

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

**Second Meeting of the IWG (IWG-2)
Beijing, China - 16-18 July 2014**

Summary of the Co-Chairs

Pan Yingzhen, China’s new UNCCD National Focal Point opened the meeting, welcomed all participants and introduced Zhang Yongli, Vice Minister of the State Forestry Administration. He highlighted the great strides that China has made in reversing desertification, reducing dust storms and soil erosion, and increasing land productivity. The UNCCD Executive Secretary, Monique Barbut, expressed her gratitude to China for their funding and hosting of the meeting. She urged the group to continue making progress on the concept of land degradation neutrality (LDN) and begin to identify the relevant options to achieve its implementation at the national level.

Professor Barron Orr, University of Arizona, was invited to participate in IWG-2 as a guest expert. He stressed the urgent need for mapping and assessment in order to begin prescribing solutions on the ground and, as with all targets, practical monitoring and evaluation tools will be required to measure progress. The UNCCD secretariat provided an update on the discussions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In her opening remarks, China strongly emphasized that LDN is important marketing language that gives the UNCCD a clear banner for the entire world to see.

The IWG members welcomed with great appreciation the working documents of the two task forces. On the definition of LDN (Task Force 1), one member requested that the definition include a reference to “arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas” in accordance with the mandate of the IWG as established by decision 8/COP11. All other IWG members accepted the proposed definition. The co-chairs and some members reminded the group that the IWG is tasked with establishing a “science-based” definition of land degradation neutrality in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. Another member suggested that the definition should contain a reference to food security. The IWG will need to further explore options as to how to reconcile the different positions and will return to the issue at IWG-3.

With regard to the options for Parties that wish to strive to achieve LDN (Task Force 2), the document length was reduced significantly even though some felt it contained many “nice words” and may perhaps be useful as the basis for a future UNCCD communications piece. The IWG reworked the document to focus on management and policy options as well as options for operationalizing LDN at the national level including target setting approaches. It was generally agreed that targets should be set at national/sub-national levels taking into account the final SDG framework of targets and indicators, and according to their national capacity and circumstances. Task force 2 will produce a revised draft text reflecting the discussion of the IWG-2 and the consultative process for consideration at IWG-3.

The overwhelming majority of IWG members agreed that both interim working papers, along with a cover letter by the co-chairs, be sent to all Parties, CSOs and Observers inviting their comments by the end of October 2014. One member reminded participants that the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG), established by decision 8/COP11, is comprised of government representatives and insisted that the texts under negotiation should not be opened to comments by civil society organizations (CSOs) before their conclusion. The co-chairs remarked that these comments will be made available to the entire IWG and that the task forces (and their coordinators) will determine how best to utilize these comments and revise the working papers if deemed appropriate. Revised working papers will be sent to IWG members in January for further discussion at IWG-3 which is expected to be held in March 2015.

Task force 3 was created to advise on the implications for the Convention's current and future strategy, programmes and the resource requirements; Cuba was elected task force coordinator. It was agreed that task force 3 will be composed of two representatives from each region which should now confer to finalize their nominations. The mandate of this task force is to develop proposals in accordance with decision 8/COP.11 and focus on the implications of LDN definition and options. The entire IWG is invited to send their ideas to Cuba over the next month in order to produce a compilation by the end of August; a zero draft will be circulated to the IWG by the end of November for feedback by end of January and for further discussion at IWG-3.

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