KEY MESSAGES FROM THE

GLOBAL BTR DIALOGUE

29 April - 3 May 2024 | Brussels, Belgium

Partnership on Transparency
in the Paris Agreement

Supported by:

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
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Ministry of Environment
Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Research Center

forestry, fisheries & the environment
Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Background

2024 is a landmark year for the Paris Agreement, as the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) will become operational with the due submissions of Parties' First Biennial Transparency Reports (BTR). The ETF is a central component to the design, credibility, and operation of the Paris Agreement. According to the modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs) of the ETF, Parties to the Paris Agreement shall submit their first reports by 31 December 2024.

Many countries have already started preparing their first BTR, however they are facing a variety of challenges, potentially hindering a timely submission. Yet, a timely submission of BTRs is key for the successful and long-term implementation of the Paris Agreement. It is needed to set up the regular cycle of reporting and review that is essential for building trust and accountability among Parties. The BTRs will additionally serve as a key input for the new NDC submissions in 2025 as well as the second Global Stocktake that will take place in 2026-2028.

Objective

Against this background, the Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement (PATPA) hosted the Global Dialogue on BTR preparation. The aim of the event was to provide developed and developing country Parties with a space to discuss the progress in developing their first BTR and exchange on common technical challenges. It served to create momentum and support Parties in the last mile of their BTR preparation.

Outcome

The intended outcome of the dialogue was for participating countries to have defined priority actions on how to overcome challenges for a timely BTR submission. Additionally, the dialogue delivered this summary of lessons learned for a general technical public.

Audience

BTR coordinators from selected developed and developing countries attended the event.

Language

This workshop was conducted in English. However, a few breakout sessions were organized in the native languages of participants, namely French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Participants

The Global BTR Dialogue was attended by 39 participants, 19 of whom were women, from 33 countries and the European Union. A further 26 participants came from various organizations, including the PATPA Secretariat, the EU Commission and supporting staff. In total, 65 people participated in the Global BTR Dialogue.

Presentations

The agenda, the presentations and the participant journal can be found on our website.

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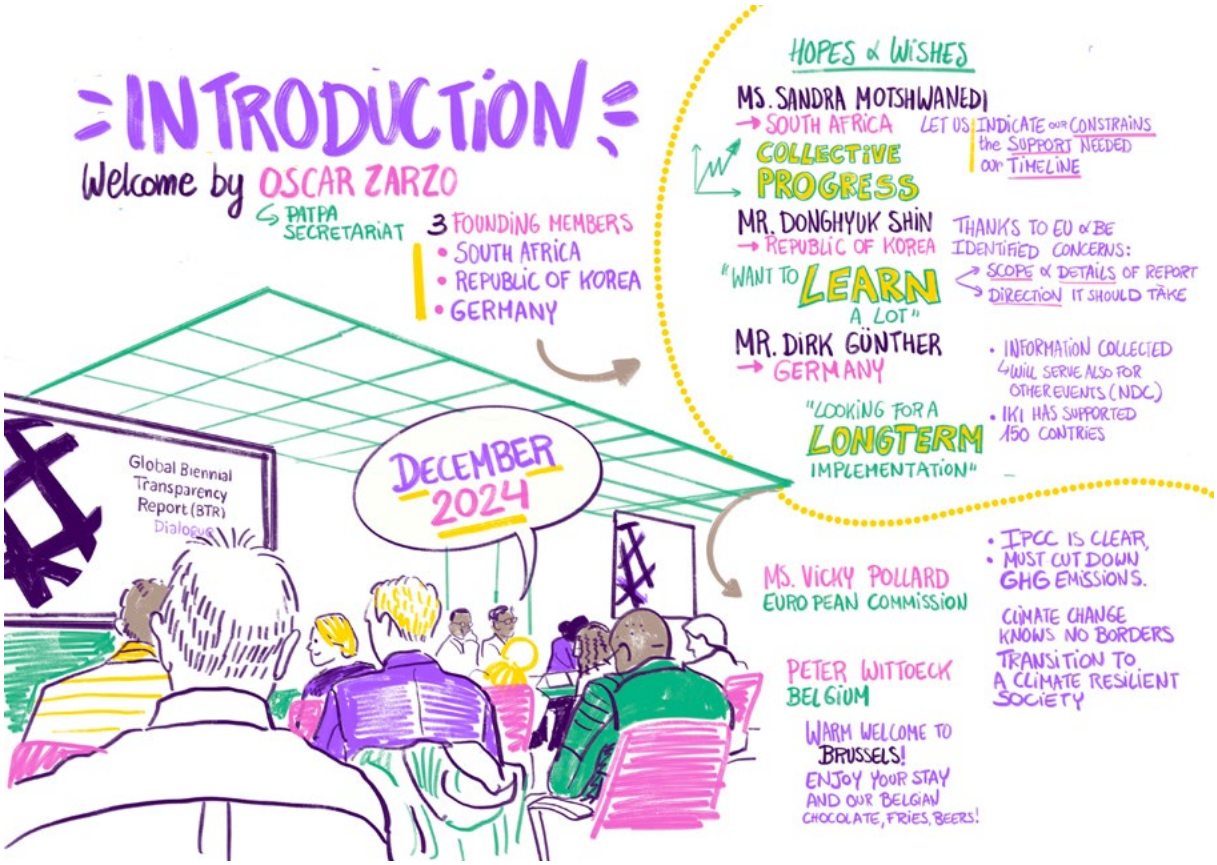
Technical Glossary

2006 IPCC Guidelines	2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories
Annex 1 Party	Party listed in Annex I of the Convention
BAU	Business-as-usual
BTR	Biennial Transparency Report
BUR	Biennial Update Report
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRTs	Common Reporting Tables for GHG inventories
CTF	Common Tabular Formats for the Electronic Reporting of the Information Necessary to Track Progress in the Implementation and Achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement
ETF	Enhanced Transparency Framework
EU	European Union
FREL	Forest Reference Emission Levels
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GST	Global Stocktake
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
MEL	Monitoring and Evaluation, Learning (of adaptation)
MPGs	Modalities, Procedures and Guidelines
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NC	National Communication
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NID	National Inventory Document
NIR	National Inventory Report
PAMs	Mitigation policies and measures, actions and plans, including those with mitigation co-benefits resulting from adaptation actions and economic diversification plans
PATPA	Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
REDD-plus	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; conservation of forest carbon stocks; sustainable management of forests; and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TER	Technical Expert Review
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Day 1: Monday, 29 April 2024

The Biennial Transparency Report - a new experience for everyone: How do we deal with it and what is expected from us?

The purpose of this session was to exchange what this new exercise means for all Parties in practical and political terms.



The panellists highlighted several points regarding to the upcoming submission of the BTRs. Consistent institutional arrangements ensure that organizations responsible for climate policy and implementation of NDCs have an ownership of the BTR. Furthermore, while the NDC process is a political process, the preparation of BTRs is primarily a technical process, but also has a political dimension, that needs to be considered in a timely manner. This also means that countries will benefit from aligning the timing of the BTRs and the NDCs well, so that the relevant information each one provides for the other is available when needed. Key to delivering a BTR is a robust national transparency system, that provides the institutional framework for collecting all the necessary information to prepare GHG inventories and report on progress made with the NDC.

For some developing countries, collecting data, e.g., from the informal economy, presents a challenge. Others highlight the lack of political will. Nevertheless, the political environment is an important pre-condition for a timely BTR submission. Lastly, it was highlighted that the gap between domestic requirements and international requirements must be bridged, so that fulfilling international requirements also has a value when it comes to domestic processes and needs.

Break-out groups: Journey to BTR delivery from regional perspectives

The purpose of this session was to get an overview of where participants are in their BTR preparation and to have a first exchange on how Parties with similar circumstances are addressing their challenges. Participants were divided into six groups based on regional and linguistic affiliation. Each group worked along guiding questions.

Anglophone African group

Participants highlighted the importance of retaining and building up institutional capacity and arrangements. While some countries are well on track to submitting their BTRs by the end of the year 2024, other African countries face challenges due to a lack of data or the reluctance of national institutions to share their data.

Latin American Spanish-speaking group

Participants discussed the common challenge that there is a difference between the political and the technical lenses, with the problem being in fact that political actors are less interested in technical details but more in a political narrative. The majority of countries experienced challenges with accessing financial support in a timely manner, which has contributed to delays in their preparations. Another point raised was the personnel turnover after changes of government, and consequently a loss of (tacit) knowledge presents a common challenge.

Francophone African group

Participants mentioned that countries are following different approaches in drafting their BTR, with some starting to fill in the data available to them and others proceeding chapter by chapter.

Asian group

The countries exchanged on their respective status of preparing the BTR chapters. Two countries plan to have the BTR ready by November, whereas the majority aims at December. The group members suggested a few additional aspects to be discussed in forthcoming solutions arenas on Day 2 and 3.

Eurasia and US group

In this group it was acknowledged that the BTR reporting rules contain a wide range of new requirements. Hence, focused planning and drafting is needed. The value of building up on the experience with reporting under the Convention was highlighted.

Portuguese-speaking group

The countries recalled the conclusions of the Lusophone cluster meeting held in April in Angola that highlighted the need for continued support and resources, without gaps between projects. They referred to the importance for their countries to report on REDD+.

Plenary discussion on results from the break-out sessions

The plenary provided the participants with a chance to further exchange on challenges faced in drafting their BTR. The following points were raised:

- The interaction between data providers and political actors can pose a challenge (two different languages are spoken).
- While some countries are more advanced in preparing BTRs, others have just started.
- Time-constraints and data availability, as well as data confidentiality remains a challenge.
- Countries expressed difficulties with building a matrix and coherent indicators across sectors.

An important lesson shared was that when starting with the first BTR, a systematic and structured approach is helpful. Furthermore, a robust MRV system is a key element for a timely submission.

Recap of the day

During the recap of the first day, it became even more evident that countries are facing similar challenges. Participants were reminded of the importance of submitting their first BTR on time, fulfilling all mandatory requirements, but doing so with a view that the first BTR does not need to be perfect and can be improved in the next submission round.

Day 2: Tuesday, 30 April 2024

Facilitated discussion on key challenges by BTR Chapter: National GHG Inventory

The purpose of the session was to provide an overview of GHG inventory reporting and Improvements in reporting over time when using "FX".

During the facilitated discussion, it was emphasized that the focus when drafting the BTR should lay on the mandatory "shall" requirements, while "should" requirements can have less of a priority. As such, the GHG inventory has absolute priority for all countries.

The technical expert review consists of a review of the accuracy, completeness and consistency of the information submitted by the Party, including their use of flexibilities; the identification of areas of improvement, and the assistance in identifying capacity building-needs. The technical expert review shall not review a Party's self-determination of flexibility, times frames, or whether they have the capacity; shall avoid placing undue burden on (all) Parties and shall pay particular attention to national capabilities and circumstances of developing country Parties.

Inventory preparation

- Systematize data collection and move away from ad-hoc efforts.
  - Build relationships with data providers, establish institutional arrangements to ensure they provide the data you need (e.g. working groups).
- Provide templates for data providers for inputting data.
- If your GHG inventory is in the early stages, focus on completeness first and then on accuracy.
- Become a reviewer to become a better compiler.
- If QC/QA is a challenge, focus on QC first.
- The executive summary should include the information you want the world to know.

Facilitated discussion on key challenges by BTR Chapter: Information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving its NDC

The purpose of the session was to provide an overview of the chapter on tracking progress towards NDC implementation, as a preparation for the detailed discussions in the breakout groups.

During the facilitated discussion, it was highlighted that the first and necessary component of tracking progress is a thorough understanding of the NDC target(s) that will be tracked. This will help determine the information requirements for tracking progress and the processes for collecting it. Information on tracking progress shall be included in a dedicated chapter of the BTR. The transparency guidance provides a table for describing the NDC in the BTR, although its use is not mandatory, because it helps to present information on the NDC in a concise and structured manner.

In the following discussion, country representatives raised a few challenges they are facing while drafting the relevant information under their BTR and potential solutions:

- **Complete data to prepare the inventory is not yet available and thus this hinders compiling information on NDC progress tracking:** if possible, do the calculations using preliminary data and update them once data becomes available.
- **Information on the impacts of policies and measures is not available:** note and explain the gaps and why they cannot be filled considering current limitations.
- **How to ensure coherence between the narrative text and the common tabular format:** Parties shall report information in narrative format and using the CTF tables, this can lead to duplicate information and means that extra care for ensuring consistency is needed. One way to facilitate is to start with completing the CTF tables, with a focus of keeping the information in there concise. The narrative format then builds on the information in the CTF tables and complements it with information that will facilitate understanding and provide context.
- **It is not clear what indicators for tracking progress should be applied:** Indicators need to be relevant for the NDC in question. The target defines the indicator. There are NDCs where this is straightforward, for example if the NDC target is an absolute economy wide amount of CO2 emissions in the target year, then the indicator for tracking progress is the annual economy wide CO2 emissions. But if this is not the case, it is best to look for simple indicators and to limit the numbers of indicators that will be reported.

Questions from the audience

Several actions which are taken in the response to climate change contribute to both mitigation and adaptation. The question was posed how to differentiate which action contributes to mitigation and which one to adaptation. It was recommended to go through each action and take those which have the most significant impact on either mitigation or adaptation and report on these. One action can be reported as both mitigation and adaptation action, if applicable.

The next question concerned the challenge that for some policies, their effects on greenhouse gas emissions cannot be estimated quantitatively. It was pointed out that the reporting table for mitigation policies and measures contains text fields for estimated emission reductions. In this field, Parties can add an explanation if quantitative information is not available.

Several questions arose on the topic of GHG emissions projections. It was highlighted, that projections are not a tool for assessing progress, but for planning and policy making that help identify early on where action is needed to stay on track towards the target. As such, in most cases, progress will be assessed against historic GHG data. GHG emissions projections can however contribute to track progress towards those NDC targets formulated against a BAU scenario. In those cases, dynamic baseline projections will need to be carried out regularly.

Regarding the aspect of reporting scenarios of GHG emissions projections with measures it was clarified that when it says, “with existing measures”, countries should report measures that have been adopted at the time of submission of the NDC, in other words those that are already in place.

The MPGs provide flexibility to developing country parties when it comes to reporting the “with measures” projections. If necessary, these can be used for the first BTR.

Further practical points on NDC description

- How you describe your NDC in the BTR is what your progress will be compared against.
- The NDC defines the indicators you will use to track progress.
- Clear information in the NDC helps reporting in the BTR and establish the link between reporters and NDC developers. The information on Clarity, Transparency and Understanding of an NDC is relevant for tracking progress.
- The time frame of an NDC corresponds to the years a NDC is in effect, for example, 2021-2030.

The Solution Arena Part 1

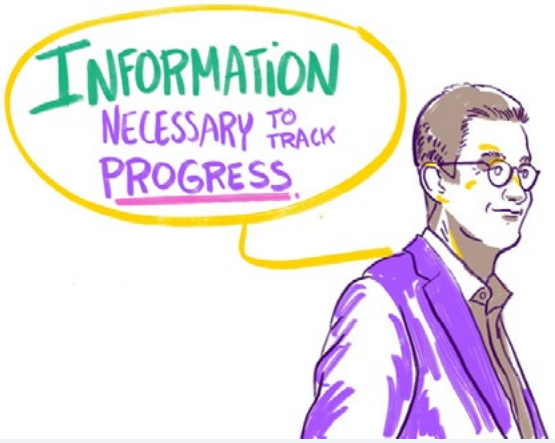
The solution arena matched the technical challenges raised in a survey before the event and invited peer-to-peer advice in small groups.

Round 1:

Solution Arena for Quality Assurance / Quality Control of GHG inventories

Key-takeaways:

- If QC and QA are a challenge, focus first on building capacity for QC.
- Once the internal quality control is set up, one can take the time to proceed with an external quality assurance.
- The system will improve gradually over time. Allow inventory compilers to train as reviewers and to participate in reviews. This is an excellent capacity building tool that will serve to improve you inventory.



Solution Arena for tracking progress tables, response measures, and Party's participation in cooperative approaches

Key-takeaways:

- Start by filling in the tracking progress tables with available information. In a next step, complement them with additional details in the textual part of the BTR.
- An indicator is needed for each NDC target. In most cases, one indicator per target is sufficient.
- Parties that participate in cooperative approaches have to provide specific information in CTF table 4 and in a separate annex to the BTR. It is important for the partner countries of a cooperative approach to coordinate and align the information which they report. This will also facilitate the review.
- Impacts of the implementation of response measures taken by other countries: Filling in a table is required in specific cases only, but the country may still decide to provide such information.

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Round 2:

Solution Arena for indicator definitions

Key-takeaways:

- The NDC target defines the indicator to track progress and achievement.
- The indicator needs to be relevant to the NDC. For example, if a target is expressed in GHG emissions, then the indicators must too.
- Check, whether it makes sense to report multiple indicators or not. It may be better to limit the number of indicators that will be reported to a minimum.
- When defining the indicator, identify the information that will be needed for it and how it will be collected. For example, if the indicator for an NDC with an intensity target is GHG emissions per GDP, the information for the indicator is annual GDP data and GHG emission data.
- Indicators are nationally determined and should be useful for national policy making.

Solution Arena for national circumstances and institutional arrangements

Key-takeaways:

- Tell the story of your climate policy in the BTR. National circumstances define the context of your narrative. Where do you stand as a country? What do you want to achieve? How are you doing it?
- Institutional arrangements must be adapted to national circumstances. There is no perfect institutional arrangement and no one size fits all approach.
- Institutional arrangements are key to the success of fulfilling the NDC targets.
- Build long term arrangements and aim to build lasting capacities.
- Ensuring the buy-in of the political level and the administrative environment will facilitate reporting. Consider that it sometimes is a challenge to build this buy-in.

Day 3: Thursday, 2 May 2024

The Solution Arena Part 2

The solution arena matched the technical challenges raised in a survey before the event and invited peer-to-peer advice in small groups.

Round 1:

Solution Arena for methodologies and accounting approaches

Key-takeaways:

- The ICTU table, which is part of the NDC document, is a good starting point for filling out table 3 of Annex II to decision 5/CMA.3. Go there first, fill in what you can and then move on.
- It is important to transparently document any differences in scope between your inventory and your NDC. Make sure that the explanations are clear and appropriately detailed for your audience (e.g., policy makers in the different sectoral ministries, national political decision-making bodies, the international review team).
- For first NDCs, a shorter approach is required than for second NDCs ('approach 2'). However, if information is available for approach 2, include this information, even if the NDC of your country is still the first NDC.

Solution Arena for description of a Party's NDC

Key-takeaways:

- The timeframe of the NDC corresponds to the years when the NDC is in effect, for example 2021 to 2030. Your country might have started implementing policies that contribute to achieving the NDC earlier on. If they are relevant, include them in your BTR.
- Having clear and concise information already in the NDC document, is very helpful for the NDC description in the BTR. An important lesson for the next NDC update round is to go straight to the point in terms of a) what is the NDC, b) what is the target value, c) what is the relevant information to understand the target.
- Avoid duplicating information in the BTR. Information that can be put in the CTF tables goes there; the narrative goes in the BTR document. Use cross references where possible. Avoiding duplications of information prevents the extra work of consistency checks.

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Solution Arena for methodologies and accounting approaches

(continued)

- Some fields will not be applicable to your country, depending on your type of NDC and the target type. Many entries in the CTF table 3 say "if applicable". If something is not applicable to your NDC skip it.
- There are open issues with the importing features of the CTF reporting tools. However, tables with a simple structure can be filled by using copy-paste. This applies to CTF3 on methodologies and accounting approaches.

Solution Arena for description of a Party's NDC

(continued)

- The NDC description table (appendix of decision 5/CMA.3) is not mandatory but provides a helpful structure for describing the NDC and can be placed very prominently in the BTR document

More practical info on NDC description

- How you describe your NDC in the BTR is what your progress will be compared against.
- The NDC defines the indicators you will use to track progress.
- Clear information in the NDC helps reporting in the BTR, establish the link between reporting people and NDC preparation people. The information on Clarity, Transparency and Understanding is relevant for tracking progress.
- The time frame of a NDC corresponds to the years a NDC is in effect, for example, 2020-2030.

Round 2:

Solution Arena for reporting on mitigation policies and measures

Discussion touched upon how to collect the data, and how to approach data from the subnational level, and the private sector, in particular, if the private sector is not national, or domestic companies but international companies, and the reporting of the costs of implementation of mitigation policies and measures.

- On the reporting of co-benefits of both mitigation and adaptation, it is recommended that reporting of mitigation should tell a „story", it is not necessary to report everything in detail, but what is behind, and to be transparent, in the sense that in the review, the reviewer can follow the intention and intended impact of the mitigation policy.
- The description of policies must be embedded in the description of national circumstances, as these determine national needs, priorities, constraints, and other relevant conditions that shape policies.
- It is of utmost importance, that your country has an institutional arrangement in place to keep track of polices and measures relevant to your NDC.

Solution Arena for reporting on projections

Many countries have NDC targets that consist of a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario as a baseline. Greenhouse gas emissions in the BAU scenario are a result of projections. Projections are to be reported in several CTF tables. Questions arose what to report in the specific tables, including what happens if projections are updated over time. What to report on parameters and on assumptions was also discussed.

- It was pointed out that decision 5/CMA.3 requires the reporting on baselines in CTF tables 1, 3 and 4. CTF 1 provides the space for a description of the baseline, CTF 3 is to be used for methodological information, and CTF 4 provides the space for reporting the baseline values.
- If basic parameters of the projections are updated, such as GDP, this will in general result in the update of the baseline values.
- Furthermore, it was noted that projections are an important source of information for the next round of NDCs.

Facilitated discussion on key challenges by BTR Chapter: Information on financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support

The purpose of the session was to provide an overview of the BTR chapters "Information on financial, technology transfer and capacity-building (FTC) support".

What needs to be reported, by whom and how?

- Developed country parties: Chapter IV information on FTC support provided and mobilized
- Developing countries: Chapter V information on FTC support needed and received
  - Textual format:
    - a) national circumstances and institutional arrangements,
    - b) underlying assumptions, definitions and methodologies
  - Textual format and common tabular formats (CFTs)
    - Support provided and mobilized (developed countries)
    - Support needed (developing countries)
    - Support received (developing countries)

Important reporting principles

- Avoid double counting
- Maximize granularity (i.e., the level of detail)
  - Capacity constraints of developing countries are acknowledged. Reporting is not mandatory.
- Recognizing the importance of facilitating improved reporting and transparency over time

How to get started?

- Start with using existing structures and easily accessible information (e.g., platforms for BURs, national MRV systems, records/information on project pipeline at national/ministerial level)
- Build and enhance institutional structure over time.

Questions from the audience

Q: Can developing countries also report on support provided?
A: Yes, they can, using the same tables as developed countries.

Q: Do developed countries need to demonstrate that they have increased financial support provided over time?
A: The requirement is to be transparent on support they provided, it is not the requirement to demonstrate in the BTR that support has been increased.

Facilitated discussion on key challenges by BTR Chapter: Information on climate change impacts and adaptation

The purpose of the session was to provide an overview of the chapter "information on climate change impacts and adaptation", discussing how to report on adaptation as a "non-mandatory chapter" in the BTR, and avoid duplication of work.

One take-away when preparing the BTR chapter on adaptation is that countries should make use of available reports and data. They likely find part of this information in either the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), NDCs, National Strategies, progress reports and/or evaluations. Furthermore, it is important to communicate/exchange with other ministries and agencies, as the data and information sources will be different from information on mitigation. There is a window of opportunity for learning and improving, an experience that can be built upon.

Overall, submitting the chapter on adaptation can be important for various reasons. It helps in recognizing countries' adaptation efforts, provides the necessary adaptation related information for the Global Stocktake (GST) process and facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices related to adaptation. Moreover, it helps to communicate adaptation-related needs, review and strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of national Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems for adaptation and to streamline the reporting requirements for adaptation.

Adaptation Reporting

Key-takeaways:

- Template of A-BTR content
- On 20 March 2024, the NAP Global Network hosted a webinar on the A-BTR, which the recording and resources are available on the NAPGN website

Separate topic: Technical Annexes for REDD+

Key-takeaways:

- Methodological consistency between the GHG inventory for LULUCF and the FREL, and in some cases projections is key but also a big challenge.
- Methodological changes and improvements can lead to changes in the FREL that can impact results-based payments. Changes in the FREL are thus not purely technical but might imply political considerations.

Day 4: Friday, 3 May 2024

The relevance of the BTR and the new NDCs in 2025

During this session, participants were asked to reflect about the meaning of the 2024 BTR and the communication of the new NDC due in 2025, reflecting on how these processes can be aligned in a useful way.

Participants mentioned the need for closer collaboration between teams working on the BTR and the NDC. This could be achieved by aligning national institutional arrangements and ensuring that an intersectional approach is chosen. Furthermore, the teams working on the BTR and NDC need to have channels to exchange information, for example through a joint workshop. In this regard, consistency was named as important factor, to ensure that the indicators, data and information align. Furthermore, participants highlighted the need to draw political attention to the BTR and mainstream it, to create increased awareness and understanding of its importance. Lastly, an early planning for the preparation of the next BTR was mentioned, for example by using the Guidance and Roadmap tool by PATPA and FAO.

Facilitated discussions regarding the user experiences with the UNFCCC electronic reporting tools (CTRs and CTFs)

The purpose of the session was to provide guidance to participants on how to make the best use of the ETF reporting tools, keeping in mind that the first round of reporting it is a challenging task for all Parties.

During the session, Mr. Trusca from the UNFCCC secretariat encouraged the participants to make use of the test version of the reporting tools, which is already available, and to test it extensively.

The final version of the reporting tools will be released on the 30th of June 2024.

Contact: Vlad Trusca, VTrusca@unfccc.int

Practical take-aways from the Global BTR Dialogue

- Tell the story of your climate policy in the BTR. National circumstances define the context of your narrative. Where do you stand as a country? What do you want to achieve? How are you doing it?
- Build on your previous efforts, don't start from scratch.
- Be pragmatic when you make decisions on what to leave out and what to include in the BTR. Decide early.
- Keep it simple.
- Flexibility applies only to specific shall requirements.
- For the chapter on tracking progress, it is helpful to start with filling in the CTF tables and then providing additional details in the textual part of the BTR.
- Avoid repetitions, rather provide references across your BTR. This saves times with consistency checks.
- If you are not writing in an UN language, consider time needed for translation at the end.
- Countries should allow for sufficient time towards the end of the year to allow for domestic approval processes. Planning to finalize the BTR around August/September leaves sufficient time for domestic approval.
- There is a continuing need for capacity-building on NDC tracking and on the reporting on financial support.
- If you need support for preparing your BTR, be specific in your ask. For what chapter, for fulfilling what requirement do you need support?
- There is no perfect BTR, but you can improve it over time.
- Build institutional knowledge wherever possible.
- Plan a periodical delivery of BTR1, BTR2 etc.
- The BTR is not just a UN report, make it a product of national relevance.

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