

Summary of research and systematic observation negotiation stream

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*This advice is provided in response to **Query 20/24***

Query:

Please provide a summary of the research and systematic observation negotiation stream.

Result:

1. Background

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) calls on Parties to promote and cooperate in research, systematic observation and the development of archives, including through exchange of information, supporting and developing programmes, networks and organisations, and taking into account the needs and concerns, and building the capacity, of developing countries (Article 4.1(g) and 5).

Parties to the UNFCCC report on research and systematic observation to the secretariat through their National Communications.

The Paris Agreement preamble also recognises the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the **best available scientific knowledge**. Action under the Agreement should be carried out in accordance with best available science (Articles 4, 7 and 14). It further identifies the need to enhance and strengthen systematic observation, climate services and knowledge sharing (Article 7) and that systematic observation and early warning systems are areas of cooperation and facilitation to enhance understanding, action and support (Article 8).

2. Overview of the Research and Systematic Observation workstream

Several UNFCCC workstreams contribute findings to ensure that such best available science is available to inform negotiations and guide workshops, dialogues, and other events. One such workstream is the Research and Systematic Observation (RSO) which **facilitates dialogue on the latest and best available science and how to support its generation**.

Parties negotiate RSO matters under the SBSTA, with *research* usually considered at the first sessional period of the year (June) and *systematic observation* at the second sessional period (November/December) (see [FCCC/SBSTA/2012/5](#), paragraph 46). The RSO agenda item relates to efforts to promote and cooperate in research, systematic observation and the development of data archives. This includes two annual forums and other efforts to strengthen the science-policy interface.

The SBSTA also mandates the UNFCCC secretariat to organise two annual forums to exchange information for supporting work on research and systematic observation, the [research dialogue](#) and the [Earth Information Day](#), which coincide with the first and second sessional periods respectively.

3. Recent RSO negotiations:

A. Dubai

In Dubai, in 2023, RSO discussions considered updates from Global Climate Observing System and World Meteorological Organization, a report from the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites, a report from Earth Information Day 2022 and Earth Information Day 2023.

Parties debated whether calling 2023 the hottest year on record is speculative, whether to “note” or “welcome” the Global Greenhouse Gas Watch initiative, and whether to highlight the initiative and prioritization of the Early Warnings for All initiative, among other outcomes.

In its closing plenary on [6 December](#), the SBSTA adopted conclusions and forwarded draft decisions to the COP and CMA, which the bodies later adopted.

In its conclusions ([FCCC/SBSTA/2023/L.10](#)), the **SBSTA**, among others:

- recognizes the vital importance of robust Earth observation systems and related long-term data records;
- expresses alarm about 2023 on track to be the warmest individual year on record;
- recognizes the need to address data gaps, including in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, ocean and coastal regions, tropical forests, desert and mountain regions;
- notes the continued efforts of the Systematic Observations Financing Facility;
- notes the new Global Greenhouse Gas Watch initiative;
- emphasizes urgent need to deliver Early Warnings for All; and
- invites parties and relevant organizations to submit views on possible themes for and ways to organize Earth Information Day 2024, to be held in conjunction with SBSTA 61 (November 2024), by 31 August 2024.

In their respective decisions, the **COP** ([FCCC/SBSTA/2023/L.7/Add.1](#)) and the **CMA** ([FCCC/SBSTA/2023/L.7/Add.2](#)), among others:

- recognize AR6 represents a more comprehensive and robust assessment of climate change than AR5, with an increased scope, compared with previous assessment cycles, providing integrated scientific, technical and socio-economic information;¹ and
- encourage the scientific community to continue expanding the scientific knowledge base on climate change and addressing knowledge gaps with a view to supporting the AR7 cycle.

B. Sharm el Sheikh

On [12 November](#), the SBSTA adopted conclusions and forwarded a draft decision for consideration and adoption by the COP.

In its conclusions (FCCC/SBSTA/ 2022/L.20), the **SBSTA**, among others, invites parties and relevant organizations to submit, via the submission portal by 31 August 2023, views on possible themes for and ways to organize Earth Information Day 2023, to be held in conjunction with SBSTA 59.

In its decision (FCCC/SBSTA/2022/L.20/Add.1), the **COP**, among others:

- emphasizes the need to address systematic observation gaps, particularly in developing countries and for ocean, mountain, desert and polar regions and the cryosphere to improve understanding of climate change, climate-related risks and tipping points, and adaptation limits and to ensure enhanced delivery of climate services and early warning systems; and
- notes with concern the existing gaps in the global climate observing system.

The IPCC's 7th Assessment Report is expected to be released by late 2029

4. Links

- [Draft conclusions of the SBSTA and decisions for adoptions by COP/CMA at the 58th session](#)
- [Draft conclusions of the SBSTA at the 59th session](#)
- [ENB Summary Report of the 2023 Bonn Climate Change Conference which covers progress made on the RSO](#)
- [GCOS' approach to systematic observations under the UNFCCC](#)