



UNITED
NATIONS



**Convention to Combat
Desertification**

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(5)/2/Add.2
18 December 2006

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
Fifth session
Buenos Aires, 12–21 March 2007
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND OF
ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22,
PARAGRAPH 2 (a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION,
AS WELL AS DECISION 1/COP.5, PARAGRAPH 10**

**REVIEW OF THE REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY
PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE
PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND
RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES**

**Review of reports on implementation by affected Asian country Parties, including
on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved
in the preparation and implementation of action programmes**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

**Progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional
and regional action programmes in Asia**

Summary

1. Affected country Parties in Asia have, in accordance with the regional implementation annex, engaged in the formulation and implementation of subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and a regional action programme (RAP). As at July 2006, the region has established four SRAPs in the West Asian, Central Asian, South Asian and South-East Asian subregions; these are at different stages of implementation and operationalization. The North-East Asia region, albeit not officially operating within a SRAP context, has also engaged in cross boundary

cooperation mainly on combating sand and dust storms. The Pacific subregion is interested in SRAP activities and has initiated some preliminary consultations on priorities and objectives.

2. The region has been consistently pursuing the development and launching of thematic programme networks (TPNs) that constitute the backbone of the RAP of Asia and Pacific countries.

3. This document presents a stocktaking exercise on achievements in the various networks established. It will form background information for discussions on bottlenecks and potentials during the regional meeting convened for 7–11 August 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand, allowing country Parties of the region to brainstorm and form regional views on SRAP/RAP implementation that will subsequently be forwarded to the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5).

4. Generally speaking, implementation of SRAPs and the RAP of Asia has been slow, despite existing frameworks that provide the means for cooperation. Various factors seem to inhibit a full-scale operationalization of those action programmes. It is in this light that the document will enable country Parties to review the process during the regional meeting and the CRIC session and draft recommendations for further deliberations at CRIC 5.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1 – 2	4
II. THE ABU DHABI INITIATIVE.....	3 – 5	4
III. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES.....	6 – 20	5
A. West Asia.....	6 – 8	5
B. Central Asia.....	9 – 14	5
C. South Asia.....	15 – 16	6
D. North-East Asia.....	17	6
E. South-East Asia.....	18 – 19	7
F. Pacific.....	20	7
IV. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME.....	21 – 36	7
A. TPN1: Desertification monitoring and assessment.....	22 – 26	7
B. TPN2: Agroforestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.....	27 – 28	8
C. TPN3: Rangeland management in arid areas including the fixation of sand dunes.....	29 – 31	8
D. TPN4: Water resources management for agriculture in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.....	32 – 33	9
E. TPN5: Strengthening capacities for drought impact mitigating and desertification combating.....	34	9
F. TPN6: Assistance for the implementation of integrated local area development programmes initiatives.....	35 – 36	9
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	37 – 40	10

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Decision 9/COP.7, on the programme of work of the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), decided that the CRIC would review reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes. This, by default, and following the mandate entrusted to the Committee, includes a review of the subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and regional action programme (RAP).

2. The time frame of the synthesis provided in this document spans from November 2002, the time where the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) country Parties gathered for the first session of the CRIC, until May 2006, taking the reporting requirements of Asian and Pacific country Parties for the third national reporting cycle into consideration. The document is structured as follows: chapter II provides general comments and introduces the Abu Dhabi Initiative, a regional initiative decided upon by the Second Ministerial Conference of Asian and Pacific country Parties that took place in 2003 in Abu Dhabi; chapter III provides an overview of SRAP implementation; chapter IV presents activities undertaken for and progress made by the RAP of Asia and the Pacific, and chapter V provides some tentative conclusions to be complemented by the deliberations and the final report of the regional meeting convened in August 2006 in preparation for CRIC 5. In accordance with decision 1/COP.5, the outcome of the regional meeting will be forwarded to CRIC 5 as an additional element allowing the Committee to undertake an in-depth review of implementation at regional level. The regional meeting in preparation for CRIC 5 took into consideration information contained in national reports on subregional and regional implementation in order to ensure that all means of official reporting and/or meeting opportunities were exhausted before drawing conclusions and concrete recommendations.

II. THE ABU DHABI INITIATIVE

3. The RAP in Asia and Pacific was adopted in 1997 at the Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation to Implement the UNCCD. The conference was held in Beijing, China, and identified six thematic programme networks (TPNs) constituting the priority areas for UNCCD implementation in Asia. The initial timespan in which regional activities were supposed to be implemented was five years.

4. The Abu Dhabi Initiative was launched in 2003 at the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on UNCCD Implementation (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates). A call for accelerated implementation was made, resulting in the Abu Dhabi Initiative. This Initiative calls for implementation of projects that relate to core issues identified by the region (TPNs and the RAP). Project implementation, according to the Abu Dhabi Initiative, should be supported by the international community and in particular, by operational programme 15 of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

5. The First Regional Consultation Meeting on the Abu Dhabi Initiative took place in March 2005, in Abu Dhabi, and was hosted by the United Arab Emirates. Subregional representatives of the Asian Implementation Annex together with participants from regional

intergovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the GEF, participated in the meeting with a view to reviewing project proposals intended for submission to the potential donors as a follow-up to the Abu Dhabi Initiative. The meeting reviewed 16 projects of which 7 were identified as warranting further support.

III. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

A. West Asia

6. The SRAP implementation activities in West Asia in the reporting period comprise the preparation of inventories and regional databases on sustainable water and vegetation cover management. The inventory and regional databases of water resources and for vegetation cover projects (TN1 and TN2) were developed by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), both in cooperation with the SRAP Coordinator (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)) and the national focal points of the SRAP.¹ In conjunction with these activities, draft project proposals were developed. The results of the inventory and database compilation, and draft proposals, were discussed with national partners in a regional workshop held in Damascus, Syria, in January 2003.

7. Within the framework of the “Integrated Natural Resource Management Implementation of Start-up Activities” project, four countries were selected to start implementing small-scale pilot projects; Lebanon and Yemen for the mountainous areas and Syria and Jordan for rangeland rehabilitation.

8. To up-scale these pilot projects and to enlarge their scope and geographical coverage, a GEF PDF-Block A Proposal “Integrated Natural Resource Management for Combating Land Degradation in West Asia” was compiled and subsequently submitted to UNEP in early 2006.

B. Central Asia

9. The ministerial meeting of Central Asian States held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 2000, decided to prepare the Subregional Action Programme to Combat Desertification (SRAP/CD). Various meetings and consultations have taken place for this purpose.

10. By September 2003, the text of the SRAP/CD was finalized and adopted. Having expressed deep concern in connection with the impact of desertification and drought in Central Asian States, ministers from these countries invited the international donor community, in particular the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Islamic Development Bank, as well as the European Community and bilateral donor agencies, to take part in implementing the SRAP/CD.

¹ The two inventories/databases can be retrieved at <<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/subregional/westasia/westasia.php>>.

11. The following priority areas for subregional cooperation were agreed upon: (i) monitoring and evaluation of desertification processes; establishment of an early warning system for drought and drought mitigation; (ii) improvement of water use in agriculture; combating erosion, salinization and swamp formation; (iii) agroforestry and management of forest resources and watersheds; (iv) pasture management; (v) conservation of biodiversity and nature protection; development of eco- and ethno-tourism; and (vi) economic capacity-building of local communities.

12. The instruments for developing subregional cooperation have also been identified. Apart from different subregional projects, they are: training courses, scientific cooperation, and development of information sharing systems on desertification and land degradation in the subregion. A special role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public organizations, as well as local administrative bodies, in the SRAP/CD implementation has been underlined.

13. Despite a lack of adequate financial resources, the process of implementing the SRAP/CD is gradually being started. The first meeting to launch the Subregional Training Programme (SRTP) under the SRAP/CD was held in May 2006 in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan, with assistance provided by the Global Mechanism and the Government of Germany. The meeting was organized by the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan, which is a hosting organization of the SRTP secretariat.

14. In February 2004, the Global Mechanism convened, with the assistance of the ADB, a workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan, which identified key elements of a Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM). The objective of CACILM is to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable land management in Central Asian States during the period 2006–2015.

C. South Asia

15. The SRAP of South Asian UNCCD country Parties was discussed and a framework document was adopted in July 2004 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Representatives from all South Asian countries attended the event and agreed upon operational and substantive guidelines for joint activities in the region. A follow-up workshop was held with Sri Lankan representatives aiming at clarifying the role of the host country and identifying project activities for joint implementation that focus on complementing activities of the national action programme (NAP).

16. At the seventh session of the COP, representatives of the SRAP member countries discussed further actions undertaken within the context of the SRAP of South Asia. E-mail discussions are still under way concerning project formulation and project implementation within the field of synergistic implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNCCD, following a request received by one of the SRAP member countries.

D. North-East Asia

17. The activities under the SRAP of North-East Asia mainly encompassed the North-East Asia Sand and Dust Storm Control Project that was jointly sponsored by the ADB, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP and UNCCD and came to completion at the end of 2004. The project successfully conducted a number of

workshops and established test projects in Mongolia and China, where dust storms originate, and enhanced information exchange between those two countries. The project completion report was submitted to participating and donor agencies. The UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) for Asia played a key role as project secretariat and was involved in the various stages of the project. Findings and outcomes of the workshop were presented to the third session of the CRIC and consultations on follow-up activities are being pursued, where appropriate, by country Parties concerned and in close consultation with the Asia RCU.

E. South-East Asia

18. In July 2003, a workshop on the development of the SRAP of South-East Asia was held in Tuban, Bali, Indonesia. Member countries discussed and adopted the SRAP framework document,² including two programme areas and four cross-cutting programme areas.

19. In December 2005, the launching meeting for the SRAP South-East Asia was held in Phan Thiet City, Vietnam. Follow-up activities, such as the development and finalization of three project proposals, were agreed upon. Those proposals take into account thematic issues relating to the countries located on the mainland of the South-East Asian region as well as island countries. Furthermore, a proposal regarding resource mobilization will be developed in collaboration with the GM.

F. Pacific

20. Pacific country Parties have shown interest in formulating a SRAP, although priority has been given to the finalization of NAPs and GEF medium-sized project proposals.

IV. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

21. This chapter summarizes progress made under the RAP in the reporting period (2002–2006).

A. TPN1: Desertification monitoring and assessment

22. TPN1, hosted by China, has produced two major outputs in the reporting period:

- (a) A benchmark and indicator system for desertification and assessment in Asia;
- (b) A draft desertification map of Asia and the Pacific region (scale 1:2,500,000).³

23. Furthermore, a TPN1 website⁴ has been developed and an e-mail network for its member institutions and major interested non-member groups has been established.

24. In October 2003, a TPN1 meeting on benchmark and indicators development and mapping for desertification monitoring and assessment took place jointly with the “International

² <<http://www.unccd.int/regional/asia/meetings/subregional/southEast/framework.pdf>>.

³ See a compressed version (scale 1:10,000,000) at <<http://www.unccd.int/science/images/asia-dmap.pdf>>.

⁴ <<http://www.asia-tpn1.org>>.

Symposium on Space Technology Applications for Sustainable Dryland Development and Desertification Monitoring” in Beijing, China. The adoption of the benchmark and indicator system that had been developed over the previous two years and the discussion and planning of the subsequent map development process were the two main objectives of the meeting. The Government of China agreed to provide resources to draft a first map (scale of 1:2,500,000).

25. The first draft version of a map on desertification in the Asia and the Pacific region was circulated among relevant TPN1 member countries and relevant institutions for their review and comments and was presented at CRIC 3. In order to improve the mapping methodology a project proposal was developed to seek funding for ground truthing activities. The proposal has not yet been submitted to potential donors.

26. An expert review meeting had been scheduled to take place in Beijing, China, in 2005 with the aim of revising and refining the developed map. Due to lack of funding the meeting could not take place and the map has not been finalized.

B. TPN2: Agroforestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas

27. An interactive TPN2 website⁵ was established in mid-August 2002. The website is hosted by the Central Arid Zone Research Institute.

28. TPN2 has completed its draft manual on dryland agroforestry. A workshop was held in New Delhi, India, in January 2005, to review and finalize the draft. The manual will constitute one of the educational tools for capacity-building within the context of TPN2.

C. TPN3: Rangeland management in arid areas including the fixation of sand dunes

29. TPN3, hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran, held a workshop on best practices in December 2002, in Tehran. The first pilot project has been launched in the country with the active involvement and support of civil society partners such as the TC-Dialogue Foundation of Belgium and the He Yuan Environment Protection Techniques Development Corporation of China.

30. TPN3 has also set up a website in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat.⁶

31. The TPN3 network established its second field pilot project in Kyrgyzstan in October/November 2004, testing moisture retention qualities of polymers. A first pilot site was established in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2003, with the assistance of the private sector of Belgium and China. The TPN3 Task Manager from the Islamic Republic of Iran attended the launching in Kyrgyzstan at the project site and assisted the local TPN3 focal point with the substantive preparation of the site. The necessary soil conditioner was donated by a Belgian foundation.

⁵ <<http://cazri.raj.nic.in/tpn-2.html>>.

⁶ <www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/tpn3/website/index.htm>.

D. TPN4: Water resources management for agriculture in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas

32. Considering that information sharing is one of the main objectives of the RAP, TPN4 has launched its activities by identifying the scope, operational methods and content of its information management system. Emphasis is placed on the integration of SRAPs, in particular that of West Asia, and the involvement of development partners in order to foster transfer of technology and expertise. TPN4 has also developed a website.⁷

33. The TPN4 network, with technical backstopping from ICARDA, has completed the development of a TPN4 information platform, and is inputting relevant statistical information and data from TPN4 member countries. The collection of general information relevant to sustainable water resource management, best practices, and statistical information has proven to be a challenging task for which capacity-building and institutional support are needed.

E. TPN5: Strengthening capacities for drought impact mitigating and desertification combating

34. The launch meeting of the TPN5 was held in July 2003 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in collaboration with the Government of Japan and the GM. The member countries and institutions adopted a framework document specifying the objectives, institutional structure, process, programme areas, priority activities, operational guidelines and strategies for resource mobilization of TPN5. Taking into account the capacity-building needs in Asia for facilitating UNCCD implementation and the focus and strength of other TPNs, the TPN5 activities will be implemented under five programme areas (PAs):

- PA1: Early warning system for drought
- PA2: Drought risk management
- PA3: Integrated ecosystem management
- PA4: Synergy with other TPNs
- PA5: Information network development

F. TPN6: Assistance for the implementation of integrated local area development programmes initiatives

35. The launch meeting of the TPN6 was held in June 2004 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The member States and institutions adopted a framework document⁸ detailing the key issues of collaboration under TPN6. The following PAs and cross-cutting themes have been defined to achieve the TPN6 objectives:

- PA1: Promotion of enabling policies for local area development initiatives
- PA2: Community driven local area development initiatives
- PA3: Network and partnership building
- Cross-cutting theme 1: Benchmarks, indicators and baselines setting
- Cross-cutting theme 2: Capacity-building

⁷ <www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/tpn4/website/index.htm>.

⁸ <http://www.unccd.int/regional/asia/meetings/regional/TPN6_2004/decision.pdf>.

Cross-cutting theme 3: Local knowledge promotion

Cross-cutting theme 4: Partnership building and resource mobilization

36. According to the agreed programme areas and cross-cutting themes a project proposal titled "Supporting the preparation of relevant documents for GEF Small Grants Programme under the framework of TPN6 of Asia" has been developed and submitted to the Government of Japan. Upon request from the Government of Pakistan, the Government of Japan agreed to postpone TPN6 activities until 2006 because of the devastating impacts of an earthquake that took place in October 2005 and related rehabilitation efforts.

V. CONCLUSIONS

37. During the reporting period (2002–2006), all TPNs have completed their launching phase and started activities, such as project formulation and development, project implementation and information dissemination. The formulation of four of the six SRAPs has been finalized and respective SRAP member parties have adopted framework documents for all existing SRAPs.

38. However, implementation of SRAPs and the RAP of Asia and the Pacific falls short of expectations by country Parties. This was reported at the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties. A consultation and in-depth analysis of bottlenecks experienced in subregional and regional implementation is still pending, taking into consideration the deliberations of the Group of Asian countries during COP 7, but it is clear that some major bottlenecks are perceived as holding back implementation at subregional and regional levels. Lack of predictable financial support for implementation of subregional and regional activities was highlighted as the major stumbling block. Country Parties recognized the need to devise an overall resource mobilization strategy for SRAP/RAP implementation with a view also to improving the capacity of the region to steer the process and enhance decision-making powers through the establishment of a steering committee, as foreseen in the final decision of the First Ministerial Conference on the establishment of a RAP in Asia and the Pacific.

39. Similarly, clarification of objectives and a prioritization of SRAP and RAP activities were mentioned as one way to overcome bottlenecks in their implementation. Capacity-building, particularly at the level of focal points and involved stakeholders, was also identified as a major need in order to devise project proposals in line with donor requirements. With regard to exchange of scientific information it was reported that information exchange modalities through TPNs needed to be reviewed and that the potential role of the Committee on Science and Technology in enhancing scientific exchanges should be taken into consideration.

40. Country Parties of the region had the opportunity to exchange information and further discuss SRAP/RAP implementation at the regional meeting in preparation for the CRIC and at CRIC 5, with a view to establishing recommendations on how to enhance cooperation and activities within the region.
