

**CDM-EB93-AA-A04**

## Concept note

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# Improving the user-friendliness of the UNFCCC CDM public website

Version 01.0



**United Nations**  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change

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## 1. Procedural background

1. The Executive Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board) of the clean development mechanism (CDM), at its ninety-second meeting, in the context of the CDM management plan (MAP) 2017, requested the secretariat to prepare for consideration at its ninety-third meeting a concept note on improving the user-friendliness of the UNFCCC CDM public website (<<http://cdm.unfccc.int>>). This work relates to the activity “Improving the user friendliness of the CDM website” under “Cross-cutting activities” with an initial resource allocation of one staff month for preparing a concept note, as referred to in table 6 on page 12 of the CDM MAP 2017 (EB92, annex 1).
2. The CDM public website was established in 2002, using an open-source management software (Zope). In the CDM Programme Budget 2002-2003, the Board allocated USD 190,000 to create a web interface related to the CDM project cycle, including the development of electronic listservs, extranets and automated electronic work processes linked to the CDM website, to facilitate cost-effective communication to all stakeholders. By the end of 2003, the CDM public website was the central information and communication point on operational and governance matters of the CDM.

## 2. Purpose

3. The purpose of this concept note is to propose three implementation options for improving the user-friendliness of the CDM public website, taking into account that the public website is an integral part of the UNFCCC public website (<<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>>).

## 3. Key issues and proposed solutions

4. Since its establishment in 2002, the CDM public website has been continuously improved by the secretariat to ensure that it efficiently serves as the authoritative source of information on the CDM. Improvements have included: the addition of a CDM news facility; live and video-on-demand streaming of meetings of the Board; redesigns of the governance, reference and stakeholder pages; and an expanded sights-and-sounds section, including films and videos showcasing the benefits of CDM.
5. These improvements have involved adding, removing and/or re-organizing content, and changing the design (look and feel). The underlying support technology for the web interface (Zope) has remained the same. Therefore, the technology behind the CDM public website is over 15 years old.
6. This is not to be confused with the investments and changes made to the technology for the log-in functions and electronic workflows related to the CDM project cycle. These processes have been continuously updated and expanded upon.
7. While the wealth of the information presented through the public website is impressive, its current structure overwhelms the user, from both a design and a user-journey perspective. For example, many of the individual web pages include more than 30 sub-links, and searching the public CDM website retrieves results from the entire UNFCCC public website and not a specific sub-site. This contributes to a negative user experience. The more time a user needs to spend looking for information, the less likely it is that the user will stay on the web page and be satisfied with the visit.

8. The CDM public website would greatly benefit from an overhaul of its design, content and web interface technology. This would not only increase its user-friendliness but also reduce future maintenance costs and the risks associated with outdated technology, including system crashes and downtime, increased support costs, decreased productivity and security holes resulting in increased chance of cyber-attacks.
9. In 2016, the secretariat launched an initiative to improve the user-friendliness of the UNFCCC public website. The objective is to update the design, content and web interface technology, taking advantage of more current web design and application technologies on the market. Phase one of the project is focused on the existing UNFCCC main public website and is expected to be completed by July 2017. Phase two, planned for 2018 and beyond, will focus on integrating the other UNFCCC public websites, of which there are 20, including the CDM public website. Funding for phase two has not been secured. Many of these other UNFCCC public websites have been established using different funding sources, designs and web interface technologies.
10. An opportunity exists to improve the user-friendliness of the CDM public website by piggy-backing on the work to date under the UNFCCC public website relaunch. This approach could:
  - (a) Benefit from the work that is already moving forward in phase one of the UNFCCC public website relaunch project, including the completed procurement of a company to do the work and the resulting mapping of information and design work performed to date on the main website;
  - (b) Improve the user-friendliness of the CDM public website in a time- and cost-efficient way, building on the new web design and application technology of the UNFCCC public website;
  - (c) Continue to allow the CDM to remain highly visible by integrating the CDM content into the new UNFCCC public website for relaunch in July 2017.
11. The approach, described further in Option 1, is the proposed solution. Options 2 and 3 describe alternative solutions.

### **3.1. Option 1: Integration of the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC public website, including website design and technology**

12. This option proposes the full integration of the web pages of the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC public website. By piggy-backing on the UNFCCC public website relaunch, time and resources could be used more efficiently. The CDM public website could benefit from the time and resources already devoted to the new UNFCCC public website design and functional requirements gathered for selecting a new state-of-the-art technology. The result would be a user-friendly and modern web presence for CDM, catering to its target audiences but also linking to broader audiences, through the UNFCCC website. The options for providing high visibility to the CDM web content in the new UNFCCC website design are still open, although the over-arching design work has been completed.
13. Access to CDM web content through a separate tab on the main UNFCCC public website is not foreseen in this option, or other options outlined below, because the new UNFCCC website design does not provide for tab-based entry points. However, since the CDM website would be fast-tracking the process of integrating the UNFCCC-related public

websites into the main website, the options for how high visibility can be developed for the CDM and other UNFCCC websites, can be done in consultation with the external design agency.

14. This option includes:

- (a) State-of-the-art technology: Yes
- (b) Modern and appealing design: Yes
- (c) User-friendly structure of content: Yes
- (d) User-friendly texts: Yes
- (e) Time-efficient implementation: Yes
- (f) Cost-efficient implementation: Yes
- (g) Expected follow-up costs (maintenance, support, hosting): Low
- (h) Risk of failing technology in the future: Low
- (i) Compatibility with other UNFCCC information technology (IT) products: High
- (j) Visibility of CDM content in new UNFCCC public website (entry points, interlinkages, accessibility through search functions): High
- (k) Procurement costs for implementation: Low-Moderate.

### **3.2. Option 2: Visual revamp of the CDM public website applying the new UNFCCC public website design but not the new technology**

15. This option proposes that the CDM public website receive a “facelift” in line with the new UNFCCC public website design but remain on its existing technology (Zope).

16. Access to CDM web content via a separate tab on the main UNFCCC public website is not foreseen in this option, once the new UNFCCC public website is launched (see paragraph 13), but the CDM website would remain visible and accessible from the UNFCCC public website.

17. This option includes:

- (a) State-of-the-art technology: No
- (b) Modern and appealing design: Yes
- (c) User-friendly structure of content: Yes, but limited by web interface technology in place
- (d) User-friendly texts: Yes
- (e) Time-efficient implementation: Not as efficient as in option 1. Outputs of the UNFCCC website relaunch project (designs, wireframes) could be used as the basis, but a design company would need to be procured to translate the designs into what is possible with the CDM website technology (Zope) and write new specifications for the programmers.

- (f) Cost-efficient implementation: Not as high as in option 1, where previous outputs of the UNFCCC website design phase can be fully leveraged without the need to adapt (wireframes, designs, specifications document).
- (g) Expected follow-up costs (maintenance, support, hosting): Moderate-High
- (h) Risk of failing technology in the future: High
- (i) Compatibility with other UNFCCC IT products: Moderate-Low
- (j) Visibility of CDM content in new UNFCCC public website (entry points, interlinkages, accessibility through search functions): Moderate-Low
- (k) Procurement costs for implementation: Low-Moderate

### **3.3. Option 3: CDM public website remains as is in terms of design and technology**

- 18. This option proposes that the CDM public website continues with the current website design and technology. Improvements would include adding, removing and/or re-organizing content, within the limitations of the technology.
- 19. This option includes:
  - (a) State-of-the-art technology: No
  - (b) Modern and appealing design: No
  - (c) User-friendly structure of content: Limited to adding, removing and re-organizing content where possible.
  - (d) User-friendly texts: Yes
  - (e) Time-efficient implementation: Yes.
  - (f) Cost-efficient implementation: Yes
  - (g) Expected follow-up costs (maintenance, support, hosting): Moderate-High
  - (h) Risk of failing technology in the future: High
  - (i) Compatibility with other UNFCCC IT products: Moderate-Low
  - (j) Visibility of CDM content in new UNFCCC public website (entry points, interlinkages, accessibility through search functions): Moderate-Low
  - (k) Procurement costs for implementation: None

## **4. Impacts**

- 20. In options 1 and 2, the CDM public website user-friendliness will be improved by updating web content and improving the design. In option 3, minimal improvements to the CDM public website user-friendliness can be achieved, through re-organizing content, where possible. The scope of the design improvements, their sustainability, and the public website search capabilities depend on the underlying technology. Changes to the

underlying technology are only presented in Option 1. Option 1 is the recommended solution because it provides for both design and technology improvements in a time- and cost-efficient approach by piggy-backing on the work already moving forward under the UNFCCC public website relaunch.

#### **4.1. Option 1: Integration of the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC public website, including website design and technology**

21. In the context of the UNFCCC public website relaunch project, the existing contract with the design agency could be amended to include: creating mock-ups for the CDM webpages based on the mock-ups already developed for the UNFCCC public website; and developing suggestions on high-visibility entry points for CDM webpage content. The concept and design phase of the CDM website relaunch project would come at significantly lower cost by piggy-backing on the UNFCCC project. Consequently, the CDM relaunch could almost immediately jump into the implementation phase, together with the UNFCCC public website relaunch.
22. Since the technology for the new UNFCCC public website has not yet been chosen, specific technical requirements for the CDM public website could be accounted for in the choice of the new technology. There will be a cost for the new technology.
23. Integrating the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC public website could:
  - (a) Increase the understanding of the connection between the CDM and UNFCCC instruments, bodies and processes. At the same time, the CDM would have an individual, prominent and appealing entry point for its target audiences via the UNFCCC main public website;
  - (b) Create higher visibility for CDM web content by enhancing its “findability” on the UNFCCC public website through improved technology-driven search functionalities. In addition, the applied technology would increase the findability of the CDM content by external search engines, such as Google;
  - (c) Allow for better integration of CDM web content with other process-related web content by applying the same metadata structure. For example, CDM official documents and CDM webpages could be dynamically displayed in different content areas throughout the UNFCCC public website, and would be retrieved in search results initiated in other areas of the website. Another example is that CDM news items could be shown in the UNFCCC public website’s newsroom, and CDM events and meetings could be displayed on the UNFCCC calendar.
24. Editors of the content for the new CDM public website would need to learn how to work with the new technology. However, with just one technology in place for the CDM public website and the UNFCCC public website, training and support for editors would be more time- and cost-efficient, and editors of the UNFCCC public website could assist in keeping the CDM public website current. Editors of the content of the CDM public website would benefit from internally offered training and other support, as needed.

**4.2. Option 2: Visual revamp of the CDM public website applying the new UNFCCC public website design but not the new technology**

25. In the context of the UNFCCC public website relaunch project, a new procurement process could be initiated to hire a designer to adapt the work on mock-ups and wireframes into a feasible solution for the Zope technology and translate it into a specifications document for the programmers to implement. There would be a cost involved in hiring a designer to adapt the mock-ups and wireframes to the CDM web pages.
26. The result would be a new CDM public website design that would be visually compatible with the new UNFCCC main public website. However, not all of the design features could be replicated in the new CDM website due to the technical limitations of Zope.
27. Content could be added, removed and/or re-organized, and the design (look and feel) could be changed, but improving search functionality and linking of information across the website would be limited, based on the current CDM website's 15-year-old technology.
28. If the UNFCCC design was to be replicated on the CDM website, synchronizing would be necessary if consistency is to be maintained. This could have time and resource implications.
29. Editors of the content of the CDM webpages would not need to learn how to work with a new technology. However, secretariat internal teams supporting website content no longer provide support for Zope, so any additional costs for support in maintaining the design would need to be borne by the MAP.
30. Continuing to use the outdated technology could potentially have data security implications as well as high follow-up costs for maintenance.

**4.3. Option 3: CDM public website remains as is in terms of design and technology**

31. The result would be updates and re-organization of the content on the CDM public website. The changes would be limited by the design and underlying web interface technology and would be made using current secretariat resources.
32. There would be no design consistency with UNFCCC website as of July 2017.
33. Editors of the content of the CDM webpages would not need to learn how to work with a new technology. However, secretariat internal teams supporting website content no longer provide support for Zope, so any additional costs for support in maintaining the design would need to be borne by the MAP.
34. Continuing to use the outdated technology could potentially have data security implications as well as high follow-up costs for maintenance



## 5. Subsequent work, timelines and budget

**Table 1. Deliverables, timelines and estimated budgets**

Option 1: Integration of the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC public website, including website design and technology		
Deliverables	Timeline	Budget (USD)
<p>Design Phase: Content strategy, information architecture and design for the new UNFCCC website has been completed. The design would apply to the CDM website but adjustments would be made.</p> <p>Technology Phase: The CDM website will piggy-back on the deliverables of the overall UNFCCC website project: choice of technology, purchase of licences, customizing of technology, set-up of hosting environment, development/programming of website and templates (front-end and back-end), development/editing of content, migration of existing content, testing, fixing &amp; iterations, and release/launch.</p>	July 2017	400,000
Option 2: Visual revamp of the CDM public website applying the new UNFCCC public website design but not the new technology		
Deliverables	Timeline	Budget (USD)
<p>Design Phase: Design including colours, fonts, templates, possibly wireframes and information architecture to match the new UNFCCCC website.</p> <p>Technology Phase: Development/programming of new design and information architecture elements where possible, testing, fixing &amp; iterations, and release/launch.</p>	Q1 2018	70,000
Option 3: CDM public website remains as is in terms of design and technology		
Deliverables	Timeline	Staff Resources
Design Phase: adding, removing and/or re-organizing content.	December 2017	6 staff months

## 6. Recommendation to the Board

35. Option 1 is the recommended option because it allows for increased user-friendliness of the CDM public website by updating both the design and technology of the current CDM website, replacing technology that has been in place for over 15 years, and allowing for integration of the CDM public website into the new UNFCCC main public website, thus giving the user an intuitive understanding of the connection between UNFCCC and the CDM. At the same time, the CDM will have an individual, clear and appealing entry point for its target audiences. Option 1 is both a time- and cost-efficient option and has a high-quality outcome.

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### Document Information

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