



Australian Government

Submission on increasing efficiency in the COP process

29 May 2025

Australia welcomes the opportunity to submit views on *increasing efficiency in the UNFCCC process, including the streamlining of the agendas of the governing and subsidiary bodies*.

With the finalisation of the Paris Rulebook at COP29, Parties have entered a new phase of work to fully implement the Paris Agreement. This milestone provides an important opportunity to reassess the overall workload and refocus our collective attention on this task.

The growing number of agenda items and mandated events has put pressure on Parties, the Secretariat and other stakeholders to meaningfully engage on issues across agendas. It has also created logistical challenges for the Secretariat and successive COP Presidencies in accommodating all mandated activities.

While we look forward to finding efficiencies across the negotiating agenda, Australia is also concerned about the growing size and complexity of COPs themselves. We acknowledge the critical role COPs play in catalysing climate action across Parties, observers, civil society, industry and investors, however, the current expansion of activities and costs of COPs may diminish the overall effectiveness and impact of COPs. We encourage Parties to actively consider what a 'right-sized' COP may look like, and how they can contribute to achieving this.

Australia also believes that while Parties consider these issues, they must work with the Secretariat and presiding officers to ensure the inclusivity, affordability, safety, effectiveness and efficiency of the process.

Increasing efficiency in negotiations.

Australia believes efficiencies can be found in the negotiations process, given it is a Party driven process, primarily through Parties making space for forward-looking work and work that supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement. As such, Australia encourages Parties to:

- **Free up time on the agenda:** Australia encourages Parties to review current agendas and move to **close agenda items** that have fulfilled their purpose and no longer advance the forward-looking objectives of the Paris Agreement. If Parties consider the closure of an item is contingent on related outcomes being finalised, they should examine whether discussion on the item could be scheduled at a later session. Parties should also consider **merging items** with overlapping mandates to free up time and resources for other items.
- When considering **proposals for new agenda items**, Australia encourages Parties to carefully consider whether the UNFCCC is the correct forum for the topic, and whether the proposed agenda item progresses the goals of the Paris Agreement. If the answer to these questions is

affirmative, Parties should identify whether an existing agenda item would be suited for consideration of the item.

Australia also believes there is a role for the Secretariat to assist Parties to improve efficiency, particularly with regard to:

- **Ensuring well-informed decisions:** Australia encourages the Secretariat to support Parties in identifying efficiencies in the UNFCCC process, including by providing Parties with the **expected costs of new mandates** requested by Parties. This information should be provided as soon as possible and well before a decision is made, to assist Parties to consider appropriate timing, location and modalities. This will allow Parties to make informed decisions on where finite financial, human and time resources of the Secretariat and Parties should be deployed.
- **Organisational clarity:** Australia encourages the Secretariat to support the SB Chairs and incoming presidency to **cluster agenda items** under key categories (i.e. Mitigation, Adaptation, Science etc). The added clarity of the expected workload under each thematic category would help Parties better organise their delegations, reduce duplication, prepare for sessions, and more accurately assess the balance of issues across the UNFCCC agenda.
 - Clustering may also assist in making agendas more readable and accessible to non-experts and the public which would increase transparency and accessibility around UNFCCC discussions.
- **Improved technology:** Australia encourages the Secretariat to provide recommendations to Parties on how technologies can be better utilised to allow full virtual participation across the negotiations and action agenda, as this would improve inclusivity and transparency. Increased virtual participation can improve the efficiency of the process in several ways including by decreasing the time and space pressures on the Secretariat and Presidency, enable increased participation, reduce travel costs for delegations, and enable more frequent engagement between Parties. We note there is considerable experience across the UN system with virtual participation which we encourage the Secretariat to draw upon as appropriate. All plans to increase virtual events and participation options should use readily available and accessible technology and platforms. Also, meetings which are fully virtual should share the burden of time-zone differences.

Making COPs more sustainable

While this submission primarily focuses on finding efficiencies in relation to UNFCCC negotiations, Australia believes Parties need to find ways to right-size COPs. It is important to highlight that the increase in the size and complexity of COPs in recent years has implications for the inclusivity, affordability, safety, effectiveness and efficiency of the process. Of particular concern are the:

- **Cost impacts on participation:** In recent years COP participants have experienced steep rises in travel and accommodation costs. These rising costs are unsustainable and threaten the inclusivity of COPs. Increased costs are an obstacle to the ability of all delegations to participate across the agenda, most particularly impacting least developed countries and small island developing states. They also have impacts on the abilities of key stakeholders, such as those representing First Nation and youth voices, to fully engage in the process.
- **Impacts on Parties' ability to host COP:** Australia is concerned that the logistical demands and costs of hosting a COP at the scale of recent years will impact the ability of Parties to host a COP. The rotating opportunity for Parties to take on the roles of COP host and

President is an important feature of the UNFCCC process, and a situation where fewer Parties have the capacity to do this would detract from equitable participation.

The UNFCCC process and COPs must be impactful and forward-looking. To realise the goals of the Paris Agreement, they need to be sustainable, inclusive and transparent. Australia encourages Parties to consider the issues identified in this submission with an open mind, and to explore creative measures to address them.

Australia looks forward to working collaboratively with Parties and the Secretariat to further enhance the transparency, inclusivity and effectiveness of our collective work.