



## ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 16-27 SEPTEMBER 2013

The Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) opens today in Windhoek, Namibia, under the theme "A stronger UNCCD for a Land-Degradation Neutral World." The meeting takes place at the halfway point of the 10-Year Strategy of the UNCCD (2008-2018) (the Strategy) and will review progress made in the implementation of the Strategy.

Delegates will also consider the outcome of the second, and preparations for the third, UNCCD Scientific Conferences and reports of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). Other agenda items include, *inter alia*: follow-up to the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) outcome on desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD); improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention; programme and budget for the biennium 2014-2015; progress in the implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy; revised procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations and private sector representatives in meetings and processes of the UNCCD; and maintenance of the roster of experts. Under institutional arrangements, delegates will discuss, among other issues, new housing arrangements for the Global Mechanism (GM) and collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

COP 11 will also feature interactive dialogue sessions with high-ranking officials, as well as two open dialogue sessions with civil society.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. It was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 195 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer to be demand-driven, and of the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with UN agencies, donors, local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

**NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION:** In 1992, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted

resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification (INCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the UNCCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean.

**COPs 1-10:** The first five COPs met annually from 1997-2001. During these meetings, delegates, *inter alia*: selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the GM; approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the GM; established an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes; adopted a fifth regional annex for Central and Eastern Europe; established the CRIC; and supported a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

COP 6 met in 2003 in Havana, Cuba. Delegates, *inter alia*, designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, decided that a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's activities would be undertaken by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and requested the Secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on all aspects of regional coordination. COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2005. Delegates reviewed the implementation of the Convention and developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF. An intergovernmental intersessional working group was established to review the JIU report and to develop a draft 10 year strategic plan to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

COP 8 convened in Madrid, Spain, in 2007 and, *inter alia*, adopted a decision on the Strategy. Delegates also requested the JIU to conduct an assessment of the GM for presentation to COP 9. Delegates did not reach agreement on the programme and budget, and an Extraordinary Session of the COP convened at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 November 2007 to conclude this item.

COP 9 convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2009. Delegates focused on a number of items called for by the Strategy and adopted 36 decisions, which addressed topics including: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, CST, GM and the Secretariat; the JIU assessment of the GM; the terms of reference of the CRIC; arrangements for regional coordination mechanisms; the communication strategy; and the programme and budget.



COP 10 convened in 2011, in Changwon City, Republic of Korea. Delegates adopted 40 decisions, addressing, *inter alia*, the governance structure for the GM, by which parties agreed that the accountability and legal representation of the GM shall be transferred from IFAD to the UNCCD Secretariat.

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST):** The CST has convened parallel meetings to each COP. At CST 1's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST 2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. CST 3 recommended that the COP appoint *ad hoc* panels on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems. CST 4 submitted proposals to improve the CST's work, and CST 5 adopted modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, namely through the creation of a Group of Experts. CST 6 continued discussions on improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items. CST 7 considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues. And CST 8 decided to convene future sessions in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format, which led to the convening of the first UNCCD Scientific Conference at CST 9.

The first Special Session of the CST (CST S-1) (2008) considered preparations for CST 9, elements of the Strategy related to the CST, the CST's four-year work plan and two-year costed work programme, and advice to the CRIC on measuring progress on the Strategy's Strategic Objectives.

CST 9 met concurrently with COP 9, during which the 1st Scientific Conference convened to consider the theme "Biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management." CST 9 also developed decisions to review the experience of the 1st Scientific Conference and to organize a 2nd Scientific Conference on the theme "Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas." In addition, the CST recommended two indicators—the proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line and land cover status—as the minimum required subset of impact indicators for reporting by affected countries beginning in 2012.

CST S-2 (2011) considered the status of work on methodologies and baselines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators, among other matters. CST 10 established two *ad hoc* working groups: one to continue the iterative participatory process on impact-indicator refinement and monitoring and assessment of impacts; and one to further discuss options for the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD. CST S-3 (9-12 April 2013, Bonn, Germany) met concurrently with the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, which discussed research and best practices in the face of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and proposed methodologies for evaluating the costs and benefits of sustainable land management.

**COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION (CRIC):** The CRIC held its first session in Rome, Italy, in 2002, during which delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions, and considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the UNCCD's implementation and advice provided by the CST and the GM.

CRIC 2 (2003) reviewed implementation of the UNCCD, its institutional arrangements, and financing of UNCCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions. CRIC 3 (2005) reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa and considered issues relating to Convention implementation at the global level. CRIC 4 (2005) considered strengthening

Convention implementation in Africa, improving communication and reporting procedures, mobilization of resources for implementation, and collaboration with the GEF.

CRIC 5 (2007) reviewed implementation of the Convention in regions other than Africa, how to improve information communication and national reporting, and the 2006 International Year for Deserts and Desertification. CRIC 6 (2007) reviewed the roles developed and developing country parties should play in resource mobilization, and collaboration with the GEF. CRIC 7 (2008) considered: the work plans and programmes for the Convention's bodies; the format of future meetings of the CRIC; and indicators and monitoring of the Strategy, and principles for improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports submitted to the COP.

CRIC 8 (2009) reviewed the workplans of the institutions and subsidiary bodies of the Convention and reporting guidelines and indicators. Delegates also recommended adoption of the proposal for an online Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS). CRIC 9 (2011) considered, among other items, preliminary analyses of information contained in the PRAIS reports.

CRIC 10 (2011) discussed the strategic orientation of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies, adopted four operational objectives to assess the implementation of the Convention against performance indicators, and approved an iterative process on reporting procedures and the refinement of methodologies for the review and compilation of best practices. CRIC 11 (2013) reviewed progress in alignment of national action programmes with the Strategy. Delegates also considered input from the Intersessional Working Group for the Mid-term Evaluation of the Strategy (IWG) and *ad hoc* Advisory Group of Technical Experts on "operationally delineating affected areas."

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON A LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL WORLD:** Hosted by the government of the Republic of Korea and facilitated by the UNCCD Secretariat, this meeting took place on 26-27 June 2013 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Participants proposed the establishment of an intersessional expert group to provide parties with further advice and recommendations for formulating and operationalizing a "Zero Net Land Degradation" target under the UNCCD.

**INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP FOR THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY (IWG):** Established at COP 10 in 2011, the IWG met four times between March 2012 and June 2013. Among other tasks, the IWG reviewed the methodology of the evaluation and coordinated a consultative process for acquiring feedback from parties and other stakeholders. At its final meeting, the IWG prepared a final report of documentary inputs, conclusions and recommendations, taking into account the outcomes of CST S-3 and CRIC 11, as well as the initial feedback received from the regional and interest groups, for submission to COP 11.

**THIRD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs):** This meeting took place from 22-24 May 2013, at UN Headquarters in New York. Among other topics, the meeting addressed two thematic clusters: food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture and DLDD; and water and sanitation. The discussions underlined the need for SDGs that are human-centered and transformative, and that build on and go beyond the millennium development goals (MDGs). The meeting recognized the inter-linkages between food, land and water and noted the need for land restoration and a land-degradation neutral world.