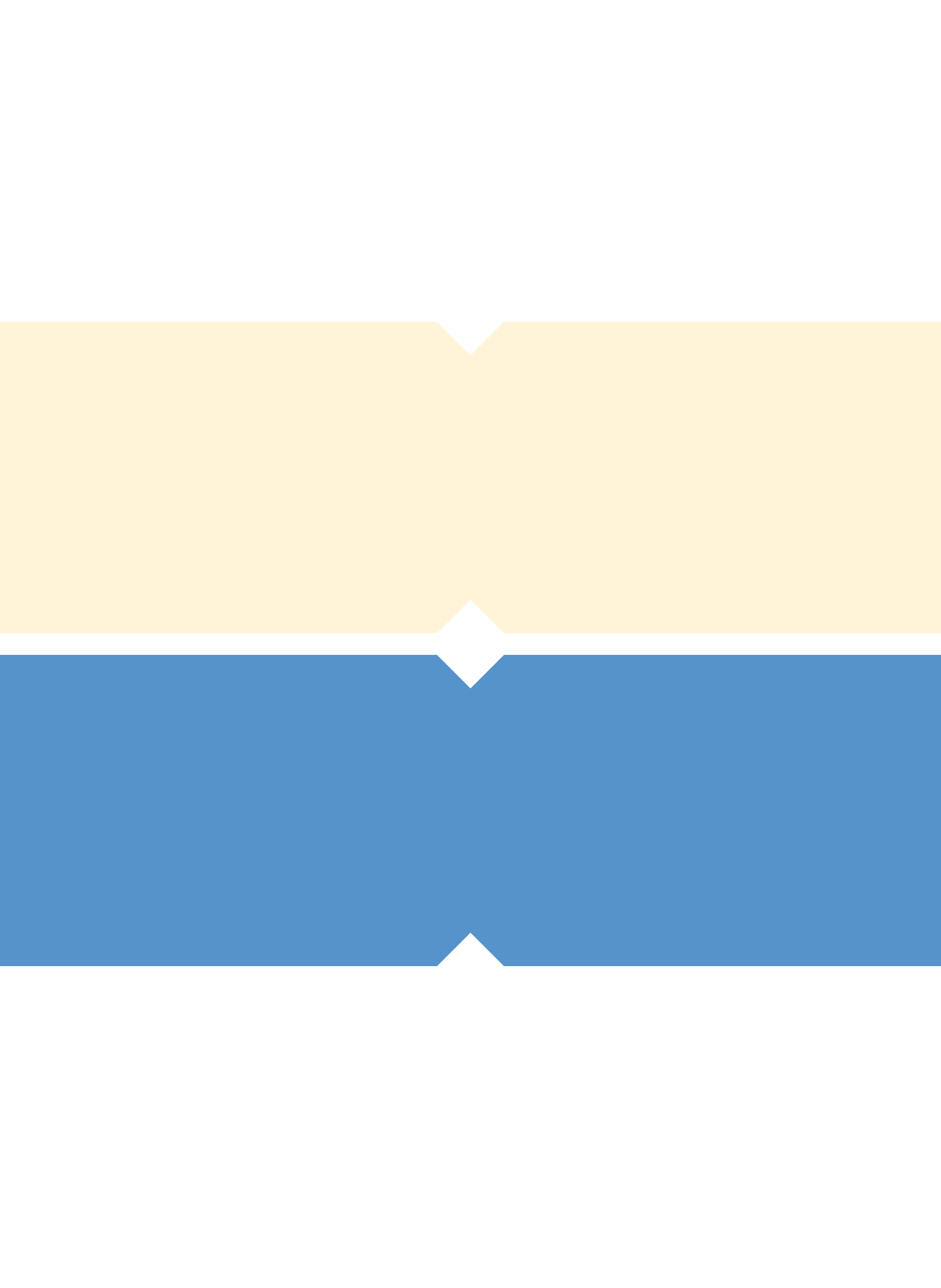


# TOOLKIT

**for non-Annex I Parties**  
on establishing and maintaining institutional arrangements for  
preparing national communications and biennial update reports



**United Nations**  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change



MITIGATION, DATA AND ANALYSIS PROGRAMME

## TOOLKIT FOR NON-ANNEX I PARTIES

ON ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING  
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS  
FOR PREPARING NATIONAL  
COMMUNICATIONS AND BIENNIAL  
UPDATE REPORTS

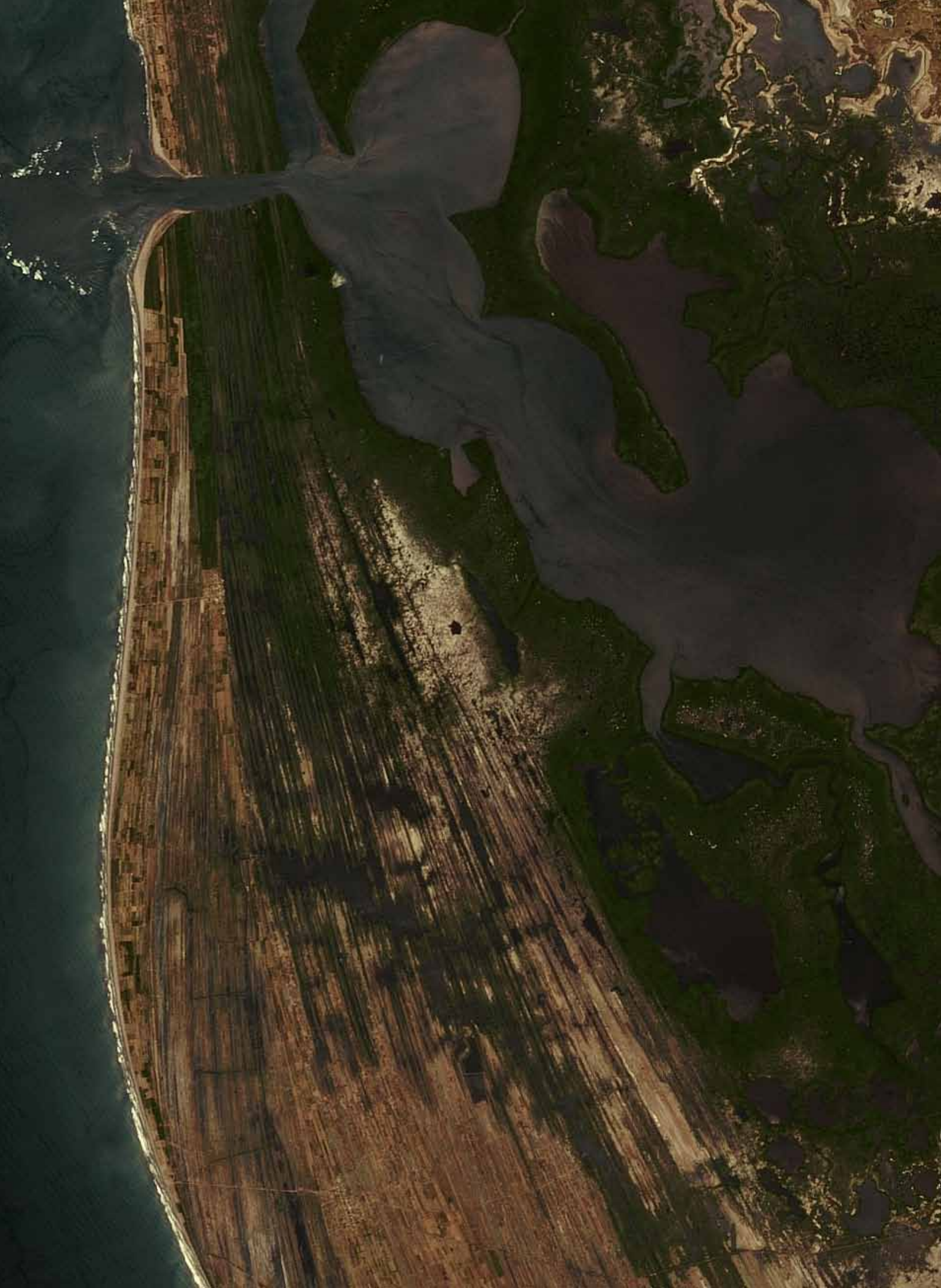
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# FOREWORD

As a part of international action on climate change, all Parties to the Convention communicate to the Conference of the Parties (COP) information relevant to the implementation of the Convention, including information on emissions, actions and support. It is important that the information reported by countries on emissions, actions and support is reliable, comprehensive and transparent since it facilitates our understanding of current levels of global emissions as well as the ambition of existing efforts to combat climate change, at both the national and the international level. Further, these national reports serve as input to the emerging comprehensive measurement, reporting and verification framework established by the Bali Action Plan (decision 1/CP.13), the Kyoto Protocol and decisions taken by COP 16, 17 and 18, which seek to further increase the transparency of information on actions and support under the Convention by all Parties.

Over the period of the last 20 years, the provisions for national reporting by developing countries have evolved, with some significant developments in the last few years which resulted in enhanced reporting and the process of subsequent consideration of the reported information being put in place under the Convention. Under the current framework for measurement, reporting and verification, developing country Parties are required to submit their national communications every four years and biennial update reports (BURs) every two years.

In light of enhanced reporting requirements, both in frequency and in the quality of the contents, developing country Parties will need to strengthen the existing institutional arrangements or establish new ones, and maintain them in a robust manner to ensure that they are functioning on a continuous basis. Such institutional arrangements should address the national coordinating process that underpins not only the availability of the national capacity to yield more technically robust reports, but also the ability to meet the frequency of submissions. Otherwise, Parties risk not being in a position to produce and report quality information in a timely manner. However, this is easier said than done as developing country Parties already continue to face challenges in meeting the reporting requirements.

Recognizing this challenge, the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE) developed training materials to support developing countries' ability to report relevant information in their national communications and biennial update reports. The CGE also developed guidance materials on establishing and maintaining sustainable institutional arrangements that function on a continuous basis.

This toolkit, developed on the basis of the training materials developed by the CGE, is designed for use by the national teams from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) and other experts involved in the reporting process for both the national communications and the biennial update reports. More specifically, the primary objectives are to provide clarity and guidance to Parties on some of the key considerations that need to be taken into account and the tools that are available for establishing and sustaining institutional arrangements. It is also important to note that this is not meant to be a solution that fits all but rather a pool from which each Party can draw upon elements that fit its national circumstances and capabilities.

The secretariat hopes that this toolkit proves useful in strengthening the process of reporting of national communications and BURs from non-Annex I Parties.



**Christiana Figueres**, *Executive Secretary*  
United Nations Convention on Climate Change  
Bonn, November 2013



# PREFACE

In the context of enhanced reporting requirements under the Convention for Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties), the need to have sustainable national institutional arrangements that function on a continuous basis becomes even more critical as they underpin national capacity to facilitate the coordination of all activities in the preparation and submission of high-quality national communications and biennial update reports (BURs).

The Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE), in keeping with its mandate to provide technical assistance to non-Annex I Parties, has done a commendable job in developing training materials to facilitate non-Annex I Parties in meeting their reporting requirements under the Convention. This toolkit, developed on the basis of the CGE training materials, aims to assist non-Annex I Parties in establishing and maintaining the most suitable national institutional arrangements to meet the enhanced reporting requirements for their national communications and BURs, in terms of the quality of the content and the frequency of submission.

This toolkit is structured into the following five elements:

- (1) **Introduction** – provides the context for the reporting requirements under the Convention;
- (2) **Purpose of institutional arrangements** – highlights the importance of the institutional arrangements in meeting the reporting requirements;
- (3) **Building sustainable institutional arrangements** – provides the key elements and considerations that are relevant for establishing and sustaining the efficient functioning of institutional arrangements;

- (4) **Best practices and lessons learned from the national communications process** – contains key best practices and lessons learned by non-Annex I Parties in preparing and submitting their national communications which are relevant and beneficial for the reporting process going forward;
- (5) **Reporting** – provides an overview of what could be reported on institutional arrangements in BURs.

Non-Annex I Parties are encouraged to make use of this toolkit, where appropriate, in either enhancing or establishing and maintaining sustainable and effective national institutional arrangements to facilitate the preparation and submission of national communications and BURs that are of high quality and submitted in a timely manner.



**Donald Cooper**, *Coordinator*  
Mitigation, Data and Analysis Programme





# I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 4, paragraph 1, and Article 12, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), provide for each Party to report to the Conference of the Parties (COP) information on its emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all greenhouse gases (GHGs) not controlled by the Montreal Protocol; national or, where appropriate, regional programmes containing measures to mitigate, and to facilitate adequate adaptation to, climate change (general description of steps taken or envisaged by the Party to implement the Convention); and any other information that the Party considers relevant to the achievement of the objective of the Convention. This report, more commonly referred to as a national communication, is prepared and submitted to the COP, through the secretariat, periodically in accordance with the guidelines developed and adopted by the COP.

2. The first guidelines for the preparation of national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) were adopted in 1996 at the second session of the COP, by decision 10/CP.2. These guidelines were revised in 2002. The revised guidelines contained in the annex to decision 17/CP.8 were adopted at COP 8. Since then non-Annex I Parties have been using these guidelines for the preparation of their national communications.

3. At COP 16, Parties, agreeing that the content and frequency of national communications from non-Annex I Parties should not be more onerous than that for Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, decided to enhance reporting in national communications from non-Annex I Parties on mitigation actions and their effects, and support received, with additional flexibility to be given to the least developed country Parties and small island developing States. It was decided that non-Annex I Parties should submit their national communications every four years or in accordance with any further decisions on frequency by the COP. Further, Parties decided that developing countries, consistent with their capabilities and the level of support provided for reporting, should also submit biennial update reports (BURs) containing updates of national GHG inventories, including a national inventory report and information on mitigation actions, needs and support received.

4. The guidelines for reporting the BURs from non-Annex I Parties were adopted in 2011 at COP 17. At the same COP, Parties decided that non-Annex I Parties, consistent with their capabilities and the level of support provided for reporting, should submit their first BUR by December 2014. Further, Parties also decided that non-Annex I Parties shall submit a BUR every two years, either as a summary of parts of their national communication in the year in which the national communication is submitted or as a stand-alone update report. The least developed country Parties and small island developing States may submit their BURs at their discretion.

5. In the light of the enhanced reporting implied by BURs and national communications over recent years, effective and sustainable institutional arrangements, operational on a continuous basis, will be even more important for the presentation of information in a consistent, transparent, complete and timely manner. Preparing a national communication every four years and a BUR every two years will likely probably that non-Annex I Parties make the transition from what have often been temporary institutional arrangements for the preparation of national communications towards a more continuous, sustained process involving permanent national teams.

6. Given the differing national circumstances and respective capabilities of each non-Annex I Party, institutional arrangements will need to be adapted to the particular requirements of national communications and BURs, as well as to the national circumstances of non-Annex I Parties and the level of support provided, and be built on existing institutional arrangements, where appropriate.

7. The guidelines for the preparation of national communications from non-Annex I Parties contained in annex to decision 17/CP.8 assume that there are existing institutional arrangements already in place, relevant to the preparation of Parties' national communications on a continuous basis. The guidelines encourage non-Annex I Parties to provide a description of such existing institutional arrangements. This is further reinforced through the guidelines on the preparation of BURs, which include reporting of information on national circumstances and institutional arrangements, as contained within the scope of the BURs.



## II. PURPOSE OF INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

8. The national institutional arrangements will facilitate individual Parties in ensuring that nationally appropriate procedures for collecting, processing, reporting and archiving required data and information are established and operational in a sustainable manner on a continuous basis. These can facilitate effective coordination among all relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors, in meeting the reporting requirements under the Convention, as well as addressing the broader issue of climate change at the national level. In particular, institutional arrangements can assist Parties to:

- (a) Meet reporting requirements under the Convention;
- (b) Further build national capacities and ensure sustainability of reporting processes;
- (c) Inform national and international policymakers, at different levels;
- (d) Assist in institutionalizing activities relating to reporting on climate change.

9. Given the interdisciplinary nature of climate change, the preparation of BURs and national communications can strengthen the overall national climate change policymaking processes by:

- (a) Enhancing coordination and intersectoral/interagency dialogue;
- (b) Raising awareness among various stakeholders, including both private and public institutions;
- (c) Facilitating consultation and establishing relationships among various stakeholders.

## III. BUILDING SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: KEY ELEMENTS

10. Building the effective and sustainable arrangements necessary for the preparation on national communications and BURs in line with the submission frequencies determined by the relevant decisions of the COP encompasses three key set-ups: the institutional, the official and the procedural.

### III-A. INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

11. It is recommended that a single body be designated to be responsible for the overall coordination and management of the process of and the preparation of national communications and BURs. Depending on the national circumstances of the country, the key tasks of such a coordinating body could include to:

- (a) Plan and conduct all coordination and consultation activities with governmental and, if appropriate, non-governmental stakeholders;
- (b) Identify all institutions and teams that will be involved in the preparation of the national communication and the BUR, including establishing any formal working arrangements;
- (c) Allocate responsibilities for all components of the national communication and the BUR ensuring that there is a clear lead for each section, and establish a formal approval process;
- (d) Develop and monitor a time frame and schedule for the preparation of the national communication and the BUR, including specific milestones and dates for deliverables.

12. In addition, such a body could be responsible for the following:

- (a) Identifying constraints and gaps, and related financial, technical and capacity needs, including a description of the support needed and received;
- (b) Keeping any management committees or working groups informed of progress and emerging issues;
- (c) Developing and overseeing the implementation of a quality assurance/quality control strategy for the

entire spectrum of the reports;

- (d) Managing the overall budget for the preparation of the reports;
- (e) Compiling and integrating all sections of the national communication and the BUR into a cohesive document;
- (f) Developing and maintaining an archiving system to ensure institutional memory;
- (g) Documenting systematically, as appropriate, all the assumptions, data and methods used;
- (h) Conducting an evaluation exercise to identify key lessons learned and areas for improvement.

13. These are some of the possible key tasks and elements that are relevant for management and coordination by a single national coordinating body. The extent of the relevance, application and performance of each of these tasks should be determined by the national circumstances and capabilities of each country. It is crucial that a country set up sustainable institutional arrangements to allow for a smooth and regular development of national communications and BURs, as mandated by the relevant decisions of the COP, on a continuous basis based on its national circumstances, capabilities and capacities.

### III-B. OFFICIAL SETUP

14. Due to the volume and diversity of the information to be included, the preparation of national communications and/or BURs generally requires the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Therefore, it is desirable that the stakeholders, in particular the providers or sources of key information necessary for the preparation of national communications and BURs, be identified, and that the roles and responsibilities, including the procedures for the flow of necessary information and data, be clearly defined. It is strongly recommended that such linkages, roles and responsibilities, including the procedures for the flow of information and data collection and provision, be formalized through, preferably, a memorandum of understanding, or any other formal agreement or a legal instrument, between the coordinating body and other relevant stakeholders involved in the process of and the preparation of the national communication and the BUR.

15. A possible structure for such an agreement could be as follows:

- (a) Objectives of the agreement;
- (b) Brief description of the stakeholders involved and related activities;

- (c) Provisions outlining, in detail, the roles and responsibilities under the arrangement, including any other necessary operational details and accountabilities;
- (d) Contact details of the key actors involved in executing the agreed provisions;
- (e) Duration of the agreement.

### III-C. PROCEDURAL SETUP

16. Countries may consider using a variety of optional tools to organize and define their institutional arrangements.

17. One example of such a tool is a series of pre-defined “templates”.<sup>1</sup>

18. These templates were originally developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and adapted by the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention, to assist national teams in assessing and documenting the strengths and weaknesses of existing institutional arrangements to ensure continuity and integrity, promote institutionalization and facilitate prioritization of future improvements. In particular, the templates:

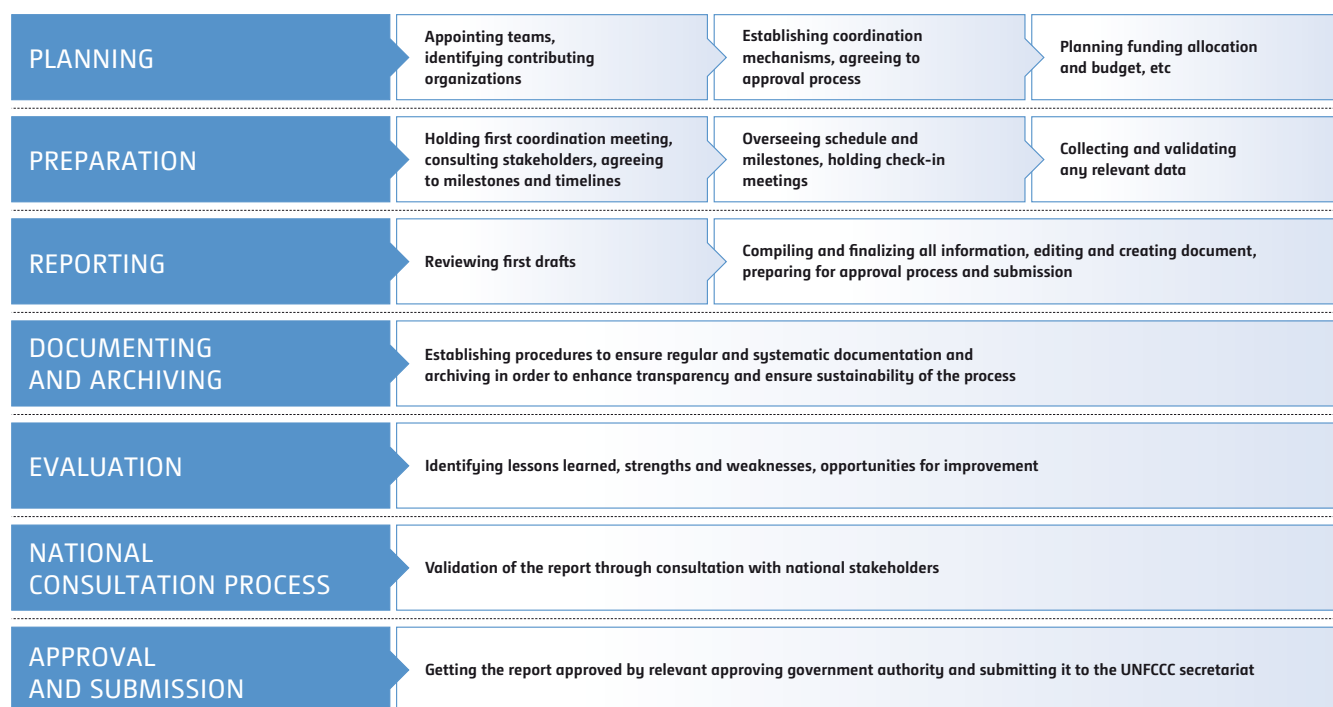
- (a) Focus on documenting essential information in a concise format;
- (b) Standardize tasks;
- (c) Ensure the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders are clearly defined;
- (d) Accommodate varying levels of national capacity;
- (e) Provide an objective and efficient system for identifying priorities for future improvements;
- (f) Allow for the presentation of information in a consistent, transparent, complete and timely manner;
- (g) Serve as a starting point for future teams;
- (h) Create transparency in a Party’s institutional arrangements.

### III-D. FUNCTION OF SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: KEY STAGES

19. All the suggested roles and responsibilities of sustainable institutional arrangements can be broadly clustered into seven key elements/stages, as shown in the illustration below:

<sup>1</sup> The electronic copies of the “templates” referred to are available at, [http://unfccc.int/national\\_reports/non-annex\\_i\\_natcom/training\\_material/methodological\\_documents/items/349.php](http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/training_material/methodological_documents/items/349.php). While these templates were adapted for capturing information on mitigation assessment, users can adapt them to capture relevant information on the process of the preparation of the national communications and BURs as a whole.

Figure III-1. Key stages of sustainable institutional arrangements



## IV. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

20. Drawing on documentation and analysis produced by the National Communications Support Programme, there are four key lessons learned from the preparation of national communications that are of significant relevance to the establishment and enhancement of institutional arrangements for the preparation of national communications and BURs.

21. These lessons learned fall into the following categories:

- (a) Establishing national legal/formal arrangements, as appropriate;
- (b) Choosing and maintaining an appropriate coordinating body;
- (c) Stakeholder involvement;
- (d) In-country institutional and technical capacity-building.

### IV-A. ESTABLISH NATIONAL LEGAL/ FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS

22. A legal/formal mandate may enhance the coordination and supervisory role and high-level authority of the appointed institutions, by designating the formal coordinating body and other implicated institutions.

23. A legal/formal mandate may also facilitate the various stages of the approval process.

24. A legal/formal mandate can also help to facilitate the coordinating body to mobilize necessary expertise, in particular, through appointment of the focal points/permanent representatives among the stakeholders concerned.

25. A legal/formal mandate is effective only if it is implemented.

### IV-B. CHOOSING AND MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE COORDINATING BODY

26. The location within the government of the national coordinating body has been a key factor influencing the effectiveness of institutional arrangements and, in particular, the strength of its mandate and ability to conduct inter-ministerial coordination.

27. The location is important, because it influences:

- (a) The credibility and clout of the coordinating body, and thereby its ability to effectively manage the BUR process and conduct inter-ministerial coordination;
- (b) The extent to which the BUR is integrated into the broader climate change planning process.

28. The location of the national coordinating body will differ from country to country. In general, the coordinating body has been located in the ministry responsible for climate change and/or environmental issues, or within a specific organization/agency responsible for coordinating the climate change policy.

29. Continuity of staff and succession planning of the national coordinating body is essential in order to avoid loss of experience, skills, institutional memory and information.

30. Although recruiting and maintaining staff for the reporting processes has proved difficult for national communications, for BURs it may be important to retain dedicated staff given the enhanced frequency of reporting.

31. In addition to assigning clear roles and responsibilities, it is important to ensure that dedicated and skilled national staff be appointed to the coordinating body, with sufficient time to coordinate inputs and activities among all stakeholders.

### IV-C. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

32. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders is important to a national communication and BUR process.

33. Given the increased frequency of submission, BUR preparation can help to establish greater continuity and institutionalization of the report preparation process as well as the processes of collaboration and information exchange.

34. It is important that clear roles and responsibilities be defined throughout the engagement, in order to ensure multi-stakeholder processes produce effective results and provide useful knowledge to those involved.

35. Identifying incentives for continuous engagement of stakeholders is recommended.

36. Countries are increasingly engaging non-governmental organization groups and the private sector, which provides access to information and raises awareness of reporting activities.

#### IV-D. IN-COUNTRY INSTITUTIONAL AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING

37. Some developing countries have often relied on consultants and external experts to assist in preparing their national communications and this has impeded archiving, institutional capacity-building, etc. Developing internal capacity could help to avoid this reliance and to encourage stability of institutions and their staff, thereby enhancing the country ownership of the process of the preparation of national communications and BURs.

38. It has become recognized that often the learning that emerges from this reporting process, the information and data gathered, and the improvement of specific capacities, are lost to the ministry and Party in question when consultants are used.

39. Institutional ownership is a key factor for sustainability of the entire national communication and BUR development process, and could contribute to the capacity-building of these institutions.



## V. REPORTING ON INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE BIENNIAL UPDATE REPORTS

40. While developing countries are required to describe their institutional arrangements in their BURs and national communications, there is flexibility to determine the level of information to be provided.

41. Beyond meeting reporting requirements, describing Parties' institutional arrangements in their BURs and national communications is also important for the sharing of information and best practices, including continued information sharing on best practices in establishing institutional arrangements.

42. Parties may consider providing the following information on their institutional arrangements:

- (a) Overall description of the institutional arrangements, including location, coordination and engagement processes, and the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved;
- (b) Relationship to the broader climate change development process and other institutional arrangements related to the Convention;
- (c) Any lessons learned or recommended practices, including recruiting and maintaining a permanent national coordinating body, etc;
- (d) Description of any adjustments or changes made to existing or new institutional arrangements as a result of BURs;
- (e) Cost implications of the institutional arrangement process;
- (f) Any capacity-building needs undertaken as part of the institutional arrangements process;
- (g) Constraints and gaps, and related financial, technical and capacity needs, including a description of the support needed and received.







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ISBN 978-92-9219-123-8

Art direction and design: Heller & C GmbH, Cologne

Photos: © ESA

Printing: Imprimerie Centrale, Luxembourg

Paper: Papyrus RecyStar Polar\*

\* Recycled paper

