

Climate Change Expert Group
Paper No. 2015(2)

Strategic Review: Implications of Proposals to Date for Mitigation Contributions

Sara Moarif (OECD)

May 2015

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ABSTRACT

Strategic Review: Implications of Proposals to Date for Mitigation Contributions

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) produced a negotiating text in February 2015, which forms the basis for negotiations toward a climate change agreement scheduled for adoption at the 21st Conference of the Parties in December 2015. This document aims to better understand proposals in the Geneva negotiating text related to the notion of strengthening nationally determined contributions (NDCs) over time, contained under the headings “strategic review of implementation”, “aggregate ambition assessment” and “enhanced ambition mechanism”. This paper focuses on how key elements of these proposals might apply to mitigation contributions or the mitigation component of NDCs: The document examines the main proposals in terms of their relevance, coherence, assumptions, scope, and feasibility, in the context of a cycle of mitigation contributions that seek to become more ambitious over time. It also explores whether the proposals are likely to be effective in achieving their foreseen outcomes, the majority of which involve changes to NDCs. In general, it finds that there is significant overlap between proposals for various “review” processes in different parts of the Geneva negotiating text, as well as overlap with monitoring, reporting and verification processes under the UNFCCC. The document also presents some broad messages on the subject of “strategic review” expressed during the CCXG Global Forum in March 2015. It is currently unclear what a review or assessment process would comprise, largely because it relates to an overarching process – a cycle of contributions – for which there is not yet an agreed vision or scope.

JEL Classification: F53, H87, Q54, Q56, Q58

Keywords: climate change, mitigation, UNFCCC, 2015 agreement, greenhouse gas

RÉSUMÉ

L'Examen Stratégique: conséquences des propositions sur les contributions d'atténuation

Les Parties à la Convention-cadre des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques (CCNUCC) ont produit en février 2015 un texte de négociation. Celui-ci constitue la base des négociations en vue d'un accord sur le changement climatique, dont l'adoption est prévue à l'occasion de la 21^{ème} Conférence des Parties qui se réunira en décembre 2015. Ce document a pour objectif de permettre de mieux comprendre certaines propositions formulées dans le texte de négociation de Genève, relatif à la notion du renforcement progressif des contributions déterminées au niveau national, présentées sous les intitulés « examen stratégique de la mise en œuvre », « évaluation de l'ambition globale » et « mécanisme pour l'amélioration de l'ambition ». Ce rapport épeluche les principaux éléments de ces propositions et comment ils pourraient être appliqués aux contributions en matière d'atténuation (ou à la composante atténuation des contributions déterminées au niveau national). Il examine la pertinence, la cohérence, les hypothèses, la portée et la faisabilité des principales propositions, dans le contexte d'un cycle de contributions à l'atténuation qui se veut de plus en plus ambitieux au fil du temps. Il s'efforce également de déterminer si les propositions ont des chances d'être efficaces et atteindre les résultats qu'elles prévoient, qui impliquent pour la plupart des modifications des contributions déterminées au niveau national. D'une manière générale, ce document conclut qu'il existe des recoupements importants entre les propositions visant les divers processus d'« examen » décrits dans les différentes parties du texte de négociation de Genève, ainsi qu'un chevauchement avec les procédures de suivi, de communication des informations et de vérification relevant de la CCNUCC. Y sont présentés aussi quelques messages à caractère général sur la problématique de l'« examen stratégique », exprimés en mars 2015 au forum mondial du CCXG par des participants divers. Pour l'heure, il n'apparaît pas clairement de quoi le processus d'examen ou d'évaluation sera constitué, surtout parce qu'il dépend d'un processus prédominant – le cycle des contributions – pour lequel l'ambition ou la portée n'a pas encore été définie d'un commun accord.

Classification JEL: F53, H87, Q54, Q56, Q58

Mots clés: changement climatique, atténuation, CCNUCC, accord de 2015, gaz à effet de serre

FOREWORD

This document was prepared by the OECD and IEA Secretariats in response to a request from the Climate Change Expert Group (CCXG) on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The CCXG Expert Group oversees development of analytical papers for the purpose of providing useful and timely input to the climate change negotiations. These papers may also be useful to national policy-makers and other decision-makers. Authors work with the CCXG to develop these papers. However, the papers do not necessarily represent the views of the OECD or the IEA, nor are they intended to prejudge the views of countries participating in the CCXG. Rather, they are Secretariat information papers intended to inform Member countries, as well as the UNFCCC audience.

Members of the CCXG are Annex I and OECD countries. The Annex I Parties or countries referred to in this document are those listed in Annex I of the UNFCCC (as amended by the Conference of the Parties in 1997 and 2010): Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Community, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. As OECD member countries, Korea, Mexico, Chile, and Israel are also members of the CCXG. Where this document refers to “countries” or “governments”, it is also intended to include “regional economic organisations”, if appropriate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was prepared by Sara Moarif (OECD). The author would like to acknowledge the helpful comments from OECD and IEA colleagues Simon Buckle, Gregory Briner, Jane Ellis, Kate Eklin, Takashi Hattori, Christina Hood, Takayoshi Kato, Michael Mullan and Andrew Prag. She would also like to thank Marta Pellegrino for background research, and Jacob Werksman (EC), Hiromi Masuda (Japan) and Helen Plume (New Zealand) for their helpful suggestions on an earlier draft. This paper also greatly benefited from participants’ comments and feedback at the CCXG Global Forum in March 2015, where a draft version was presented, as well as from subsequent written comments from Elias Abourizk (Canada), Marie Karlberg (Sweden), and Marta Olender (EC).

The Secretariat would like to thank Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK for their direct funding of the CCXG in 2014/15, and the OECD, IEA and Japan for their in-kind support.

Questions and comments should be sent to:

Sara Moarif
OECD Environment Directorate
2, rue André-Pascal
75775 Paris Cedex 16
France
Email: sara.moarif@oecd.org

All OECD and IEA information papers for the Climate Change Expert Group on the UNFCCC can be downloaded from: www.oecd.org/environment/cc/ccxg.htm

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1. Introduction and context

This document attempts to clarify certain proposals contained under the headings “strategic review of implementation”, “aggregate ambition assessment” and “enhanced ambition mechanism”, in the Geneva negotiating text produced by Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) (UNFCCC, 2015a).¹ This document uses the term “strategic review” as shorthand. The processes put forward under the “strategic review” heading are assessments and/or reviews that would take place in the context of countries putting forward nationally determined contributions (NDCs) within the 2015 agreement. The assessments and/or reviews proposed would occur within a cycle of contributions that would be renewed at certain intervals and evolve over time, including towards greater ambition. Some proposals for strategic review also relate NDCs with collective, longer-term goals.

The proposed processes for strategic review are centred on how NDCs are set and/or renewed over time. However, the contents of NDCs are not agreed. As such, there are different views on whether strategic review would cover all aspects of a NDC that might include mitigation, means of implementation and adaptation. This document focuses on discussing key elements of the main proposals for “strategic review” from the perspective of how they might apply to mitigation contributions or the mitigation component of NDCs.

The Geneva text contains proposals for various other types of “review”. Some of these fall under provisions for transparency, or measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). Discussion of assessments and reviews within MRV or transparency provisions do not directly relate to the notion of a cycle of contributions, though other parts of the Geneva text refer to processes that do. For example, one “review” proposed in the Geneva text is an ex ante process (“consideration” or “consultative period”) for NDCs. This would principally occur after the NDC is “communicated”, but before it is “inscribed” in an agreement, decision or annex (though there is some variation within proposals on timing). Within provisions for setting NDCs, some proposals describe revisions and updates of the mitigation component of NDCs as part of the objective-setting cycle. The outcomes of various types of review, as proposed, would play a part in the process of setting, revising and updating NDCs.

One challenge with the Geneva negotiating text is that while it compiles different proposals on a strategic review or assessment processes, it also splits them up across different sections of the text, making it difficult to understand how different proposals might fit together. For example, a proposal that might have included both an ex ante and ex post review process might be split across the “Mitigation” and “Transparency” sections, along with the “Strategic review of implementation” and “Ex ante consideration” sub-sections, without it being clear that the now separated proposals relate to each other.

It is not clear exactly what the strategic review will comprise, largely because it relates to an overarching process – a cycle of contributions – for which there is not yet an agreed vision or scope. Different views on how this cycle works within the 2015 agreement lead to different proposals for strategic review. Some are structured for a more time-limited agreement, others for a longer, evolving agreement. “Strategic review” may occur at the global level, the individual country level, or it may link the two. The review may also take place before NDCs take effect, in the course of their implementation, or following their implementation. The scope and content of countries’ mitigation NDCs will differ, in-line with capacities, responsibilities, and diverse starting points. Different groupings of countries may emerge, as when mitigation pledges under the Cancún agreements were

¹ These proposals are contained in Section J of the Geneva text, titled “Time frames and process related to commitments/contributions / Other matters related to implementation and ambition”. Proposals are largely contained in paragraphs 185 to 193, and the additional Option II paragraph 162 at the end of section J. A footnote clarifies that some parties consider it premature to discuss this section.

made.² If strategic review takes place at the individual country level, the process will likely differ for countries according to capacities and types of NDCs. These differences would also likely be consistent with how differentiation among countries is expressed more broadly in the 2015 agreement.

This document examines the main proposals for strategic review in terms of their relevance, coherence, assumptions, scope, and feasibility for mitigation contributions, in the broader context of a cycle of contributions that seek to become more ambitious over time. It also explores whether the proposals are likely to be effective in achieving the outcomes foreseen by the strategic review process. Section 2 outlines existing relevant review provisions and some lessons they hold, Section 3 presents current proposals contained in the Geneva negotiating text, and Section 4 looks at their potential implications for mitigation contributions. The document concludes with some initial messages in Section 5, drawn from discussion among a wide range of delegates during the Climate Change Expert Group (CCXG) Global Forum in March 2015.

2. Current review provisions and lessons learned

Any new review processes should seek to fill gaps, and build on processes currently in place. Table 1 provides an overview of existing review and assessment processes under the UNFCCC relevant to mitigation. These include both recurring processes as well as one-off exercises. Most have a more technical focus, though some more recent processes have also had a broader, somewhat political orientation (i.e. exchanges between Parties regarding their actions).

There are also two relevant global climate review processes undertaken by UN bodies.³ The first are the Assessment Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These provide a full scientific and technical assessment of climate change, and present scenarios for different levels of temperature increases, along with the likelihood of staying within or exceeding certain scenarios. They have been produced every five to eight years since 1990. The second is the Emissions Gap Report produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), produced annually since 2010. This synthesis report includes a global assessment of emissions consistent with meeting the long-term 2°C temperature goal. It examines the difference between emissions levels consistent with this pathway, in 2025 and 2030, and the expected levels of emissions in these years based on countries' climate targets. It also tries to assess whether countries are on track to meet their targets, based on available data.

A number of lessons can be drawn from experience with existing assessment and review processes relevant to mitigation under the UNFCCC (van Asselt, Sælen and Pauw, 2015; Ellis et al., 2011):

- It is possible to combine both one-off and recurring technical reviews, depending on needs; the Kyoto Protocol had a one-off review of initial reports, and a review of “true-up” period reports⁴ is currently underway.
- In the context of the Kyoto Protocol, review processes also facilitated compliance by flagging implementation problems.

² Annex I countries had absolute quantified greenhouse gas (GHG) targets, as did some non-Annex I countries (e.g. Costa Rica); several countries had relative quantified GHG or carbon dioxide (CO₂) targets; many countries, including some least-developed countries (LDCs), listed quantified non-GHG targets (e.g. forest cover, renewable energy); still others listed various policies and measures they would undertake, some quantifying their GHG impact. Some small island developing states (SIDS) undertook relative quantified targets (Singapore), or absolute targets (Marshall Islands, Antigua and Barbuda).

³ There are also many relevant assessments carried out by non-UN organisations, e.g. IIASA, IEA, OECD, Climate Action Tracker.

⁴ The “true-up” period is a 100 day period following submission and review of final GHG emissions reports, during which Kyoto Protocol parties can continue to acquire and transfer emissions units.

- It is possible to have differentiated processes for different groups of Parties, not only along Annex-I / non-Annex I lines: e.g. small Annex I emitters do not require in-country reviews as often, and special provisions are in place for least-developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS).
- We are acquiring experience with having review processes that are not just technical, but address broader issues (including political ones), through the International Assessment and Review (IAR) and International Consultations and Analysis (ICA) processes. Under the assessment and consultation parts, Parties can discuss their concerns regarding each other's actions.
- The 2013-2015 review process, which is currently underway, has included structured expert dialogues. These demonstrated the usefulness of dialogue between policy makers, the scientific community, and technical experts to better understand ways of articulating long-term collective climate objectives, as well as broader issues such as policy options and constraints (UNFCCC, 2015b).
- Assessment and review processes can be highly resource-intensive; if these increase in scope or frequency, rationalisation of existing processes (e.g. different expert reviews) and adequate resources will be needed.

One difference with the “strategic review of implementation” process put forward within the Geneva text and most existing review and assessment processes is that the strategic review would occur in the context of countries putting forward contributions that are renewed over time. As such, the only similar experience is with the review under Article 9 of the Kyoto Protocol. However, this process explicitly precluded consideration of any new commitments and was divorced from target-setting, exactly the opposite of current proposals for strategic review. In addition, the Article 9 Review’s objectives were vague⁵ and its outcomes not specified. As a result, the Article 9 Review was not “strategic”; it focused on specific topics related to implementation of the Protocol, and led to no outcomes (Murphy, 2009).

⁵ To “periodically review this Protocol in the light of the best available scientific information and assessments on climate change and its impacts, as well as relevant technical, social and economic information”.

Table 1. Overview of existing UNFCCC review processes relevant to mitigation

Orientation	Description of process	Function/purpose	Outcomes
<i>For all Parties</i>			
Scientific/ technical/ broad (e.g. policies, potentials)	2013-2015 Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2010; scope decided 2012; currently underway • Collective; meant to be recurring • Conducted following IPCC reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess adequacy of long-term global goal (2°C) • Assess adequacy of progress toward achieving the long-term global goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis report to be produced • Appropriate action to be taken by COP in 2015; includes consideration of strengthening long-term global goal.
Technical	Compilation and Synthesis Reports of National Communications (NCs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurring for Annex-I since 1995, ~ every 4 years • Six reports from 1999-2005 for non-Annex I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though not a “review”, the C&S Reports describe aggregate trends regarding emissions, mitigation and adaptation measures, support, etc., as reported in NCs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented to and considered by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation
Institutions/ Processes/ broad	Article 9 Review of Kyoto Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second review 2006-08 (1st review was procedural) • Collective; one-off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General review of the Protocol in light of scientific information. • In practice: scope focused on specific implementation topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None: no decision or document.
<i>For Annex-I or developed country Parties</i>			
Technical	In-depth review of National Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 1999, ~ every 4 years • Individual; recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive technical assessment of information on actions taken to implement the Convention as laid out in NCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a report • For KP Parties: can lead to recommendations to compliance committee
Technical	GHG Inventory reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually since 2003, following inventory submission • Individual; recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate, reliable information on domestic emissions and removals; consistency and comparability; improve quality of inventories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a report • For KP Parties: can lead to inventory adjustments; can impact eligibility for use of flexible mechanisms
Technical	International Assessment and Review (IAR): Technical Review of Biennial Reports (BR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2011; began 2014 • ~every 2 years • Individual; recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assessment of completeness, transparency of information provided in BR related to attainment of emission reduction target and provision of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Review Report, used as input into Multilateral Assessment process
Technical/ broad (e.g. policies, ambition)	IAR: Multilateral Assessment (MA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exchange of questions and answers between the Party being assessed and other Parties, for clarity on information reported in BRs, NCs and inventories, to improve comparability and build confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiled questions and answers (provided in writing and during MA session) • SBI summary report • Any observations by the Party being assessed
Broad (policies, potentials)	Work programme on clarification of quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2011; took place 2013-2014 • Individual; one-off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying common elements for measuring progress made towards achievement of targets • Ensuring the comparability of efforts among Parties, taking into account different national circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and reports of the workshops

Table 1. (Continued) Overview of existing UNFCCC review processes relevant to mitigation

<i>For non-Annex I or developing country Parties</i>			
Orientation	Description of process	Function/purpose	Outcomes
	<i>For non-Annex I or developing country Parties</i>		
Technical	International Consultations and Analysis (ICA): Technical Analysis of Biennial Update Reports (BURs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2011; to start in 2015 • ~2 years; variable for SIDS and LDCs • Individual; recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assessment of completeness and transparency of information reported in BURs (including GHG inventories; mitigation actions) • Identify capacity-building needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary report, used as an input into the Facilitative Sharing of Views
	<i>For non-Annex I or developing country Parties</i>		
Technical/broad (e.g. policies, potentials)	ICA: Facilitative Sharing of Views <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above; but not yet started • Individual and collective (<5 Parties) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workshop to exchange questions and answers between the BUR of the Party concerned and other Parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of the Facilitative Sharing of Views
Broad (policies, potentials)	Work programme to further the understanding of the diversity of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2011; took place 2013-2014 • Individual; One-off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of experiences and information in order to facilitate the preparation and implementation of NAMAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and reports of the workshops

3. Elements proposed for “strategic review”

The terms used to describe the proposals covering paragraphs 185 to 193 of the Geneva text – “Strategic review of implementation”, “aggregate ambition assessment” and “enhanced ambition mechanism” – suggest different processes and approaches:

- Strategic review of implementation suggests a process that focuses on recent performance (in terms of implementation of contributions and their outcomes, for example), and one that is open-ended. “Strategic” suggests a focus on issues considered most important or essential to the agreement’s objectives; this could also include longer-term, collective or structural issues.
- The aggregate ambition assessment suggests a collective, global process that looks both at recent performance, and future or planned contributions. The term “ambition assessment” suggests assessing actual performance against a reference or standard level of performance (e.g. pathway towards a 2°C goal).
- The enhanced ambition mechanism suggests existing levels of ambition would need to be enhanced, not just assessed against a given level; the process suggests greater focus on future contributions or changes to contributions going forward.
- The strategic review and the enhanced ambition mechanism could refer to both a collective (e.g. aggregate, global) and individual (e.g. national level, Party specific) process.

Table 2 presents various proposals for strategic review relevant to mitigation included in the Geneva negotiating text, generally following the sub-section headings used within the text. However, not all proposals in the negotiating text are listed in the table, and not all proposals listed will be discussed. It is not always clear which purposes match or correspond to a given set of outcomes and processes. There are many repetitions, and vague or insufficiently explained proposals. Note that the use of the terms “commitments” and “commitments/contributions” occurs when these are used in the textual proposals. Otherwise, the terms NDC or contribution will be used. Where the proposal does not specify whether it applies to developed or developing countries, this means: a) it was not specified in

the text, or; b) there are brackets maintaining various options which make it unclear if the proposal applies to all Parties or a sub-set.

The Geneva text groups together parts of what were proposals by different Parties on an assessment and review process for contributions. As such, these proposals might currently be spread across different parts of the sections in the Geneva text on Mitigation, on Transparency, and on Timeframes and Processes related to contributions. The proposals also point to different views of how contributions will be put forward and renewed over time. In some proposals, contributions are seen as limited in time, e.g. to 2030, while in others, a very long-term cycle is assumed, e.g. every five years without any specified end date. In some cases, the objective of the review appears to be clarification and understanding, and in others specifically for countries to increase the ambition of their contributions. Proposals often differentiate between different groups of Parties in various forms: Annex I/non-Annex I, the more undefined developed/developing, and the not-yet-defined Annex X/non-Annex X.⁶

Previous Party submissions include differing views on this issue: that non-Annex I contributions be reviewed in aggregate and Annex I contributions individually; that developing countries not be subject to any *ex ante* review; or that developing countries not have their emissions reductions assessed, but only their needs and barriers to action (van Asselt, Sælen and Pauw, 2015).

Some proposals suggest an assumption of greater uniformity in NDCs – that these might follow the same timeframes, cover the same areas (e.g. only mitigation), and that there would be agreement on the information provided to accompany them. This is currently not the case for intended NDCs that are to be communicated “well in advance” of December 2015, and the guidance provided regarding accompanying information is voluntary and generic (Decision 1/CP.20). Some proposals for strategic review may therefore be more applicable to the variety present in the first set of NDCs, while others would be more relevant should there be more common rules for certain elements of NDCs, or for other types of contributions or commitments that may emerge in the future. The proposals are therefore also sensitive to how Parties view evolution and dynamism under the 2015 agreement, as well as its legal provisions.

⁶ “Annex X/non-annex X” relates to the proposal that new annexes with different country groupings be attached to the 2015 agreement.

Table 2. Options in the Geneva text for strategic review relevant to mitigation NDCs

<p>What is the purpose of the review?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing progress towards operationalising or achieving the ultimate objective of the Convention, by reviewing individual commitments/contributions (implementation and/or ambition) as well as their aggregate or overall effect • Reviewing the adequacy of the long-term “aspect” in light of the objective of the Convention • Reviewing individual and collective ambition of commitments by developed country Parties compared with a collective emission reduction target for 2030 • Tracking the performance of the implementation of post-2020 enhanced action • Increasing the level of ambition • Forward-looking assessment of ambition and fairness of individual and aggregate mitigation commitments in relation to long-term goal (either 2°C or as defined in the agreement) • Considering the historical responsibilities of Parties in relation to the global temperature increase⁷
<p>What outcomes are foreseen from this process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body (<i>of the agreement</i>) recommends adjustments to Parties’ commitments • The COP recommends further arrangements on implementing the agreement and increasing ambition from 2021 to 2030, and enhancing implementation after 2030. • Parties are to take into account recommendations from the review in preparing their successive contributions, or increase their level of ambition after the review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By adjusting their existing commitments/contributions upwards (<i>i.e. more ambitious</i>) or communicating more ambitious mitigation commitments/ contributions • Differentiated: some Parties adjust existing contributions, others address barriers and constraints (developed/developing differentiation, or “annex X/non-annex X”) • Parties’ commitments for the next five years shall “respond” to recommendations
<p>What would the review process include?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An international revisit of emission reduction commitments (of developed or annex X Parties) • A review of the adequacy of mitigation commitments • The Reviews subsequent to the 2013-15 Review (2020-2023 and 2027-2030) • A forum on lessons learned on innovation of sustainable development pathways among all Parties [sic.] • Domestic reflection and international understanding of enhanced action undertaken, in a non-punitive and non-intrusive manner, respectful of national sovereignties (developing or non-annex X Parties)
<p>Which countries are reviewed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only developed country Parties • All Parties • All Parties, but differentiated according to what is subject to review (e.g. term “ambition” not used in relation to developing countries)
<p>What information and elements would inform the review?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on progress towards achieving commitments and global emission trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information currently reported and contained in inventories, national communications, biennial reports, biennial update reports, review reports, the IAR and ICA processes • Information reported under transparency arrangements of the new agreement (Section I) • IPCC assessment reports • The report of the 2013-2015 Review and subsequent Reviews • The technical examination of mitigation potential, opportunities and policy options for enhancing ambition • An assessment against an equity reference framework • Information communicated on Parties’ future commitments/contributions • Reports of existing subsidiary bodies and new institutional arrangements established by the agreement • A process/arrangements to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of commitments /contributions • Inputs from non-state actors, relevant international organisations and international cooperative initiatives
<p>What previous review processes would inform the modalities of the strategic review?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review referred to in Article 4, paragraph 2(d) of the Convention • The ambition mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol • The IAR and ICA processes • The clarification of quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments (annex I or annex X Parties) and the process for identifying the diversity of NAMAs (non-Annex I or non-annex X Parties) • The 2013-2015 Review • Multilateral consultative process set out in Article 13 of the Convention; this would comprise amending the mandates and guidelines of the IAR and ICA processes, or improving the modalities and organisation of the existing 2013-2015 Review process

⁷ This proposal will not be assessed because discussions on operationalising historical responsibility are so politically contentious as to be impractical. Focusing exclusively on a backward-looking indicator for “responsibility” is also methodologically contentious (La Rovere, de Macedo and Baumert, 2002; Den Elzen, Schaeffer and Lucas, 2005)

Table 2. (Continued) Options in the Geneva text for strategic review relevant to mitigation NDCs

When and how often does the review take place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a set year, to be decided • After the agreement has come into effect • At least <i>x</i> years before the end of the implementation period • Starting in year <i>x</i> and : annually (developed countries); every 2-4 years (developing countries) • Every <i>x</i> years (<i>options range from 1 to 5</i>) • On a common five-year cycle • Immediately following the publication of IPCC assessment reports (<i>this is every five to eight years</i>)
Who undertakes the review?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body of the agreement or the COP (recommends adjustments to contributions/ commitments) • Parties • A technical panel of experts (for assessment against an ‘equity reference framework’; to examine ambition and fairness of commitments and prepare a report)

4. Implications of “strategic review” proposals for mitigation contributions

This section examines the main elements of proposals from the perspective of how they might apply to mitigation contributions or the mitigation component of NDCs, using the following questions:

- *Are they coherent?* Are the proposals consistent with other proposals on relevant processes (e.g. reporting framework, target-setting process), and do they make sense.
- *Are they relevant?* Do the proposals fill any existing gaps.
- *What assumptions or preconditions do they require?* What elements or information are required to understand the proposals (for example, a decision on the timeframe of contributions).
- *Are they feasible?* Can the proposals be operationalised, and what are the implications of doing so.
- *Is their scope appropriate?* Are the elements to be put forward for review appropriate in scope to meet the stated objectives of different proposals.
- *Are they likely to be effective?* Are the proposals likely to achieve the outcomes they foresee.

4.1 Are the proposals coherent?

Most of the proposals on the purpose of the strategic review relate it to two different goals: collective, long-term objectives (the ultimate objective of the Convention, or the 2°C goal), and individual national contributions. The two are linked, in that review of individual progress with achieving contributions is part of assessing overall progress towards a collective objective. In terms of outcomes, most proposals clearly link the review to the NDC-setting and adjustment process, and aim at increasing or enhancing ambition. However, some proposals suggest the outcome for developing countries would be a clarification exercise, addressing barriers, constraints and areas where further action could be taken.

As such, the proposals are generally coherent regarding both long-term, global mitigation objectives and individual country contributions, as put forward in Section D of the Geneva text on mitigation. Most proposals are also coherent with the notion proposed in the same section that mitigation contributions must increase in ambition over time (or at the least not decrease in ambition), or have to represent “progressions” compared with current or previous contributions (e.g. paragraphs 19, 21.4, 25).

In other cases, particularly regarding purpose and outcomes of the strategic review, there is much overlap with other sections of the Geneva text. Reviewing progress with both individual and collective contributions overlaps with similar objectives foreseen in proposals for transparency provisions (Section I, e.g. paragraph 141 and 143). The current proposals for strategic review suggest the review or assessment could potentially occur before a contribution is finalised, in the course of its implementation (given the frequency suggested in some proposals), and/or after its implementation period. In terms of occurring before a contribution is finalised, there are several overlaps with various proposals on an ex ante consideration process for NDCs (paragraph 176). Proposals for revision and updates of the mitigation component of NDCs (paragraphs 169 and 171) refer to the ex ante consideration process, and not the strategic review. Again, it is possible that proposals combining an ex post and ex ante or implementation review process have now been split up.⁸

In general, proposals for reviewing or assessing implementation of contributions in a regular manner overlap with proposals for a transparency framework. It is unclear whether a process that impacts future NDCs would be part of the “strategic review”, or whether it would be a separate but complementary “ex ante consideration”. While the Geneva text on implementation and compliance remains vague, assessing progress with NDCs at the end of a cycle, to “ratchet up” their level of ambition, could also form part of facilitative compliance provisions (Briner, Kato and Hattori, 2014). Some proposals call for reviewing the adequacy of mitigation commitments; it is unclear whether this process would be individual, collective or both. However, one of the listed purposes of strategic review refers to the adequacy of the long-term “aspect” of the Convention, which suggest a collective process. Reference to adequacy is also included in proposals for an ex ante consideration process, and in some proposals on mitigation contributions. Paragraph 28 in Section D on mitigation, for example, refers specifically to a “review of the adequacy of the sum of individual commitments” to take place.

The proposals regarding processes included in the strategic review remain vague; it is not clear to which objectives or outcomes they relate, what the process would actually entail, and how this would lead to the outcomes foreseen. Certain processes are listed as “informing” the strategic review, such as a technical examination of mitigation potential or assessment against an equity reference framework. It is not clear if these processes or their outputs/outcomes would inform the strategic review. Some of the processes listed as providing a basis for how strategic review is carried out have never been operationalised (Article 4, paragraph 2(d); Article 13).

Several of the information elements needed to inform the strategic review refer to reports and information from existing and proposed transparency and MRV provisions. Some of these inputs could be specific to the strategic review, while others could be common to other “review” processes proposed in the Geneva text, as well as in the NDC-setting process or a compliance process. The text also refers to information sources not yet in place, such as reports produced under any new institutional arrangements, and an “equity reference framework”. Information needs for the strategic review might shape information requested or required elsewhere, such as information accompanying NDCs or included in MRV provisions. The links between information provided as part of MRV provisions and information required for a strategic review process would need to be clarified.

The information needed for strategic review would also be available for Parties expected to participate in such a process; there would need to be consistency between participation in the strategic review and transparency provisions. The frequency of the review is directly linked to timeframes for submitting and revising NDCs, their duration, and whether an ex ante consideration process is also in place as a separate review process. The text is sparser regarding what body might undertake the strategic review. It refers to the “governing body” of the new agreement. There is reference to this body throughout the Geneva text, though it is not clear if this refers to the Conference of Parties (COP) or a new body. There is also reference to a technical panel of experts; coherence will be needed with other technical bodies involved in transparency processes. The proposal that Parties shall review

⁸ For example, Brazil’s proposal for a dynamic contribution cycle and aggregate consideration process contains both an ex post and ex ante process; South Africa’s proposal included both implementation review and ex post assessment.

their emission reduction commitments appears difficult to reconcile with the process and outcomes foreseen by the strategic review. Section K of the Geneva text, on implementation and compliance, also refers to the governing body or a compliance committee; the latter could be relevant if the strategic review process is linked to a facilitative compliance mechanism.

4.2 Are the proposals relevant?

There are currently no review or assessment processes with the explicit purpose of leading to recommendations and adjustments to countries' mitigation pledges. Given this gap, and that the 2015 agreement will be centred on NDCs, a process that is meant to inform these NDCs is likely to be relevant. For long-term global goals, the current 2013-2015 Review process is meant to consider the UNFCCC's long-term objective and progress towards it. It is not yet clear what the outcomes of the 2013-2015 Review will be, i.e. what "appropriate action" will be taken by the COP (Decision 2/CP.17).

Several proposed purposes of and processes comprising the strategic review echo those of processes currently in place (Table 1). Reviewing progress towards achieving the objective of the Convention, for mitigation, is similar to the 2013-2015 Review process. The UNEP Emissions Gap Report also fulfils a similar function. Tracking the performance of implementation of mitigation actions is currently part of MRV processes, and similar provisions are proposed in the transparency section of the Geneva text. A review of the adequacy of mitigation commitments took place at the first COP in 1995; this led to the Berlin Mandate and emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the "review" appears to have taken the form of a negotiated decision (that commitments were inadequate), rather than a specific technical and political process. The proposal for "international understanding" of action sounds similar to an ICA process, or the process for identifying the diversity of NAMAs. It is not clear how a multilateral process would be involved in "domestic reflection" or what this refers to.

The information and elements to inform the strategic review mostly comprise the outcomes of processes under current and proposed transparency processes, as well as the NDC-setting process (e.g. information on future contributions). New elements include an undefined "equity reference framework", and a technical examination of mitigation potentials, opportunities and policy options. While no formal technical examination process is in place, the technical expert dialogues on enhancing pre-2020 mitigation ambition partly address several of these topics. The issue of technical potentials and possible mitigation actions has also been discussed within the structured expert dialogues as part of the 2013-2015 Review process. Outside the UNFCCC, the UNEP Emissions Gap Report has previously included assessments of technical mitigation potentials and opportunities (e.g. for energy efficiency in 2014). At the national level, analyses of mitigation potentials and policy options can be offered as part of capacity-building support, and are also provided outside the UNFCCC framework⁹.

4.3 What assumptions or preconditions do the proposals require?

At a basic level, proposals for a strategic review process refer to both a collective, global goal, as well as individual national goals; both are outlined within the mitigation section of the Geneva negotiating text, it therefore appears that both are assumed to be in a future agreement. For the strategic review process in general, the timeframe for NDCs and the subsequent timing of adjustments would need to be agreed. In addition, the outcomes foreseen require prior agreement that a multilateral strategic review will adjust or inform NDCs in some way. The legal nature of recommendations stemming from the strategic review process would therefore need to be agreed, as well as the legal status of mitigation NDCs themselves. Some proposals also require that developed countries agree to a collective mitigation target for 2030, or that aggregate mitigation targets are in place.

⁹ This includes: UN bodies such as the UNEP DTU Partnership or UNDP; multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the International Partnership on Mitigation and MRV and the LEDS Global Partnership; bilaterally funded initiatives such as the Climate and Development Knowledge Network and the International Climate Initiative.

The timing of the strategic review would, preferably, be aligned with the timeframes of contributions. If they cover a shorter timeframe, e.g. five years, it may occur at the end of the NDC timeframe; if longer, it may also take place mid-way through the NDC's implementation. To be effective, strategic review would need to occur at a point where implementation of a NDC was underway, but before the next contribution was finalised.

The actual mechanism by which the strategic review would translate into increased ambition of NDCs would need to be clarified; this might happen through the strategic review process itself, as part of the broader process of setting NDCs, or be part of compliance processes. A precondition for the strategic review process and its outcomes is that Parties propose NDCs for a given time period, and that NDCs would be proposed for subsequent time periods, up to a given end date. Some proposals clearly assume five-year implementation periods. Others refer to the year 2030, making it unclear how a review or assessment process for NDCs would relate to this specified timeframe.

There would also need to be clarity on the 2015 agreement's transparency provisions, compliance procedures, and provisions for setting and revising NDCs (including any ex ante consideration). The specific purposes of the various proposed review processes might overlap, and these would need to be clearly delineated. Participation in the strategic review would also need to align with these other processes, and technical bodies might also overlap between them.

Another important precondition for performing a strategic review is good data and information. Undertaking an assessment of aggregate progress towards meeting the 2°C goal for example, requires reliable, verifiable GHG emissions data, as well as projections of GHG emissions. This would be needed for major emitters, ensuring that the majority of global emissions are covered, and MRV provisions would need to adequately provide this information.

4.4 Is the scope of the proposals appropriate?

This question applies more specifically to whether the scope of the information and processes proposed would be appropriate to meet the stated objectives and outcomes, namely of NDCs becoming more ambitious at the end of the strategic review process. While the process itself could occur at the national and/or global level, there is of course a link between national and global assessments. The strategic review would need to consider how to integrate these, and whether procedurally these assessments would occur within separate processes (e.g. under MRV provisions as well) or a single one.

Most of the processes and much of the information elements proposed suggest strategic review would occur after implementation of a NDC was completed, examining what and how countries have implemented (or not). Here the information and processes suggested are appropriate, as they include data and information on GHG emissions and trends required in order to carry out an assessment of national and global trends. Existing mitigation contributions could take a variety of forms (e.g. expressed in non-GHG terms), so understanding how well they had been implemented would be needed for any adjustments. Reviewing implementation would also provide the information needed to better understand a given country's circumstances and what further actions it may or may not be able to undertake. Some proposals suggest the process would occur during implementation (e.g. annual or biennial frequency), and the information elements proposed are appropriate, though these overlap with transparency provisions put forward elsewhere in the Geneva text.

Only a few proposals explicitly refer to a forward-looking assessment, which overlap to a greater degree with proposals for an ex ante consultation. A balance between reviewing past performance and looking forward to future or planned NDCs would be needed to assess the adequacy and ambition of contributions in light of the objective of the Convention. Information on future NDCs is listed as an input, and a process of technical examination of mitigation potential could also be forward-looking. To meet the purpose of assessing progress with achieving the Convention's ultimate objective, GHG information may not be required from all Parties. However, to meet the stated outcome of adjusting

NDCs, information on progress with implementation would be needed for all Parties, though the type of information might differ in line with the variety of NDCs (e.g. these might not all be expressed in GHG terms).

4.5 Are the proposals feasible?

The outcomes foreseen by the strategic review are feasible if Parties agree that revisions and updates to NDCs (suggested in various parts of the Geneva negotiating text) are to be informed by a multilateral review process. This is likely relevant given the bottom-up nature of contributions. However, experience with the Kyoto Protocol and EU target-setting processes point to the difficulty of adjusting targets once implementation has begun. As such, proposals suggesting an adjustment to existing contributions (or indeed, intended contributions) appear difficult.¹⁰ An ex ante consideration process, proposed elsewhere in the text, may be better suited to reviewing existing contributions. For successive contributions, the strategic review would need to be integrated into the NDC-setting process as part of a cycle of contributions.

Many of the purposes of the strategic review appear feasible simply because they echo existing processes currently in place (see Tables 1 and 2). However, some of these existing processes are not yet complete and it is not clear how well they will meet their objectives, notably the 2013-2015 Review, and the facilitative sharing of views as part of international consultations and analysis. In addition, most of these processes do not take place in the context of countries setting contributions that are to become more ambitious over time, making it uncertain whether existing processes will be appropriate for such a purpose. The outcomes of the current 2013-2015 Review, expected in December 2015 at COP 21, might be helpful in understanding how such a process could lead to changes in the global long-term goal.

The feasibility of assessing and increasing an NDC's level of ambition might be limited if doing so is viewed in absolute rather than relative terms, i.e. if ambition is assessed against collectively pre-determined criteria, such as a specific emissions reduction level derived from global GHG emissions scenarios. A process requiring agreement on defining ambition and how it is assessed would be difficult to implement. In addition, the proposal referring to a collective mitigation target for developed countries for 2030 appears infeasible, simply because submissions and discussions do not indicate this is a strong possibility.

The relation between assessing the long-term global goal and overall progress towards it, and how this is then broken down to affect individual contributions, could take a variety of forms and remains unclear in the text. Processes and purposes referring to reviewing ambition, fairness, adequacy and equity may aim to do this. An equity reference framework and other assessments of fairness would require agreement on criteria, which is politically contentious. Even if this is not seen as completely infeasible, it would likely mean a lengthy, parallel process. The resource implications of current review processes are significant, for the Secretariat, for the Subsidiary Bodies and for Parties. If the strategic review process occurs at the national level, this may be infeasible to do for all UNFCCC Parties at the same time. Establishing new groups or bodies always takes time and resources; rationalising and better using existing institutions may be more feasible.

Proposals regarding timing would need to account for the time lag associated with data gathering processes. Greenhouse gas data for a given year is available two years later in Annex I countries. This delay is longer in many non-Annex I countries, according to data reported in Biennial Update Reports and National Communications. The strategic review will need to balance sufficiently broad participation, to be environmentally meaningful, with appropriate differentiation. Limiting strategic review to only developed country Parties is not politically feasible, nor is strict differentiation along developed- and developing-country lines, and neither is no differentiation whatsoever. A large

¹⁰ From investors' perspective, a process that potentially leads to changes in national policy over the course of the policy's implementation introduces an element of political risk that could dampen investments.

number of developing countries have low capacity and are small emitters. The resources required for them to undergo an individual review process in the same year would be significant – and unlikely to be feasible, both for the countries and for the Secretariat.

4.6 Are the proposals likely to be effective?

The most important element to ensure outcomes are met – and most outcomes proposed involve changes to NDCs – remains agreement by Parties on how a multilateral strategic review process will influence changes in nationally-determined contributions. This includes agreement on how NDCs should be guided by a longer-term, collective mitigation objective. The main risk in any process to adjust NDCs “upwards”, i.e. to make them more ambitious, is that this may create a perverse incentive to lower their initial level of ambition. If some countries know they will probably be asked to increase the ambition of their NDCs, they may put forward a less ambitious initial NDC to ensure they can subsequently ratchet it up. If the strategic review is more forward-looking and only applies to future NDCs, its basis would be the first NDCs put forward under the 2015 agreement. This may also discourage Parties from coming forward with their most ambitious NDCs, though various other factors may already contribute to such discouragement (e.g. lack of clarity on various rules surrounding NDCs, lack of time). Countries that currently have low capacity and are small emitters will likely submit NDCs that are limited in scope and take a variety of forms. The strategic review process could therefore also form part of a facilitative mechanism to strengthen these over time, in line with national circumstances.

The objective of assessing progress with implementation of NDCs would likely also contribute to meeting the outcome of increased ambition. Reviewing implementation would be important for revising NDCs, and could potentially increase collective ambition through building trust and sharing lessons. Understanding whether countries are collectively on track to meet the long-term global goal is also important for informing the collective level of action needed. The process by which assessing the ambition and fairness of individual and collective NDCs, in line with the long-term objective, would then inform individual mitigation NDCs remains unclear.

The processes, information and elements put forward generally focus on progress with fulfilling individual NDCs. Some do include forward-looking proposals (information on future contributions) and global assessments (2013-2015 Review; IPCC reports). Others suggest an attempt to link the global assessment with national contributions (equity reference framework, review of adequacy). While all these elements could be useful, they will need to be specifically tailored to the purposes and outcomes of the strategic review, i.e. more ambitious NDCs. How the strategic review process works to do this will likely require significant negotiation, but is what will determine effectiveness.

For mitigation, efforts by all large emitters would be needed to meet most of the objectives put forward for a strategic review, from an environmental perspective (Clarke et al., 2014; Hare et al., 2014, OECD, 2009). Nevertheless, the strategic review process will likely be different for different groups of countries and/or types of contribution, in line with the types of flexibilities in place for countries within MRV provisions and NDC-setting processes.

The timing of the strategic review will be important for its effectiveness. As discussed in section 4.3, the timing will need to be aligned with NDC timeframes for maximum effectiveness. To reinforce the notion that all Parties increase ambition together, it could be important for the review to take place in the same year for countries accounting for the majority of emissions, if possible. If strategic review is seen as equivalent or similar to the 2013-2015 Review, then timing these to follow IPCC assessment reports would likely be most effective.

5. Broad messages on “strategic review” for mitigation

This document examines proposals on “strategic review” contained in the Geneva negotiating text within the context of a cycle of mitigation contributions that seek to become more ambitious over

time. During discussions at the CCXG Global Forum in March 2015, it appeared that there remain divergent views on what the scope, timing, basis and process of strategic review might be for such contributions. However, there is general agreement that the ultimate aim of the process is to enhance ambition, and that it takes place in the context of a dynamic cycle of contributions. This section presents some broad messages emerging from discussions among participants at the March 2015 CCXG Global Forum.¹¹

The areas of divergence are principally related to differing views on the cycle of contributions more broadly, including what comprises NDCs and if strategic review might apply to non-mitigation aspects of NDCs. Disparate views on the cycle of contributions also mean different views on the best timing for the strategic review (ex ante, during implementation, ex post). There are also differing views as to how the strategic review process might be differentiated across Parties; as discussed in Section 1, there are various proposals with different levels and types of differentiation. Participants at the Global Forum generally agreed that both individual reviews and collective assessments of NDCs are needed to increase mitigation ambition, as are assessing implementation of current contributions and the adequacy of future contributions. However, there are a variety of views on where to place the emphasis in each of these areas, i.e. whether on a global or individual review and/or assessment, whether primarily on past performance or more forward-looking.

Besides general agreement among CCXG Global Forum participants that the ultimate aim and outcome of strategic review for mitigation contributions is enhanced ambition, there was also mutual consent that a multilateral review and/or assessment process could be compatible with nationally determined contributions. The 2015 agreement is likely, at least initially to be structured around nationally determined contributions. Future NDCs could be strengthened through multilateral processes, including strategic review. A hybrid system for mitigation objectives could take shape, with a multilaterally agreed long-term goal, nationally determined contributions, and some top-down rules for transparency, accounting, and eventually timeframes and scope of national contributions. This would lead to outcomes of strategic review that are unlikely to be prescriptive or lead to *multilateral* adjustments of NDCs. Global Forum participants viewed a multilateral review and/or assessment process under the 2015 agreement as different in character from previous reviews. In part because its objectives would be farmed by a universal agreement with legal force, meaning there would be real pressure and expectation placed on countries to enhance ambition following strategic review.

Obtaining clarity on these issues will require a more harmonised view on the cycle of mitigation contributions among Parties. The cycle and the contributions within it may also change in the future; for example, there may be agreement on the timeframe for mitigation contributions. Any multilateral assessment or review would also need to adapt to any changes in this cycle (e.g. different lengths of timeframes for contributions, as happened with the first and second commitment periods under the Kyoto Protocol). For example, an ex post and individual strategic review might, in a context of fewer common guidelines or rules surrounding NDCs, emphasise transparency, to improve clarity and certainty regarding implementation and outcomes. However, in a context of stronger guidelines and greater commonality in the structure and content of NDCs, strategic review might be more useful if integrated into a facilitative compliance mechanism. Transparency provisions in the 2015 agreement could allow for regular assessment of the implementation of NDCs and their outcomes, both individually and collectively. This is not currently the case, though Biennial Reports do aim to track progress with meeting individual country targets. In a context of strong transparency provisions in the 2015 agreement, strategic review could arguably be more forward-looking than IAR for Biennial Reports and ICA for Biennial Updated Reports, and primarily seek to influence future rounds of planned contributions.

¹¹ The CCXG Global Forum was attended by over 200 participants from 56 countries, including government delegates and experts from civil society, intergovernmental organisations, research institutions, and academia.

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Glossary

BR	Biennial Report
BUR	Biennial Update Report
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IAR	International Assessment and Review
ICA	International Consultations and Analysis
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KP	Kyoto Protocol
LDC	Least Developed Country
LEDS	Low Emissions Development Strategy
MRV	Measurable, Reportable and Verifiable
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NC	National Communication
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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