

## KEY MESSAGES

- 1) First summary of information can provide the opportunity to collect relevant information to establish a baseline, test drafting processes, build capacity, and prompt decisions on institutional arrangements.
- 2) Second and later summaries of information can focus on reporting information about stepwise improvements in how the REDD+ safeguards are respected, including environmental and social outcomes associated with REDD+ implementation; and refinements in the country's safeguards approach. Successive summaries can increasingly draw on content from the safeguards information system (SIS).
- 3) Summaries of information can help demonstrate national safeguards performance for an expanding diversity of REDD+ finance streams.

# INFO BRIEF

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# GLOBAL

## SUMMARIES OF INFORMATION: INITIAL EXPERIENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL REDD+ SAFEGUARDS REPORTING

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## READ THIS BRIEF...

- If you are involved in REDD+ safeguards processes in your country, particularly in reporting on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.
- If you want to learn about the UNFCCC requirements on summaries of information, and recommendations for producing such safeguards reports.

## INTRODUCTION

The provision of a summary of information on how safeguards for REDD+ (also known as the Cancun safeguards)<sup>1</sup> are being addressed and respected during the implementation of REDD+ activities is a requirement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This Convention's guidance on summaries of information<sup>2</sup> indicates that developing countries seeking to receive results-based payments for REDD+ should start providing summaries upon commencing the implementation of REDD+ activities.

Once the first summary of information has been submitted, a country should continue to provide summaries of information throughout the implementation of the REDD+ activities. The frequency of subsequent summaries should be consistent with the provisions for submission of national communications, i.e. at least once every four years for developing countries. Summaries of information may be submitted directly to the UNFCCC REDD+ web platform at any time. Countries are also encouraged to improve the information provided in their subsequent summaries of information, taking a stepwise approach.<sup>3</sup>

Developing countries must provide information on which REDD+ activity or activities (referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70) are included in the summary of information. The information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected should be provided in a way that ensures transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> Developing countries are also strongly encouraged to incorporate the following elements, where appropriate, in their summaries<sup>5</sup>:

- Information on national circumstances relevant to addressing and respecting the safeguards.
- A description of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances.
- A description of existing systems and processes relevant to addressing and respecting safeguards, including [safeguards] information systems, in accordance with national circumstances.
- Information on how each of the safeguards has been addressed and respected, in accordance with national circumstances.

## RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON INITIAL COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

As of August 2020, seventeen countries have presented a summary of information, and three of these have presented a second and one a third report.<sup>6</sup> The scope, structure and content of the summaries submitted to the UNFCCC vary from country to country. In 2016, the UN-REDD Programme elaborated a first information brief '[Summaries of Information: How to demonstrate REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected](#)', drawing on country experiences and key elements of the summaries of information

4 UNFCCC Decision 17/CP.21, paragraph 3.

5 UNFCCC Decision 17/CP.21, paragraph 5.

6 As of June 2020, these countries are Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Paraguay, Peru, Viet Nam, and Zambia. From these, Brazil and Ecuador have presented a second summary of information, and Colombia a second and a third summary of information. All reports are available here: <https://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/safeguards.html>

1 See UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16.

2 UNFCCC Decisions: 1/CP.16, 12/CP.17, 12/CP.19, and 17/CP.21. Available here: <https://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/safeguards.html>

3 UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 3 and 4; 9/CP.19, paragraphs 4 and 11; and 17/CP.21, paragraph 7.

submitted by that time. The present information brief explores the more recent country experiences and lessons learned in developing summaries of information, based on the review of an increased range of summaries and the experience of the Programme in supporting safeguards activities in a number of countries. To date, some countries have already reported on how they respected the REDD+ safeguards; however, a significant amount of the information included in the first summaries of information has focused on the progress made in developing country approaches to safeguards, and on the provision of information on how countries have addressed or plan to address and respect the REDD+ safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation.

## DEFINITIONS OF ADDRESSING AND RESPECTING SAFEGUARDS (UN-REDD)

Addressing safeguards is understood to mean ensuring that a body of policies, laws and regulations (PLR), and associated institutional arrangements is in place 'on paper' to deal with the potential environmental and social benefits and risks – including gender risks – associated with REDD+ policies and measures.

Respecting safeguards is understood to mean that these PLRs are implemented and enforced, through the associated institutional arrangements, in such a way that this implementation affects real and positive outcomes on the ground, in line with the REDD+ safeguards.

It is expected that in future summaries, more information will be included on how the safeguards have been respected. This information may relate to the application of safeguards instruments and procedures such as how free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) or risk screening processes have been carried out; the social and environmental outcomes that have been achieved; any identified shortcomings in respecting the safeguards; or gap-filling measures that were implemented to improve safeguards performance.

A first summary of information provides the opportunity to collect relevant information for a baseline on how the REDD+ safeguards are addressed and respected – noting that several first summaries focused primarily on the aspect of addressing safeguards –, test drafting and consultation processes, build capacity, and prompt decisions on institutional arrangements related to safeguards processes and frequency of future summaries. Subsequent summaries of information should complement the information presented in previous ones, particularly in relation to how the safeguards are respected, and environmental and social outcomes associated to REDD+ implementation. They can also provide an updated perspective on improvement opportunities, gaps identified and measures to close the gaps in processes for addressing and respecting the safeguards.

Countries producing subsequent summaries of information should bear in mind that additional efforts may be required to demonstrate step-wise improvements in the information included in their reports.<sup>7</sup> As of now, countries who have already submitted at least one summary of information are engaged in efforts to increase the availability of safeguards information, such as clarifying reporting arrangements; defining indicators for the SIS or establishing protocols for data collection.

The following sections present experiences, recommendations and lessons learned on different aspects of preparing a summary of information.

<sup>7</sup> Encouraged by Decision 17/CP.21.

### Planning

The summary of information can be an instrument for responding to different objectives and reporting requirements, and may address both domestic and international audiences. Country choices in this regard are likely to influence the design of the report.

As a first step in the planning stage of developing a summary of information, it is useful to define the scope of the report, including the period and REDD+ activities to be covered, in line with the progress of REDD+ readiness and implementation phases in the country. Some countries considered a subnational scope for their summaries, they may decide later to report on safeguards at the national level. If the summary of information is to be used for accessing results-based payments for a specific time period, its scope should at a minimum encompass the application of safeguards to the REDD+ policies and measures associated with the results for which payments will be requested.

General good practice is to develop a work plan for delivering the summary of information that clearly states the activities, timeframe, resources needed, and associated roles and responsibilities. It is useful to define at an early stage which stakeholders should be engaged and how they will be involved. The role of both state and non-state stakeholders in the process of compiling and validating information is important. Some key stakeholders should be involved, including civil society and community-based organizations, representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities (including equitably women, men and youth within them), women's and youth groups, academia, and the private sector. Different participatory processes or approaches may be needed to fully involve the relevant stakeholders, in particular marginalized or vulnerable social groups. Adequate time and resources are needed for conducting consultative processes.

A clear definition of institutional arrangements for implementing safeguards-relevant policies, laws and regulations can facilitate the process of developing summaries of information. In order to provide transparent, consistent, comprehensive and effective information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected, some human and financial resources are needed. For some countries, it has been helpful to assess required resources under the following categories:

- Person/team to collect information (less resources may be needed if a SIS has been established).
- Person to organize the information and to coordinate the elaboration of the safeguards report.
- Human and financial support for conducting workshops and consultations, both for gathering inputs and for reviewing and providing feedback on the document (as above, resource requirements may be lower if information can be drawn from the SIS).
- External expert reviewers.
- Human and financial support for communication actions to ensure that information about the process of developing the summary of information, and the report itself, is disseminated.



## Structure and content

The previous [info brief on Summaries of Information](#) includes ideas of content that might be included in the summaries, based on the understanding and expectations of different stakeholders consulted. Below, some additional suggestions are shared based on what was included in the summaries of information that have been elaborated and submitted to the UNFCCC so far.

Generally, the content of the document will be guided by the information available in the country and the safeguards-related processes conducted during the period that is being reported upon. It may be useful to start with an annotated outline that can be reviewed and agreed by key stakeholders. The following substantive content should be considered:

- **Introduction:** this section can set out the scope of the report, its objectives, the intended audience, some background information on safeguards processes for REDD+, and the outline of the following sections.
- **National context:** diverse content can be included in this section, such as information about environmental, social, gender-related, economic and cultural circumstances, or details on progress and outcomes in developing the key elements of the country's REDD+ framework, particularly the Warsaw Pillars required for achieving 'REDD+ readiness'. It is useful to state the links between the implementation of REDD+ policies and measures that are part of a country's national REDD+ strategy or action plan, and any processes developed for addressing and respecting the safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation.
- **Process to produce the summary of information:** this section will provide an explanation of the steps and activities undertaken to elaborate the report. These should consider processes for promoting stakeholder engagement and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, especially indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as key groups within them, such as women and youth. The document should

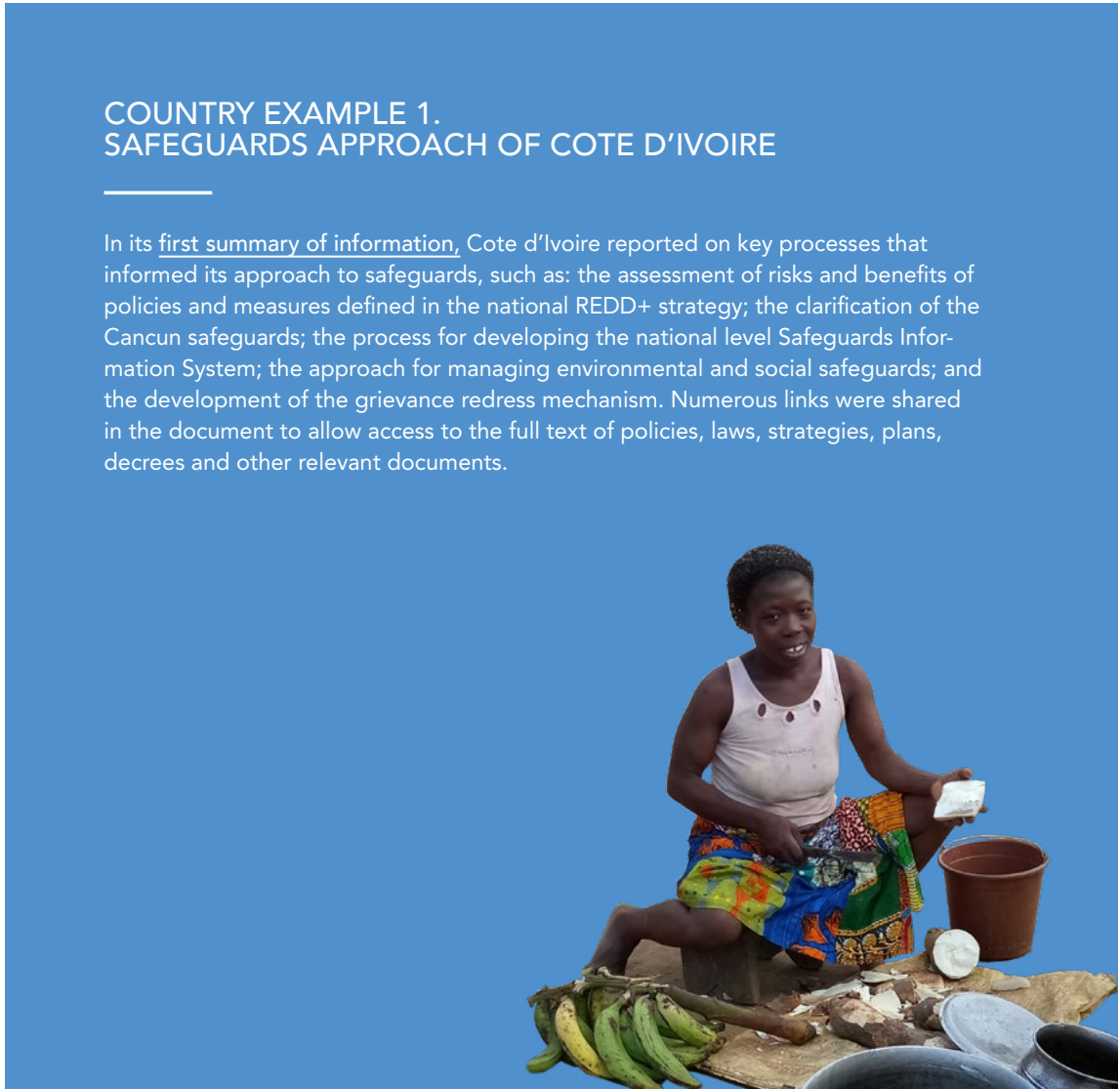
inform about the engagement of different country institutions and stakeholders during its elaboration. Countries will benefit from participatory processes for producing the summary of information, which will enrich the content of the report and promote ownership of the REDD+ safeguards activities. The process of producing a summary of information may become shorter from one summary of information to the next, as countries gain experience in developing the reports, and as more information can be drawn from the safeguards information system. However, this should not necessarily mean that there is less information reported.

- **Safeguards framework or country's approach to safeguards:** this section outlines the set of governance arrangements and processes that a country has in place or will put in place to respond to safeguards requirements for REDD+. These may include existing PLRs, coordination mechanisms or information systems, as well as other processes developed during REDD+ readiness (e.g. stakeholder engagement platforms; FPIC protocol or grievance redress mechanisms) or in the context of specific projects (e.g. gender action plans or indigenous peoples' plans). While detail on the elements of each of the Cancun safeguards can be provided in the section on addressing safeguards (below), this section provides an overview of the main elements and characteristics of the safeguards approach, including information on its goals and scope of application. The section can also describe the steps that were undertaken to determine and elaborate the country's safeguards approach. Examples of analyses that may be useful to mention include assessments of risks and benefits of REDD+ policies and measures or assessments of existing PLRs relevant for addressing and respecting safeguards, among others.

## COUNTRY EXAMPLE 1. SAFEGUARDS APPROACH OF COTE D'IVOIRE

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In its first summary of information, Cote d'Ivoire reported on key processes that informed its approach to safeguards, such as: the assessment of risks and benefits of policies and measures defined in the national REDD+ strategy; the clarification of the Cancun safeguards; the process for developing the national level Safeguards Information System; the approach for managing environmental and social safeguards; and the development of the grievance redress mechanism. Numerous links were shared in the document to allow access to the full text of policies, laws, strategies, plans, decrees and other relevant documents.



- **Describing relevant systems and processes:** this section can provide more details on existing systems and processes that are relevant for addressing and respecting safeguards, or those that are under development. If a mapping exercise to identify existing systems and processes has been carried out, this could be a useful input.

In a first summary of information, a key focus should be to describe the design of the national safeguards information system (SIS) and its operation (if the SIS is up and running). It is useful to incorporate information on the definition of SIS objectives, information needs and structure, as well as the institutional arrangements

and processes for managing the system. As soon as the SIS is operational, it should be a key source of information for any future safeguards reports.

Some countries have included information and links in this section that relate to other key systems that feed information into the SIS. It would be useful to include details on the relation between the content of these systems and safeguards-relevant information.

## COUNTRY EXAMPLE 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM – BRAZIL

In its [second summary of information](#), Brazil included details on the approach adopted to create its Safeguards Information System (SISREDD+), which considered the following elements: governance arrangements; stakeholder engagement processes on safeguards; development of an interactive online interface for safeguards information; and an ombudsman mechanism. The conceptual foundations for the system were defined, as well as the premises for instituting gradual improvements to the SISREDD+ once it is operational. Brazil has been working on the formulation of safeguards indicators and the development of a computational tool to integrate different existing sources of information. The country has a [web portal](#) to share information on the implementation of the REDD+ safeguards and the development of the SISREDD+.



- **Interpreting safeguards:** a national interpretation, also sometimes called 'national clarification' of the safeguards, explains how each of the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards is understood by the country, according to the country's context and specific circumstances. A large number of countries have developed the interpretation as part of their approach to safeguards. The interpretation of safeguards can be presented as a narrative text with several elements; or a set of principles and criteria defined for each safeguard. Definitions of key concepts are commonly used. In some cases, this interpretation provides the structure for the core content of the summary of information, particularly the section(s) on addressing and respecting safeguards (see below).

### COUNTRY EXAMPLE 3. PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION ON INTERPRETING THE SAFEGUARDS – GHANA

A section on the interpretation of the REDD+ ('Cancun') safeguards was included in [Ghana's first summary of information](#). It is indicated that the purpose of the interpretation is to specify how the principles/objectives encompassed in the safeguards translate into concrete rights and obligations in the national context of Ghana that are to be followed and promoted in the context of the implementation of REDD+ activities, in line with the country's policies, laws and regulations. Ghana's interpretation of each Cancun safeguard is presented in the form of core clarifying elements, the legal basis linked to each of these and a narrative text. The narrative clarification combines the core clarifying elements and relates them to the legal framework.



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- **Addressing safeguards** (see definition presented before): this section explains how the REDD+ safeguards have been addressed during the implementation of REDD+ activities. In some cases where a summary of information was produced before the country enters the stage of REDD+ implementation, countries described the steps taken to ensure that the safeguards will be addressed. The information included in this section could relate to legal, political and institutional frameworks relevant for the application of safeguards. It could include a description of processes established or under development specifically for REDD+, such as grievance redress mechanisms

and safeguards-relevant compliance mechanisms. Information could be provided in narrative form or tabular form, broken down safeguard by safeguard and/or structured in line with the national interpretation of safeguards, or presented as concise answers to a number of key questions.

It is useful to provide information on mandates, roles and responsibilities of institutions in relation to safeguards processes. In addition, it may be useful to describe any gaps in the existing policies, laws and regulations relevant for addressing and respecting safeguards, together with plans for closing those gaps.



## COUNTRY EXAMPLE 4. DESCRIPTION OF HOW REDD+ SAFEGUARDS ARE ADDRESSED – CAMBODIA

In the [first summary of information of Cambodia](#), the country presented the legal and institutional framework that is in place to ensure that REDD+ interventions are implemented in accordance with the safeguards, guided by the core elements defined in Cambodia's safeguards clarification (interpretation) of the Cancun safeguards. It also described specific additional measures that will be taken to ensure consistency of REDD+ interventions with the REDD+ safeguards and to mitigate any potential negative impacts these interventions might have.

Further, reporting requirements for REDD+ implementers, including indicators, will allow the country to verify that REDD+ interventions are carried out in line with the safeguards when implementing the Action and Investment Plan for Cambodia's National REDD+ Strategy.



- **Respecting safeguards** (see definition presented before): this section is intended to provide information on how the REDD+ safeguards have been respected when implementing REDD+ activities. It can include information on the application of safeguards-relevant elements of the legal, political and institutional frameworks; implementation of relevant procedures such as FPIC, stakeholder engagement plans, or indigenous peoples' plans; and implementation of measures to avoid or reduce environmental, social and gender risks. Any actions taken to enhance the environmental, social and gender benefits derived from the policies and measures could also be reported. Other types

of relevant information for this section might include: a summary of grievances received and information about their resolution; data on the application and results of compliance mechanisms; lessons learned on constraints to safeguards implementation and plans to remedy weaknesses; and data on environmental and social outcomes of REDD+ policies and measures.

A number of countries have decided to identify indicators to facilitate consistent recording of information in their SIS on how safeguards are respected (e.g. Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador), for example drawing on information that will

be compiled by project implementers or on relevant existing data collection efforts such as surveys and censuses. Where available, such indicators should be presented in the summary of information.

- **Conclusions and plans or recommendations for the next summary of information:** this section should highlight key points from the report, present final comments, and provide information on next steps or identified areas for improvement in the country's safeguards approach. In fact, the process of developing a summary of information may offer a valuable opportunity for the identification of gaps in the safeguards framework and opportunities for strengthening safeguards processes.

#### Format

In terms of how the information is presented, there is no specific guidance or template from the UNFCCC regarding the structure of the summary of information. Countries may seek

to complement narrative text with tables, charts, maps, figures, graphics, as well as boxes highlighting specific examples, quotes or stories to communicate the information on safeguards. The use of a simple and visually appealing format is highly recommended; together with a clear organization of the information that facilitates the review of the report on each safeguard<sup>8</sup>.

Countries are advised to be concise and avoid repeating information in different sections of the safeguards report. The summary of information is not a report about how REDD+ implementation is advancing, but on how the REDD+ safeguards have been addressed and respected during the implementation of REDD+ policies and measures. The provision of links to access more detailed information or related documents can be used to avoid very long documents. In addition, countries can refer back to information presented in previous summaries of information.

<sup>8</sup> An example of presenting information in a way that considers these characteristics can be found in Argentina's first Summary of information.



## CONCLUSION

In addition to the key UNFCCC-encouraged content on how safeguards have been addressed and respected, a review of existing summaries of information shows that countries can present important safeguards-related topics, namely:

- how the Cancun safeguards have been clarified/interpreted, in accordance with national circumstances;
- how 'addressing' and 'respecting' of safeguards has been defined in the national context;
- what institutional arrangements are, or have been put, in place to address and respect REDD+ safeguards;
- how the SIS was developed and how it will – or does – operate;
- how the summary of information, itself, was produced and how stakeholders were engaged; and
- how processes and products - e.g. stakeholder engagement platforms, FPIC guidelines, grievance redress mechanisms and gender action plans – of safeguards frameworks other than the Cancun safeguards contribute to a country's national approach to meeting UNFCCC safeguards requirements.

Besides the core elements of emerging good practice mentioned above, future summaries of information can be further strengthened through the inclusion of information on:

- key environmental and social risks and benefits anticipated from REDD+ implementation, together with the actual outcomes of that implementation;
- gender-specific analyses and gender-disaggregated reporting;
- links between the processes to elaborate, and content of, summaries of information and the operations of the SIS; and
- gaps identified, and proposed measures to address the gaps, to improve the addressing and respecting safeguards.

The summary of information can be useful for reporting to other donors, investors, institutions or standard accrediting entities. As the safeguards

requirements of these specific funding sources are likely to differ in some respects from those of the UNFCCC, then the information included in the summary prepared for UNFCCC may therefore need to be complemented or adapted to a different format to comply with their procedures.

Lastly, summaries of information can also be a key element to support transparency in REDD+, providing an opportunity to involve stakeholders and build their confidence in safeguards and the wider REDD+ process. As such, it can serve as a vehicle for communicating countries' progress on safeguards to an international audience, notably those entities financing REDD+. By creating trust – domestically and internationally – in country safeguards processes, summaries of information can be viewed as a tool for mobilizing further investments from a number of REDD+ revenue streams - results-based payments, forest carbon credit sales to offset markets, future Article 6 transactions under the Paris Agreement or private sector investments in forest landscape conservation and restoration. [The Green Climate Fund's Pilot programme](#) for the results-based payments, and the [Architecture for REDD+ Transactions' standards](#), for example, include requirements around summaries of information.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



UN-REDD Info Brief 5:  
Summaries of  
Information: How to Dem-  
onstrate REDD+ Safeguards  
are Being Addressed  
and Respected

[English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#)

- UN-REDD Workspace:  
[Safeguards Country Resources Hub](#)
- UN-REDD Workspace:  
[Safeguards Technical Knowledge Page](#)
- Submissions to the UNFCCC of  
[summaries of information](#)

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