and engaging actors at both technical and political levels.
11. Once established, the RCCs quickly became a magnet for other activities and institutions active in the regions. This has contributed to the evolution of both the activities and the impacts they have made. In particular, it is worth highlighting the following achievements by the RCCs since their establishment:
  - (a) The RCCs have attracted many requests to support capacity building activities and act as important hubs for CDM-related activities in their regions. This arises from the interest of other institutions to co-organize events for the promotion of the CDM. The presence of the RCCs in the regions enables key participants to be identified, making the events very effective in building local capacity. Such events have attracted additional resources (financial and in-kind) from agencies and the private sector, including KfW, the Belgian Technical Cooperation, UNECA, UNEP, GIZ, UN Habitat, as well as from the RCC host partners. In the first nine months of 2015, the RCCs were involved in the organization of 18 events, from workshops with project developers to large events involving local and international financing institutions. Capacity building activities have helped five Parties establish DNAs and have promoted new CDM tools, such as the voluntary sustainable development tool. Importantly also, work is underway to develop the technical capacity of the host partners to secure the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the initiative.
  - (b) The RCCs are also supporting secretariat and Board efforts to promote new sources of CDM demand, including the voluntary cancellation of CERs and the use of the CDM in policies established at the national level (such as taxation systems or national carbon markets) by gathering intelligence on domestic policies and establishing contact with policy makers. For example, a round table organized by RCC Bogota gathered relevant policy makers and stakeholders in Mexico to discuss the new carbon tax in that country and the way in which the CDM could be integrated with it as a payment option;
  - (c) Recent collaborations with results-based-financing (RBF) institutions have helped to widely promote funding opportunities for CDM projects and engage project developers in regions, such as West Africa, where the lack of financial resources is a major impediment to progress in the CDM. It has become apparent that many such funding organizations are looking for robust projects and PoAs in which to invest or buy CERs from, and they have enthusiastically embraced the RCCs as a local partner to work with. By providing information and assistance to these institutions, as well as by broadcasting their activities through local networks, it has been possible to help facilitate financial support for such projects and PoAs, as well as providing technical support directly from the RCCs. This enhances the

capacity of the RCCs to ensure that a core of CDM activities is able to keep momentum in the CDM even in the current, difficult market;

- (d) The RCCs have also become established as important information centres, as they are aware of local conditions and developments and can systematically collect and elaborate relevant data. This has been consolidated through gathering information relating to country profiles and developing policy notes to contribute to current efforts to improve and simplify the CDM.
12. The centres have also achieved a significant number of intangible benefits through the creation of local contacts and improvements in the secretariat's information resources. As a result of the RCC initiative, the secretariat now has access to an overall view of the CDM pipeline, including detailed project level information on the progress of individual activities and the barriers faced in their development. This enables the secretariat to better predict the potential supply trajectory of the CDM and to support the Board's work in further developing the regulatory framework of the mechanism.
  13. The RCCs achieve these results thanks to having strong capacity and credibility to interact with local, regional and global stakeholder networks. They are increasingly recognized locally and internationally as centres of regional expertise for mitigation activities. In addition, the RCCs have maintain an infrastructure that enables them to engage with both governments and non-state actors wishing to act on climate change.

### **3.2. Prioritization of country activities**

14. The report on the independent evaluation of the RCC initiative states that there has not been a clear policy within the RCCs to prioritize LDCs, SIDS and countries with fewer than 10 projects, and that the RCCs have worked on a reactive basis, collaborating with those stakeholders who have requested their assistance and expressed an interest in collaboration. It should be pointed out that the CMP mandates to the secretariat also include African countries, even where they are not LDCs or SIDS.
15. It has indeed been the case that the RCCs have to date been open to all countries in their regions. The initial engagements have been broad and subsequent activities and support has been made available to all countries and stakeholders that seek it. In addition, the downturn in CDM market demand also made it necessary for the RCCs to focus more strongly on the proactive promotion of the CDM in all countries. In practice, however, with the exception of the area serviced by RCC Bogotá, almost all countries in the RCC regions fall within the categories of LDCs, SIDs, Africa or other countries underrepresented in the CDM (having fewer than 10 registered projects or PoAs).
16. Table 1 below shows the countries in each of the RCC regions. It indicates whether the countries are LDCs, SIDS or otherwise underrepresented in the CDM. Bogotá is the only RCC serving a region with countries not falling within these categories or within Africa. The table indicates where countries have either 1-2 registered projects, or none at all. It also shows a simple indicator of engagement with the relevant RCC, through using the number of visits by RCC staff as a proxy.

**Table 1. Countries served by the RCCs**

LDCs	SIDS	Other under-represented countries	Other countries
<b>RCC Bogotá</b>		<u>Panamá</u> , <u>Nicaragua</u> , <u>Paraguay*</u> , <u>Uruguay</u> , El Salvador, Bolivia, <u>Costa Rica</u> , <u>Venezuela**</u> , French Guayana**	<u>Argentina</u> , <u>Chile</u> , <u>Colombia</u> , <u>Ecuador</u> , Guatemala, <u>Honduras</u> , <u>Brasil</u> , <u>México</u> , <u>Perú</u>
<b>RCC Lome</b>	<u>Burundi</u> , <u>Liberia</u> , <u>Mali</u> , <u>Sierra Leone</u> , <u>Gambia</u> , <u>Togo</u> , <u>Senegal</u> , <u>Madagascar</u> , Equatorial Guinea, <u>Burkina Faso</u> , Democratic Republic of the <u>Congo</u> , <u>Benin</u> , Central African Republic, Chad, <u>Mauritania</u> , Djibuti, <u>Comoros</u> , Guinea	<u>Cabo Verde</u> , <u>Sao Tome and Principe</u> , <u>Guinea-Bissau</u>	<u>Cote d'Ivoire</u> , <u>Morocco</u> , <u>Cameroon</u> , Algeria*, Tunisia*, <u>Niger</u> , Congo**, <u>Gabon**</u>
<b>RCC Kampala</b>	<u>Lesotho</u> , <u>Rwanda</u> , Angola, <u>Zambia</u> , <u>Malawi</u> , <u>Sudan</u> , <u>Mozambique</u> , Djibuti, Comoros, <u>Eritrea</u> , Somalia, Guinea	<u>Mauritius</u>	<u>Ethiopia</u> , <u>Kenya</u> , <u>Namibia</u> , <u>Zimbabwe*</u> , Swaziland, Libya*, <u>United Republic of Tanzania</u> , <u>Egypt</u> , <u>Uganda</u> , <u>Botswana**</u> , <u>Seychelles**</u> , <u>Swaziland</u> , <u>South Africa</u> , <u>Burundi</u>
<b>RCC St Georges</b>	<u>Haiti</u>	<u>Dominican Republic</u> , Cuba, Jamaica, <u>Trinidad and Tobago</u> , <u>Belize</u> , Bahamas, Guyana, <u>Antigua and Barbuda</u> , <u>Barbados</u> , Dominica, <u>Grenada</u> , Saint Lucia, <u>Suriname</u> , <u>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</u> , Bahamas, Saint Kitts and Nevis	
* Countries with 1-2 CDM projects		Single underline:	One RCC visit to date
** Countries with no CDM projects		Double underline:	Multiple RCC visits to date

17. The case of RCC Bogotá makes clear that engagement has occurred with countries that already have over 10 projects or PoAs registered with the CDM. This has primarily been because of their significance as CDM countries, in the region and also globally, or because of other activities in which the RCC has been engaged. For example, the RCC engaged in discussions on the development of the carbon tax in Mexico; it was instrumental in leveraging funding from international donors for the development of standardized baselines in Peru and Honduras; and in Brazil the RCC support helped in catalyzing private sector interest to join the Climate Neutral Now Initiative.
18. Information for RCC Bangkok has not been included in table 1, given that the operation there has only recently commenced. However it should be noted that only around 15

percent of the countries in this region do not fall within the categories of LDCs, SIDS or being otherwise underrepresented in the CDM.

19. The secretariat plans to adopt the following principles to guide the prioritization of RCC activities within their regions:
  - (a) RCC support should continue to be available to any country that seeks it, within the scope of RCC activities, although the level and timing of that support may need to be subject to priorities indicated in the other principles below;
  - (b) Technical support for the CDM should be given as a first priority to LDCs, SIDS, countries in Africa, and countries with fewer than 10 registered projects or PoAs. Within this, special priority should be given to countries with three or fewer registered projects or PoAs. This prioritization should be implemented through proactively targeting these countries with opportunities for support, such as through developing a “starter” package of information and activities. Support should however only continue in situations where interest and engagement from the relevant ministries and agencies is forthcoming;
  - (c) Special priority should be given to those countries that have not yet established a designated national authority, as this is considered a key prerequisite for further capacity building activities and a country’s further engagement in the CDM;
  - (d) The provision of technical support should nevertheless continue to take account of other factors, especially if resources are constrained. These factors include mitigation potential, institutional barriers, capacity building needs, relevant government policies, requirements for countries to implement their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs), the potential for project finance (such as through the CDM Loan Scheme, funds and donor governments), the potential for participation in regional initiatives (such as multi-country PoAs and regional power pools), and alignment with other work under the CDM;
  - (e) RCC support for activities that focus on the integration of the CDM into other mitigation initiatives, at the national policy level and internationally, or on climate action beyond the CDM, should not be limited to LDCs, SIDS, countries in Africa, and countries with fewer than 10 registered projects or PoAs (see section 3.3).
20. These principles need to be considered when developing programmes of RCC work and would also need to guide the annual planning cycle of the RCCs.

### **3.3. Areas of new RCC work**

21. The independent evaluation, including through the consultation with a range of government representatives and other stakeholders, confirmed that the RCCs are generally seen as a broader UNFCCC initiative not limited only to CDM.
22. Requests for the RCCs to provide support on UNFCCC-related mitigation activities beyond the CDM come most strongly from governments. Many of these, as well as other stakeholders, would like to engage the RCCs in work in support of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), INDCs, national policy instruments, national climate strategies, adaptation measures, national communications and biennial update reports, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). A wider scope of activities for the RCCs is also generally supported by partners with



which the RCCs are currently working, such as UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank and KfW. It is not expected that such requests will lessen in the next years.

23. The secretariat is generally supportive of providing support through the RCCs in areas other than the CDM. It is aware that RCC support on the ground would have great value for actors in the UNFCCC process and for climate action generally. The secretariat has, however, so far been hesitant to engage in such work, mostly because the funding of the RCCs has, until recently, been provided primarily through the CDM MAP. For this reason, other work by the RCCs has until now been limited to activities relating to the integration of the CDM into other mitigation and finance approaches, therefore continuing to keep the CDM at the core of the work.
24. However, the resourcing of the RCCs is now evolving. Recently an increasing proportion of RCC funds have been sourced through co-funding arrangements with other partner agencies and via voluntary contributions from governments for specific projects. This non-CDM funding allows for an expansion of the RCC focus from pure CDM-related activities to a broader set of activities under the UNFCCC.
25. In addition, financial and in-kind resources from by the host partners, which have always been provided, are also growing more significant. The host partners currently provide a total of 18 staff (seven administrative, nine technical/research and two communications), of which 10 are dedicated to the RCCs on a full-time basis. In addition, management and legal staff from each host partner work with the RCCs, and additional administrative staff are generally available when needed.
26. Many potential areas for broadening of the scope of RCC activities would need to be considered in conjunction with other parts of the UNFCCC secretariat and/or external partners, and would need to take account of the type and degree of expertise that could be made available. The secretariat plans to further consider potential areas, including:
  - (a) An information hub to disseminate information relevant to the UNFCCC;
  - (b) Technical support and capacity building for:
    - (i) The development, implementation and MRV of NAMAs;
    - (ii) The implementation of country-level actions under the Paris Agreement;
    - (iii) The preparation of national communications and biennial update reports;
    - (iv) The development of national-level climate change policies and strategies;
  - (c) Facilitation of a finance matching process to allow project developers and investors to find each other;
  - (d) Development of a network of experts with local knowledge of the regions.
27. The secretariat's further consideration of these potential areas will also take account of alternative sources of financing other than the CDM MAP.

### **3.4. Long-term development of the RCC initiative**

28. Much learning has occurred through the RCCs since their establishment. All the four established RCCs have now been in operation for over two years and the Asia-Pacific

RCC is now bringing the initiative to the full complement of centres originally envisaged. Each of the four older RCCs is currently going through a process of extending its memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the secretariat for a further two years.

29. From the experience of the RCCs to date, including the pressures to branch into other areas of support, it is apparent that the long-term RCC model needs to encompass:
- (a) A broader base of expertise to adequately and credibly support a wider spectrum of country and non-state actor activities. This can to some extent be sourced from within the secretariat or the host partners, and there are opportunities to draw other experts into the RCC infrastructure, such as from other agencies and partners in the context of jointly funding activities;
  - (b) A wide and immediate presence across the regions. The regions served by the RCCs are vast and diverse in comparison to the locations and resources currently available. Getting “even closer to the ground” could be achieved by creating over time a wider network of bases (not necessarily all with secretariat staff) from which RCC activities are conducted;
  - (c) Strong, long-term partnerships with other agencies and institutions sharing the same aims as the RCCs, particularly in relation to capacity building and the provision of finance. There has already been very positive early experience with such partners, but there would be value in stabilizing and formalizing these relationships, including through joint planning and further financial commitments;
  - (d) Central support and coordination from the secretariat. A wider network of RCCs would need a degree of autonomy to respond effectively to local needs and conditions. This would, however, bring greater challenges to the running of the RCC initiative in terms of ensuring an appropriate level of coherence in activities and approaches and in ensuring effective support to each part of the network.
30. The structure of the RCCs will need to ensure that adequate non-CDM sources of finance can be integrated. Such funding will need to be secured from other programmes within the secretariat, other than the funding related to the current Sustainable Development Mechanisms (SDM) programme. It will also need to be secured from host partners and other institutions that the secretariat partners with. Such external funding may be generic in contributing to individual RCCs or the RCC infrastructure as a whole, or tied to specific activities and events being conducted through the RCCs.
31. Bearing in mind the above needs, the secretariat plans to evolve the structure of the RCCs in line with the following principles:
- (a) A wider network of RCCs should be developed through:
    - (i) Capitalizing on the networks of offices and experts already established by many of the RCC host partners;
    - (ii) Building the RCCs to the point where they are able to operate autonomously without the direct presence of secretariat staff, albeit with continued support and coordination from the secretariat. Consideration would be needed as to whether this should apply to all or only some RCCs;
    - (iii) Establishing new RCCs with new host partners, through allocating secretariat staff to the new RCCs for at least an initial period;

- (iv) Ensuring the integration of RCC work across the network, by enabling intelligence and support to be provided by RCCs to each other;
  - (b) External partners should be fully integrated with the RCCs work to build on synergy between the organizations, through MOUs involving long-term joint planning and combined funding of activities. These partnerships could involve the direct integration of externally funded experts in RCCs;
  - (c) The work by the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn should focus on:
    - (i) The coordination of the overall RCC network;
    - (ii) The provision of support to individual work areas, where there is a need for common approaches or specialist expertise across the RCC network that can be best provided centrally from Bonn;
  - (d) The RCC initiative should be integrated within the wider UNFCCC secretariat, and not only associated with the CDM. This should involve joint management responsibility and non-CDM sources of funding;
  - (e) The goals of the RCC initiative, and the relationships and obligations among the partners and the secretariat, should be formalized at a global level. This may involve agreement on a framework of overall principles and approaches. Individual MOUs with partners would fall within the framework, as would the governance structure of individual RCCs and more elaborated plans and funding commitments. Account would need to be taken of the individual circumstances and environments of the RCCs, rather than seeking a one-size-fits-all approach.
32. In setting out this vision for the long-term development of the RCC initiative, the secretariat is aware that a more structured support to the development of individual RCCs and host partners will be needed. Such development and capacity building is already being undertaken, however, so far it has been more a by-product of the work undertaken by the RCCs than a specific focus for its own sake. It will be necessary to define a specific capacity building programme for the host partners, that takes account of the individual circumstances of each host partner, and integrate this within the work plans of the individual RCCs. This will need to define specific goals, learning plans, on-the-job training, performance indicators, monitoring and reviews.

### **3.5. Communications**

33. The independent evaluation highlighted that information on the RCCs is not made widely available through global information channels, such as the internet, and that communication and outreach rely largely upon direct communications and the general stakeholder communication channels established for the CDM. Indeed, RCCs have engaged with stakeholders primarily through email, regional newsletters, brochures, press releases, workshops and other events, and articles in local and regional media.
34. Work has, however, begun, in collaboration with the communication and outreach team at the secretariat, to develop a comprehensive communication strategy for the RCC initiative. It is expected at this stage that this strategy will result in:

- (a) A microsite or dedicated website for the RCC initiative that provides a central information repository and communications channel for information relevant to the initiative as a whole and the individual RCCs and their activities;
  - (b) Greater capacity for communications in local languages;
  - (c) Effective sharing of stories and experience from the field;
  - (d) Enhanced use of social media to share information;
  - (e) Stronger integration of RCCs in UNFCCC events;
  - (f) Effective targeting of relevant stakeholders.
35. It is expected that the implementation of this communications strategy will commence in 2016. Information can be shared with the Board when the work is more advanced.

## **4. Impacts**

36. The principles and plans set out in this note can be expected to significantly enhance the support that the RCCs provide at the regional level, thereby strengthening the ability of governments and other stakeholders to effectively implement climate action, and ensure a long-term sustainable basis for the work and synergy with efforts made by partner organizations. They will ensure that resources are dedicated to the technical support and capacity building required for the CDM in order to strengthen the regional distribution of projects and PoAs. They will also allow for a broadening of RCC activities and funding to other work under the UNFCCC process and climate action more generally.

## **5. Subsequent work and timelines**

37. Further work needs to be undertaken by the secretariat to implement the principles and plans set out in this note, including for the prioritization of country activities, areas of new RCC work, the long-term development of the RCC initiative, and the communications strategy. The results of this work will be shared with the Board and further opportunities will be ensured for the Board to contribute to their ongoing development.

## **6. Recommendations to the Board**

38. The secretariat recommends that the Board provide feedback to the secretariat on the plans shared via this note, in order to help the secretariat further develop them.

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### Document information

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