

Switzerland

Work of the consultative Group of Experts on national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE)

1. Situation

Decision 5/CP.15 reconstituted the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE), for a period of three years from 2010 to 2012. The annex to that decision contains the mandate of the CGE, which is structured in six tasks. Five tasks correspond to the structure of the National Communications, following the guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (annex to decision 17/CP.8). The sixth task requests the provision of recommendations on elements to be considered in a future revision of these guidelines. These recommendations have to be submitted to the SBI for its consideration (FCCC/SBI/2011/5/Add.1).

The COP 17 should have reviewed the term, the mandate and the need for the continuation of the group. The COP 17 decided to let the CGE pursue its work under its current mandate until the end of 2012 and invited Parties to submit their views on the term and mandate of the CGE for the period after 2012 and on the need for the continuation of the group.

Switzerland welcomes this invitation to submit its views and look forward to discussing them with all Parties next May during the 36th session of the SBI.

2. Need for the continuation of the CGE

The need for the continuation of the CGE seems necessary, as both the Cancún Agreements and the Durban decisions have triggered a higher level of ambition in the reporting obligations of non-Annex I Parties in terms of frequency, scope and depth.

As recognized by the Durban decision on the outcome of the work of the AWG-LCA, the CGE could indeed play a very important role in supporting non-Annex I Parties in fulfilling their new reporting tasks, particularly their initial biennial update report. Therefore, the future CGE's term and mandate should focus on providing guidance and technical assistance with regard to biennial update reporting and, consistently with the Cancún and Durban decisions and the task already undertaken by the CGE, advise on additional elements to be considered in a future revision of the guidelines for the preparation of national communications by non-Annex I Parties. Clear political guidance should be given to the CGE to allow the group to perform the expert work expected from it in support of non-Annex I Parties when coping with enhanced report obligations. Additional views on the term and mandate of the CGE is provided hereunder in section 3.

Since a number of years the necessary revision of the guidelines has been put in abeyance due to a lack of consensus among Parties. Consequently, the training materials on GHG inventories as well as the reporting software, currently prepared by the CGE, have to accommodate the three different reporting guidelines (IPCC 1996 revised guidelines, 2000/2003 GPG guidance and IPCC 2006 guidelines). The IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse gas Inventories' state of the art information sources such as the emission factor database are, though, only customized to the most recent guidelines. Hence, the use of different guidelines leads to friction losses in the transfer of information contained in national communications and inventory reports.

Switzerland welcomes any steps towards harmonization of the international reporting system to enhance the consistency of the information provided. The new reporting requirements for non-Annex I Parties based on the Cancún and Durban decisions would achieve a higher

level of environmental integrity if the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 17/CP.8 could be updated to integrate established good practices. The 2011 guidelines for the preparation of biennial update reports would clearly benefit from such a step.

Under these circumstances, Switzerland is of the view that continuing the CGE makes only sense if coupled with a mandate to the SBI to revise the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 17/CP.8 (for the preparation of National Communications).

There should be consistency between the National Communication and the biennial update report, but not backward-looking. The Durban Platform for Enhanced Action will produce new obligations for all the Parties together and this will also be true for reporting. In the future climate regime under the Convention, after 2020, Switzerland envisages reporting obligations that will be common for all Parties, without leaving aside the necessary flexibility (tiers) to accommodate the national circumstances of each Party.

Revised guidelines for the preparation of both National Communications and biennial update reports by non-Annex I Parties go into the right direction towards this future set of reporting obligations. On this basis, the CGE could provide adequate capacity building for an optimal use of these new guidelines.

Furthermore, the decision about the continuation of the work of the CGE should be made in accordance with the one on the composition, modalities and procedures regarding the team of technical experts that will perform the analysis phase of the ICA (see the Swiss submission on this matter). Depending on the mandate of the team of technical experts, the CGE could either be terminated or see its own term and mandate radically modified, so as to provide complementary support while avoiding redundancy.

3. Term and Mandate of the CGE

The term and mandate of the CGE for any activity after 2012 should be decided in parallel with the launching of the revision process of the guidelines for the preparation of National Communications. The CGE has already made recommendations for elements of such a revision and could accompany it.

The term and mandate of the CGE, once its continuation has been decided, should complement and be coherent with the decision on the composition, modalities and procedures regarding the teams of technical experts due to perform the analysis phase of the ICA process.

The future CGE could support, through training and technical assistance, non-Annex I Parties when preparing their reports (National Communications and biennial update reports) while letting the team of technical experts analyze, once the biennial update reports have been submitted, the difficulties encountered by non-Annex I Parties in the use of the guidelines and methodologies.

The CGE could also play a role in examining the last National Communications forming the basis from which the biennial report will provide updated information. As the team of technical experts will analyze the content of the biennial update reports during the analysis phase of the ICA process, the CGE could, in addition, pay more attention to the parts of the National Communications not subject to biennial update reporting, such as the chapters on vulnerability and adaptation assessment, research and systematic observation, education, training and public awareness.

Finally, the mandate given to the CGE should contain a work programme, at least for the first year. The work programme should be decided during the SBI negotiations on the mandate of the CGE so as to allow the group to begin with its technical work right after the mandate is decided. Letting the CGE develop its own work programme, as contained in the actual terms of reference (annex to decision 5/CP.15), has proven to be counter-productive for the efficiency of the group, which is technical in nature.