

*Submission by the Gambia on Arrangements for Intergovernmental Meetings
(AIM) pursuant to decision FCCC/SBI/2012/15, paragraph 238*

May 2013

Introduction

In accordance with FCCC/SBI/2012/15 paragraph 238 and the recommendations of FCCC/SBI/2013/4 paragraph 28, the Gambia would like to submit its views on ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and planning of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Within this submission, improving the Arrangements for Intergovernmental Meetings (AIM) as well as streamlining the process's structure and budgetary implications are considered important for this process. The Gambia hopes that the recommendations of this submission will inspire decisions that enhance the effectiveness of the UNFCCC bodies. Further to these considerations, the Gambia would like to align itself with the views expressed by Nepal in its submission on AIM on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

As stated in FCCC/SBI/2013/4, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) is invited to provide recommendations to the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) on the organization of their work during the 2013 UNFCCC Conference, to be held in Warsaw, Poland. The SBI is also invited to provide guidance concerning the organization of the work of the subsidiary bodies: the SBI; SBSTA; and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). Thus, the Warsaw Conference aims to include sessions of the COP, the CMP, the SBI, the SBSTA, and the ADP during its two-week sessional period. Though the number of sessions is fewer than the 2012 sessions convened in Doha, Parties must seriously consider streamlining the work of these five bodies to ensure that each body completes its mandated task.

In this submission, the Gambia proposes its recommendations for streamlining and improving the intergovernmental process. The Gambia is particularly concerned with addressing points (a), (d), (f), (g), and (i) of FCCC/SBI/2013/4 paragraph 28, which provide an initial list of areas for Parties to consider in their AIM submissions. The following sections of this submission suggest a number of measures that could be introduced in the secretariat's effort to improve the overall functioning of the intergovernmental process.

(a) Possible Ways to Enhance Methods of Negotiation

COP Presidency

In keeping with the principle of rotation among regional groups, the SBI noted in FCCC/SBI/2013/4 that the President of COP 20/CMP 10 will come from Latin America and Caribbean States, while the President of COP 22/CMP 12 will come from the Africa. Though the rotation of the COP Presidency ensures all regions have an opportunity to preside over a COP/CMP, it does not allow equitable opportunities to act as host. While the Government of Poland, as the host of COP 19/CMP 9, is expected to provide a single integrated venue large enough to host both UNFCCC negotiation meetings and side events, it is not clear that all states have the same capabilities. As demonstrated by the Government of Qatar in their hosting of COP 18/CMP 8, large facilities to accommodate activities and negotiations have become a challenging expectation for many smaller states. Although these comprehensive venues do enable a more streamlined approach to meeting space and travel times, they almost inherently preclude small developing countries, such as the Gambia, from acting as COP President.

Therefore, the Gambia would like to voice its support for the proposition made by AOSIS in its AIM submission, which supports a permanent COP/CMP host country. The role of COP President would continue to rotate among regional groups in accordance with the existing practice under the draft rules of procedure; however the physical location of the COP/CMP host would remain unchanged. For example, upon completion of its new facilities, Bonn could host all COP/CMPs while the acting presidency would continue to regionally rotate. This structure would allow for both the SBI's request for adequate venue size and a more equitable selection of COP presidencies. Without such a change from the current practice, it is likely that an LDC will never act as COP President.

Provision of Adequate Resources to the UNFCCC Secretariat

The Gambia recalls with deep concern the critical and urgent need for financial contributions voiced by the Executive Secretary prior to the UNFCCC informal meetings in Bangkok last year which took place from August to September 2012. Though Parties had agreed on the importance of additional inter-sessional meetings of the ad hoc working groups before the Doha Conference, the secretariat was prevented from making timely arrangements for these meetings due to the lack of sufficient voluntary contributions.

As such, the UNFCCC secretariat requires additional financial resources in order to effectively improve the intergovernmental process. The Gambia calls for able Parties to make regular and sufficient financial contributions to the secretariat without delay.

In accordance with the LDC Group, the Gambia would also like to express its concern over the growing trend of informality in response to recent financial constraints and cost-saving measures enacted by the secretariat. The Gambia notes that recent UNFCCC sessions held no formal plenary meetings, provided no interpretations or webcast services, and produced no official documents. Such limitations defeats the basic principles of the UN process and led to lack of the full participation of many francophone countries, as these delegations rely on interpretation services to effectively engage in negotiations. Thus, the Gambia again calls for capable Parties to make timely, regular, and sufficient financial

contributions to the secretariat. Without adequate resources, the secretariat will not be able to carry out the activities and provide the services that the Parties have mandated it to perform.

Provision of Resources to Smaller Delegations

The UNFCCC stresses that the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusiveness should guide the organization of its work. To effectively facilitate inclusiveness, it is important that Parties ensure the full and effective participation of all regional groups. In order to accomplish this aim, smaller developing country delegations must acquire adequate financial support.

The UNFCCC currently funds a maximum of three LDC delegates during COP/CMP meetings and a maximum of two LDC delegates at inter-sessional meetings. However, for small delegations, such as that of the Gambia, the increasing number of meetings on highly technical and complex issues that take place during these sessions proves exhausting for the limited number of delegates. As such, the Gambia and other LDCs are often under-represented in crucial negotiating sessions due to the strain placed on these delegates. The Gambia supports the LDC Group's suggestion that extra funding should be made available for the LDCs to facilitate the participation of at least three delegates at the inter-sessional meetings and four delegates during COP/CMP meetings.

(d) The High-Level Engagement of Ministers and Political Leaders

As recommended in FCCC/SBI/2013/4, Parties should discuss how to actively engage high-level ministers and political leaders in the UNFCCC process. The active involvement of these decision-makers is critical for an agreed outcome and for decisive action. The Gambia supports the preponderant view of the LDC Group that ministerial attendance at high-level COP/CMP segments is critical to underlining Parties' political commitments to the intergovernmental negotiation process. Such ministerial involvement would also work to raise the global profile of the UNFCCC process by lending it the necessary media and political attention the issue of climate change requires.

The Gambia wishes to further agree with the LDC Group's suggestion of establishing two focused ministerial meetings prior to Warsaw. The first would focus on increasing pre-2020 mitigation ambition, while the second would discuss scaling up climate finance as decided in Doha. The secretariat could arrange these ministerial meetings in the form of round table discussions, which would supplement making general statements. These meetings should aim to build political momentum towards focused ministerial engagement with the specific outcomes of COP 19/CMP 9. The meetings will also add to a shared understanding amongst political decision-makers going into COP 20/CMP 10. The Gambia proposes that the secretariat invite ministers from ministries of finance, planning, and environment to attend these pre-Warsaw ministerial meetings. Furthermore, ministers from developing countries, such as the Gambia, should be financially supported.

In establishing a high-level engagement of ministers and political leaders, the secretariat must also carefully balance the arrangements for ministerial attendance with on-going technical negotiations.

The Gambia would like to stress that the process of involving ministers needs to remain transparent and inclusive. Furthermore, while arranging ministerial meetings, the secretariat should seek to avoid parallel technical negotiations concerning the same issues since the process must ensure a proper interface between technical and political negotiations.

(f) The Effective Use of Informal and Intersessional Activities

Effective Use of Informal Activities

In FCCC/SBI/2013/4, the SBI notes that it will continue to increase the use of informal plenary meetings and the electronic availability of documentation during the two-week Warsaw Conference. The Gambia would like to express its concern with the increase of both these practices. Regarding the use of informal meetings, the Gambia believes that such meetings that have the purpose of facilitating informal exchanges between Parties and other stakeholders are non-inclusive. The Gambia would like to stress again the necessity of providing translation services at plenary meetings to allow the full participation of francophone and other non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, public webcasts as well as publicly available documentation should aim to enhance both inclusiveness and transparency. In this regard, the Gambia supports the LDC Group's view concerning the importance of hard copy documentation during meetings, as most of the LDC delegations do not possess the technology necessary to utilize electronic documentation.

Scheduling Additional Inter-sessional Activities

As Parties established a number of important work programmes under the SBI and SBSTA, considerable work remains to be done for upcoming negotiations. Under the SBI, the work programme on loss and damage and the work programme for further understanding the diversity of the nationally appropriate mitigation actions requires considerable attention. In comparison, the SBSTA work programmes that need further attention include the process of clarifying the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets of developed country parties as well as the work programme to elaborate a framework for various approaches. Among other things, it is expected that both subsidiary bodies will assist the COP/CMP in conducting the first review of the long-term temperature goal. Arrangements for meetings of both subsidiary bodies should consider the increasing volume of work that still needs to be accomplished and, as such, provide sufficient time for Parties to come to meaningful conclusions.

The Gambia concurs with the LDC Group view that the establishment of the ADP represents an opportunity for all Parties to come together to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Convention in the period both before and after 2020. Though decision 1/CP.17 gives Parties an opportunity to plan on a much longer time frame than the annual COP/CMP cycle normally allows, the opportunity may also lull Parties into postponing decisions from one year to the next. Such a practice

would leave insufficient time to reach meaningful conclusions by the end of 2015. This must be avoided at all costs. The Gambia believes that arrangements for negotiations under the ADP must reflect a balanced negotiating approach, pace, and intensity for both work streams of the ADP. It is therefore necessary that arrangements for the sessions be made to facilitate the heavy workload and aim to complete the ADP mandate.

The Gambia supports the LDC Group suggestion that Parties should agree on a permanent inter-sessional meeting rather than continue with ad hoc arrangements for additional sessions. The current uncertainty regarding extra sessions leads to tensions during the negotiations, and affects both participation and outcomes. For example, most LDC negotiators are responsible for a number of other multilateral negotiations due to the limited capacity in their countries. Due to the uncertainty regarding the extra sessions of the UNFCCC, these delegates prioritise other responsibilities over climate negotiations that can lead to a lack of country participation. A permanent extra session would allow Parties to better organise and plan the annual negotiating arrangements. Furthermore, a permanent extra session would ensure effective participation, particularly by developing countries. In accordance with the LDC Group, the Gambia suggests that the extra meeting should be at least two weeks long and should be organised annually around September/October.

(g) Measures to Promote the Timely Closing of Conferences

As previously stated, the Warsaw Conference will include sessions of the COP, the CMP, the SBI, the SBSTA, and the ADP during its two-week sessional period. Although these sessions represent a decrease from the 2012 convening of seven bodies in Doha, completing the mandated tasks of five bodies in a timely manner still remains challenging. As such, it has become common practice for COP/CMP meetings to extend beyond the scheduled two-week sessional period. Recent negotiation sessions frequently ran several days over and meetings extended well into the night.

Like the LDC Group, the Gambia is deeply concerned that this practice of running over time and into the night has become the norm. Negotiations, particularly COP/CMPs, must end as planned in accordance with the session's relevant agenda, which would entail the conclusion of all sessions within the two-week period and meeting within appropriate negotiating hours. The practice of extending beyond two-weeks and meeting throughout the night severely disadvantages small delegations, such as the Gambia and the other delegations of the LDCs. The Gambia does not possess the necessary resources to change their travel arrangements last minute nor meet at all hours without exhausting its already limited number of negotiators.

The Gambia supports the LDC Group suggestion that regular stocktaking sessions should occur across all five bodies during negotiations. Such stocktaking sessions would enable Parties to evaluate the overall picture and provide them with adequate time to address those issues that require further negotiations to produce outcomes. To ensure these measures do not decrease the time available for negotiations, the secretariat must enact arrangements to maximize the time available for effective negotiations.

Should Parties not reach consensus on an issue, it should be forwarded to an additional session rather than permitted to continue beyond the scheduled two-week sessional period.

(i) Ways of Increasing the Effectiveness of the Participation of Observer Organizations in the Process

The Gambia appreciates the secretariat's efforts to establish intervention opportunities for observer organizations and make greater use of observer inputs and presentations. As noted in FCCC/SBI/2013/4, the number of observer organizations admitted to the UNFCCC process at COP 18/CMP 8 increased significantly from 2008 levels. Observer organizations continue to take advantage of opportunities to address the joint high-level segment of the COP/CMP. At COP 18/CMP 8, twenty-four observer organizations spoke on behalf of various intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organization (NGO) constituencies.

The Gambia welcomes the continued interest by observer organizations in the UNFCCC sessions and supports the recent developments for the engagement of observer organizations in the UNFCCC process. The recent exponential increase of participants from observer organizations reaffirms the fundamental value of effective participation by observers and the value of contributions from observer organizations to deliberations on substantive issues. Participation from these diverse positions in the UNFCCC negotiations benefits Parties as they seek to address the complexities of climate change. The Gambia encourages further UNFCCC arrangements, such as online documentation and virtual participation, in order to promote greater communication to and participation by observer organisations.