

**Third Meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG)
on the follow up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (“Rio+20”)**

**Rome, Italy
18-20 March 2015**

Summary of the Co-Chairs

Giampaolo Cantini, the Director General for Development Cooperation at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the importance of the work being undertaken by the IWG particularly for future trends in development assistance and the need for a scientific basis on which to build a convincing argument for donors and investors alike. The UNCCD Executive Secretary, Monique Barbut, expressed her gratitude to the European Commission and the Government of Italy for their funding and hosting of the meeting. She urged the IWG to finalize its guidance on how the UNCCD and its Parties can make the target of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) a “reality on the ground” while recognizing that this target cannot be achieved in isolation from other challenges and processes.

The UNCCD secretariat made two introductory presentations followed by questions and discussion by the IWG members. The first presentation was an update on the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Sustainable Development Goals within the post-2015 development agenda, in particular the UNCCD’s potential role in developing a monitoring framework for an expected LDN target that is consistent with the UNCCD’s progress indicators adopted at COP11. The second presentation provided an overview of the LDN project being supported by the Government of Korea. The project currently includes 12 national plans (i.e. setting targets, designing a strategy and proposing a budget) to achieve LDN which could then be integrated, on a voluntary basis, into their respective National Action Programmes (NAPs).

The coordinator of Task Force 1 provided an overview of the comments received during the consultation period and presented various options for arriving at a consensus on the science-based definition of LDN. The subsequent discussion primarily focused on the scope of the Convention and whether to include “arid, semi-arid and dry, sub-humid areas” within the definition. The majority of the IWG members felt that the definition should be universally applicable and that there was no scientific basis for including “arid, semi-arid and dry, sub-humid areas”. The majority opinion was that a universally applicable definition could also help to avoid debating the definition in other fora in the future. The final text was agreed to with two sets of text brackets around “affected areas” and “arid, semi-arid and dry, sub-humid areas”.

Similarly, the coordinator of Task Force 2 presented a revised text, based on comments received, on the options for achieving LDN should countries wish to do so. There was agreement on a set of management and policy options at the national and sub-national levels as well as options for operationalizing LDN, including a non-exhaustive list of interlinked activities. The final text on options includes the same bracketed text as in the definition text, namely “arid, semi-arid and dry, sub-humid areas”.

The coordinator of Task Force 3 on the implications of LDN for the Convention presented draft text to the entire IWG for the first time. The initial discussion revealed the consensus view that the objectives of the Convention and its existing operation are consistent with the objective of LDN, but do not fulfill all of the components of LDN. The current strategy of the Convention has only two years left to run and thus the IWG saw no useful purpose in amending it at this stage. In organizing the future work of the Convention, the group presented two options for when the current Strategy expires. Likewise for programmes and resources requirements, the implications for LDN were framed in general terms with illustrative examples of how to achieve it. The only bracketed text concerns the language on “technology transfers and capacity building” where consensus is still possible before issuing the final report.

In closing the third and final meeting of the IWG, the Co-Chairs presented the next steps whereby they would prepare an introduction with their signature outlining the IWG process and submit it for the review of the IWG members. This would then be compiled with the final text of the three Task Forces agreed to at IWG-3 without further editing, and presented as one report to the COP. The final IWG report will be delivered to the UNCCD secretariat sometime in June for dissemination to the Parties in all official languages at least 60 days before COP11.

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