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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

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**Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda**

**Committee on Science and Technology**

**Maintenance of the roster of independent experts and creation, as necessary, of ad hoc panels of experts**

**Report on progress on the maintenance of the roster of independent experts**

**Note by the secretariat**

1. Article 24, paragraph 2 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) states that “the Conference of the Parties shall establish and maintain a roster of independent experts with expertise and experience in the relevant fields”. By its decisions 18/COP.1, 13/COP.2, 15/COP.3, 15/COP.4, 15/COP.5, 13/COP.6, 13/COP.7 and 11/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish and maintain a roster of independent experts, in accordance with the procedures attached to decision 18/COP.1.
2. In accordance with the provision of paragraph 2 of article 24 of the Convention and decision 18/COP.1, the selection of experts to be included in the roster shall be based on nominations communicated by the Parties in writing and through diplomatic channels, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and a diversity of knowledge and skills to provide advice on combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, the need for an appropriate gender balance and broad and equitable geographical representation, and the need for nominees to have expertise and experience in fields relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.
3. The secretariat requested the Parties to incorporate into their national reports an annex with an updated list of their experts on the roster, with their contact details.
4. In decision 13/COP.7, the secretariat encouraged Parties, through their national focal points, to revise and update the database regarding their national experts already on the roster of independent experts, and to propose new candidates in order to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines, of social scientists, of women, of non-governmental organizations, and of individuals with expertise in the field of desertification.

5. By the same decision, the COP invited Parties that had not yet submitted nominations of experts for the roster to do so, via regular diplomatic channels, no later than six months before the next session of the COP.

6. In order to prepare the list of nominations, the secretariat has produced a curriculum vitae form taking due account of the illustrative list of disciplines annexed to decision 15/COP.3 and as amended in annex II to document ICCD/COP(4)/5/Add.1. Annex I to that document contains a summary of the following information: countries submitting nominations, name and sex of candidates, institutes from which they come, and their main fields of experience or expertise. An illustrative list of the disciplines contained in annex III and the general features of the roster are summarized in annex IV of the same document.

7. By its decision 11/COP.8, the COP requested the secretariat to continue distributing information on the roster through the established e-mail network.

8. The secretariat has, accordingly, posted an electronic version of the roster on its Internet site at the address <www.unccd.int>; the site has its own search engine. The secretariat has also prepared a CD-ROM for Parties which have no Internet access or which have problems accessing the UNCCD website.

9. The total number of experts included in the roster is 1,852, from 91 Parties. There are 1,570 male and 279 female candidates, representing respectively 85 per cent and 15 per cent of the experts included. Some of the records in the roster of experts database are no longer valid, and therefore the database needs to be updated as soon as possible; this information has to be provided by country Parties.

10. In order to update the database of the roster of experts, the UNCCD secretariat has sent an official letter to national focal points, inviting them to review the roster of experts nominated by their countries and to update the details of their experts, as well as to supplement their submissions to the secretariat, before 15 June 2009.

11. Based on the provisions of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018), the COP might wish to consider improvements in the procedures for nomination of experts and scientists to the roster of independent experts.

12. Considering new technological developments, the secretariat should receive full support for updating the equipment in order to improve the services provided to Parties. In this regard, the following suggestions are made in order to improve the quality of services provided to country Parties:

(a) Software improvements should allow easy, interactive and fast updating, and reporting in different formats. In the same vein, a comprehensive statistical system should be set up that allows Parties and the secretariat to assess the use of the database (statistical analysis topology);

(b) In order to be able to update the roster of experts database regularly and efficiently, a function should be created enabling the end user to submit changes for the attention of the secretariat directly through the roster of experts web page;

(c) Information should be displayed regarding the rosters of experts of the three Rio Conventions through a common web-based information-sharing system. In this regard, a common search tool would be very useful for displaying the results of all three Rio Convention records.

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