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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Items resulting from the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2016–2017**

**Rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands**

## Rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands

### Synthesis report by the Science-Policy Interface

#### *Summary*

Objective 3 of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) work programme 2016–2017 was to encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands.

This document presents a synthesis report of activities undertaken by the SPI on this topic as well as conclusions and proposals for consideration by the Committee on Science and Technology at its thirteenth session.

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## **I. Background**

1. In line with its mandate, as defined in decisions 23/COP.11 and 19/COP.12, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) shall provide the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements (e.g. thematic assessments, scientific studies and/or user guides) for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
2. By decision 21/COP.12, at its twelfth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNCCD decided to adopt the SPI work programme for the biennium 2016–2017, requesting the SPI to carry out the following science-policy work for objective 3: “Encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands”.
3. By the same decision, the COP requested the SPI to present a report, including policy oriented recommendations for each objective included in its work programme.
4. This document presents a synthesis report of the activities undertaken by the SPI relative to objective 3 of its work programme for 2016–2017, as well as conclusions and proposals for consideration by the CST at its thirteenth session.

## **II. Actions undertaken by the Science-Policy Interface related to the implementation of objective 3 of the work programme for 2016–2017**

5. Objective 3 of the SPI work programme 2016–2017 was to encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands. The SPI was requested to (i) assess existing land management practices suitable for the rehabilitation, restoration or reclamation of degraded lands with regard to the land’s potential, including associated costs, and (ii) provide scientific guidance and policy options for addressing degraded lands, taking into account the land’s potential and the different degrees of degradation severity in different biomes and regions, and available best practice case studies.
6. The SPI noted that any work done under this objective should complement and offer potential added value to existing research and any ongoing initiatives and assessments.
7. In November 2015, the SPI was informed of the intention of the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) International Resource Panel (IRP) to develop a proposal for an IRP report on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their contributions to poverty eradication.
8. In accordance with its terms of reference, the SPI identified the cooperation pathway together with the UN Environment-IRP in the drafting of the above-mentioned report to ensure synergies and cost-efficiency in addressing objective 3.
9. Subsequently, the SPI team leaders for objective 3 contacted the UN Environment-IRP Secretariat to explore options for cooperation, together with the SPI co-chairs and with the support of the UNCCD secretariat. The SPI welcomes the development of further cooperation with UN Environment-IRP in order to ensure synergistic work on rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands, after delays in the development of the cooperation due to processes outside of SPI control.
10. One SPI objective 3 team leader participated in a Working Group Meeting on ‘Land Restoration, Ecosystem Resilience and their Contributions to Poverty Eradication’,

organized by the UN Environment-IRP Secretariat in partnership with the Water and Land Restoration Centre Ethiopia between 10–11 March 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

11. The meeting aimed to (i) allow participants to share information about ongoing research and implementation initiatives on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their impacts on poverty eradication, and (ii) identify gaps in the research agenda and policy-relevant science in order to determine the scope and focus of the forthcoming IRP research in this area.

12. Participants identified numerous areas where further scientific work from a resources perspective could support the implementation of land restoration policies and programmes such as:

(a) The assessment of the multiple ecological, social and economic benefits linked to land restoration;

(b) The assessment and identification of strategies supporting the sustainability of the land restoration initiative;

(c) The benefits and best-practice of taking a cross-scale and cross-sectoral systems approach to coordinate and synergize global, national and local action;

(d) The use of a systems perspective to develop a consistent monitoring, reporting and verification system on the outcomes of land restoration.

13. Based on the outcomes of the meeting in Addis Ababa, the SPI welcomes the efforts of UN Environment-IRP in developing the outline of the UN Environment-IRP report that would take into consideration the outcomes of other existing initiatives and assessments on land degradation and restoration. To support the synergistic quality of the UN Environment-IRP report, the SPI will also provide the relevant outcomes of its second work programme (2016–2017), particularly on the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality.

### III. Conclusions and proposals

14. **The SPI notes that although the process was delayed, continued cooperation with the UN Environment-IRP is a promising means of addressing this objective in its new work programme for the biennium 2018–2019.**

15. **The SPI suggests that the CST considers the following proposal and recommends that the COP:**

*Proposal:* **Requests the SPI to further develop cooperation with the International Resources Panel of UN Environment on preparing a report on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their contributions to poverty eradication, and outline policy-oriented options on how land restoration contributes to land degradation neutrality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.**