

Arab Group Submission

Increasing the efficiency of the UNFCCC process for enhanced ambition and implementation

I. Introduction

The Arab Group welcomes the call for submissions for *Views from Parties and observer organizations on increasing efficiency in the UNFCCC process*. The Arab Group emphasizes the importance of efficiency and inclusivity in the UNFCCC process and will engage in the Party-driven process to increase the efficiency of the process.

II. Increasing the efficiency of the UNFCCC

Approaches to increasing efficiency of the process

Inclusivity and Equity are core elements that should continue to guide and define the UNFCCC process. As such, the Arab group emphasizes that all steps to increasing the efficiency of the UNFCCC remain consistent with its foundational principles, and draft rules of procedures being applied. Furthermore, we ask that all Parties bridge divergences drawing from these established principles, rules in these discussions. The Arab Group identified the following key approaches to increasing the UNFCCC's efficiency:

- a) **Balance among agenda items and thematic areas:** As per established practice and the necessity of our work, agenda items must be equally balanced and must address the needs of developing country Parties. All agenda items should be held at a level playing field in terms of numbers of sessions and budget allocation. Balance among thematic areas is key to ensuring climate change is effectively addressed. Mitigation on its own will not be sufficient to address the rising adaptation needs of developing country Parties. Adapting to the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement will remain a necessity to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of people in the global South. Mitigation and Adaptation action cannot proceed without the sufficient means of implementation from developed country Parties, including finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building. The secretariat must manage mandates in an efficient, inclusive and effective manner to support the decision-making process.

- b) **Compliance with the draft rules of procedure:** Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had laid out the necessary draft rules of procedure being applied to navigate the negotiation process and establish a level playing field with clear expectations. These draft rules of procedure being applied save time and effort by eliminating the need to incrementally negotiate on how agenda items could be proposed, how decisions should be made and how discussions should be carried out. A key concern that the group would like to outline is the lack of compliance with Rule 54 of the draft rules of procedure being applied which stipulates that “the official languages of the Conference of the Parties shall be Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.” We note that the UNFCCC website is only available in 5 of these languages, excluding Arabic, and expect this to be duly rectified. Maintaining a transparent and inclusive process is necessary to retain integrity and fairness to breed multilateral consensus. Adhering to these elements will retain the efficiency, credibility and integrity of the process and safeguard Parties’ ability to come together and agree on important decisions.
- c) **Adherence to the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement:** Over the course of more than three decades, Parties have laid out an extensive body of work that provides answers to key questions pertinent to international cooperation on climate change. Equity and the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities in the light of different national circumstances and the bottom-up nature of the Paris Agreement form the bedrock and basis of our multilateral discussions. Efficiency is strained when previous decisions and principles are repeatedly challenged and reinterpreted, and the basis of our discussions are shifted – leading to prolonged political negotiations rather than efficient, effective and equitable technical negotiations to share best practices and solutions fit for context and purpose.
- d) **Respecting the Kyoto Protocol as a multilateral and legally binding legal instrument:** The Kyoto Protocol is a living instrument with ongoing mandates. These mandates include oversight into operations that continue to serve developing countries, which include the Adaptation Fund and Clean Development Mechanism. The Kyoto Protocol must be maintained and to continue deliver on its mandates and the functioning operations that provide support to developing countries. Furthermore, as a legally binding instrument, it is key the Kyoto Protocol is complied with and fully implemented by those country Parties that have obligations therein.

- e) **Effective use of different components of the process:** The negotiation track must remain Party-driven and inclusive in nature, representing the views, perspectives and solutions relevant to sovereign nation states participating in these consensus-based discussions. External initiatives that lack multilateral consensus should not be introduced into negotiations in a manner inconsistent with the purpose of negotiations or with the view to adopting one-size-fits-all approaches inconsistent with the varying national circumstances of Parties. The negotiation track is key to building platforms of engagement among governments to share best practices and experiences while operationalizing our treaty regime in a manner that advances its full implementation. The Action Agenda is a useful track to advance an opt-in approach for different types of initiatives that could be relevant for select groups of Parties and could continue to be used as a tool to advance international cooperation in a manner that advances implementation.
- f) **Focused technical negotiations designed to advance international cooperation and implementation:** Within the context of the Paris Agreement, Parties have deliberated thoroughly to design the architecture of the Paris Agreement and to outline its operationalization. Ranging from the Enhanced Transparency Framework, to the Global Stocktake Process and to the finalization of Article 6, the Paris Rulebook is now complete with all the requisite components in place. Parties must avoid now reopening such agreements in a manner that overlays the architecture, creating redundancies and at times conflicting structural proposals. These proposals, manifesting at times within the context of reporting or national plans, are inconsistent with what has been agreed and place the efficiency and efficacy of our process in real jeopardy. Alternatively, Parties have the unique and timely opportunity to approach negotiations in a non-Political manner with a view to sharing knowledge and expertise while identifying meaningful ways to cooperate in order to implement nationally determined plans in a way that advances our collective progress towards our shared objectives. This means that dialogues, work programs and other modalities should be technical in nature, respecting the bottom-up nature of the agreement, and focused on positive opportunities for collaboration rather than fleeting and unsuccessful attempts to alter the very nature of our architecture by introducing top-down and one-size-fits-all approaches.
- g) **Maintaining a Party-Driven Process:** The Arab Group reemphasizes that the UNFCCC is a Party-driven process that must remain under the control of Parties, ensuring that any changes to the agenda-setting process is the result

of inclusive, consensus-based decision and fully in accordance with the draft rules of procedure being applied. To preserve the party-driven nature of our process, it is important that we consider proposals that preserve Parties' involvement, deliberation and decision-making. We therefore would not agree to proposals suggesting that draft texts can be unilaterally produced and circulated before sessions. In this regard, we do not support proposals to group agenda items and sub-agenda items in a manner that is inconsistent with established rules and practice. Any grouping or clustering of mandates and agendas must be made with these considerations. Furthermore, any amendments or additions during the agenda-setting process must initiate from and be agreed by the Parties in accordance with the draft rules of procedures being applied. Finally, and along the same lines, we do not support proposals to move to multi-year planning as this would also be inconsistent with the draft rules of procedure being applied. We would like to note that COPs are being hosted in each UN region thus presenting opportunities for Parties to engage with the process, build regional capacities and foster understanding of regional challenges through the diversification of presidencies. Setting a multi-year plan could adversely impact the process by preventing presidencies with limited capacities from being able to accurately reflect their regional expertise on the process, whereby the capacities and influence would concentrate only in a few Parties if we adopt a multi-year plan approach.

III. Conclusion

The Arab Group believes that the UNFCCC has many bridges to build before reaching its maximum efficacy. The Arab Group will support the UNFCCC in increasing its efficiency, but views that the arrangements described above must be implemented to reach this agreed goal. The barriers to achieving climate action identified above have clear solutions, but to achieve them, cooperation and understanding must be considered by all Parties. All Parties to the Convention, its Kyoto Protocol and its Paris Agreements must uphold the core principles of CBDR-RC and Equity, and the Arab Group considers this to be the first step achieving a successful implementation phase with maximum efficiency.