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Subsidiary Body for Implementation

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Item 16(b) of the provisional agenda

Administrative, financial and institutional matters

Other financial and budgetary matters

Budgetary implications of UNFCCC mandates: standard costs

Note by the Executive Secretary

Summary

This report, prepared in response to the request from the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-fourth session for the Executive Secretary to prepare, regularly update and publish before each session of the subsidiary bodies brief reports on standard costs and, if available, options for reducing the cost of activities where practicable, contains information on the costing of official travel covered by the secretariat. It should be read in conjunction with document FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4, the first report prepared in response to the aforementioned request, which includes an overview of standard costing practices within the United Nations system as well as options for approaches to preparing and using standard costs for supporting decision-making in relation to new UNFCCC mandates under consideration by the governing or subsidiary bodies.

* Dates of the session to be determined.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), at its twenty-fourth session, requested the Executive Secretary to prepare, regularly update and publish before each session of the subsidiary bodies brief reports on standard costs and, if available, options for reducing the cost of activities where practicable.¹ COP 25 requested the secretariat to implement the recommendations contained in document FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4.²

B. Scope of the report

2. This report is the third prepared in response to the request from COP 24 referred to in paragraph 1 above and contains information on the costing of official travel covered by the secretariat. It should be read in conjunction with the first such report, made available for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its fiftieth session, which contains background information on the standard costing practices of the secretariat and other United Nations entities and was intended to facilitate relevant decision-making.³

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

3. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation may wish to consider the information provided in this report as part of its consideration of this agenda sub-item and to provide guidance on possible next steps, as appropriate.

II. Costing of official travel

4. For final accounting and reporting purposes, all travel costs are based on actual expenditure. Standard costing for estimating travel costs is primarily used for planning the cost of official travel of secretariat staff and funded meeting participants. Travel is regulated by applicable United Nations rules and administrative instructions. There are three main components of travel costs that are covered:⁴

(a) Ticket cost, based on the most direct and economical means of travel in accordance with applicable travel rules;

(b) Daily subsistence allowance (DSA), to cover expenses such as meals, lodging, gratuities and other costs for services rendered during official travel.⁵ DSA rates are determined by the International Civil Service Commission⁶ for all travel destinations and are valid for all United Nations organizations;

(c) Terminal expenses, which are reimbursed at a rate set in accordance with applicable rules,⁷ to cover the cost of public conveyance between the airport or other point of arrival or departure and the hotel or other place of dwelling.

5. An analysis of historical official travel led to the following average standard costs, each of which includes 13 per cent programme support costs:

(a) For a three-day trip: EUR 3,400;

(b) For a five-day trip: EUR 4,500;

¹ Decision 18/CP.24, para. 15.

² Decision 18/CP.25, para. 18.

³ FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.4.

⁴ See United Nations Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2018/1.

⁵ See United Nations Secretariat administrative instruction ST/AI/2014/2.

⁶ See <https://icsc.un.org/Home/DailySubsistence>.

⁷ See United Nations Secretariat information circular ST/IC/2001/43/Amend.4.

(c) For a five-day trip to a remote location: EUR 6,200.

6. These standard costs are subject to change as a result of exchange rate fluctuations and adjustments to average ticket prices, DSA and terminal expenses. Ticket costs may be expected to increase as a result of the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 on global travel.

III. Recommendation

7. In relation to the request from COP 24 for the Executive Secretary to provide budgetary cost implications in pre-session documents, where applicable, and any other relevant information to Parties on budgetary implications of decisions and conclusions,⁸ and the request from COP 25 referred to in paragraph 1 above, it is recommended that, in order to increase transparency, the secretariat publish the regularly updated standard costs used for planning purposes on the UNFCCC website. Publication on the website would replace the brief update reports.

IV. Next steps

8. The governing and subsidiary bodies may wish to consider the information contained in this report when proposing new mandates that involve official travel.

⁸ Decision 18/CP.24, paras. 16–17.