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COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
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**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 BY 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

Outcome of the regional meeting of affected Asian country Parties

Summary

The seventh regional meeting of Asian and Pacific focal points on national report preparation, held to develop regional input to the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, took place from 7 to 11 August 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand. It was attended by representatives of 38 Parties of the region, and of United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. This document sets out the conclusion and recommendations developed at the meeting.

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I. MANDATE

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 1/COP.5 on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist in the review of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), requested the secretariat (annex, paragraph 15) to take advantage of its ongoing work and activities at the regional and/or subregional levels to disseminate information stemming from its preliminary analysis and seek to obtain feedback with a view to enriching the work base of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) (ICCD/COP(5)/11/Add.1).
2. In accordance with that decision, and decision 9/COP.7 on the programme of work of the fifth session of the CRIC (ICCD/COP(7)/16/Add.1), the secretariat organized regional meetings of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa in preparation for CRIC 5. The present document contains the required feedback obtained through the regional meetings of affected Asian country Parties.

II. REGIONAL MEETING OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRY PARTIES

A. Organization of the meeting

3. The seventh regional meeting of Asian and Pacific focal points on national report preparation, held to develop regional input to the fifth session of the CRIC, took place from 7 to 11 August in Bangkok, Thailand.
4. The participants expressed gratitude to the Government of Thailand for the hospitality extended to them and expressed thanks to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) for co-hosting the meeting.
5. The following officials were elected: Ms. Bernarditas Muller (Philippines) Chairperson of the meeting; Mr. Khaled Al-Sharaa (Syria) Vice-Chairperson; Mr. Apichart Jongskul (Thailand), Vice-Chairperson; and Mr. Chencho Norbu (Bhutan) Rapporteur. The participants adopted the provisional agenda as proposed by the secretariat.
6. The meeting was attended by representatives of 38 country Parties of the region, of 8 United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental organizations, and of 7 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
7. National, subregional and regional reports to be submitted to CRIC 5 were presented and conclusions and recommendations were agreed upon. Participants to the meeting noted the absence of donor countries invited to attend the meeting.

B. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Participatory processes and civil society participation in the national report formulation process

8. Parties of the region recognize the importance of the participatory approach in both the national report formulation process and the preparation and implementation of national action programmes (NAPs). The challenge lies, however, in developing the capacity of all relevant stakeholders for effective participation in these processes.

9. Parties also reported on the increasing involvement of local communities in the Convention process as a result of information and awareness-raising activities undertaken by government institutions and NGOs working at local levels.

10. The valuable role of the scientific and academic communities was widely recognized. Despite chronic budgetary constraints, these communities continued to provide strong technical and scientific support to these processes.

11. Private sector involvement would need to be further encouraged, thereby highlighting that sustainable land management offers profitable investment opportunities.

12. Given the important role of women in sustainable land management, building their capacity to participate effectively in the formulation and implementation of NAPs should be pursued.

2. Legislative and institutional frameworks

13. Parties in the region reported that they had set up appropriate legislative and institutional frameworks for implementing NAPs. Parties also reported on progress made in streamlining NAPs for inclusion in national development strategies. Most countries have established their respective national coordinating bodies and designated their national focal points.

14. However, these existing legal frameworks and institutions have not led to concrete actions for the effective implementation of NAPs and therefore would have to be assessed to align them to the needs of the Convention.

3. Resource mobilization at the national and international level to implement the Convention

15. All Parties identified inadequate financial resources as a major impediment in the formulation of the national reports and the implementation of the NAPs, and called for the effective implementation of article 6 of the Convention.

16. Many countries are exploring options for mobilizing financial resources, through national and local sources. Some countries are devising “synergetic” strategies and developing partnerships at bilateral and multilateral levels.

17. While recognizing the role played by the Global Mechanism (GM) in promoting access to financial resources in setting up a Central Asian subregional framework for capacity-building at national level, the reports also cited the inadequacy of the financing that is raised through the GM for the implementation of the Convention.
18. Special attention for increased financial support, including for capacity-building for least developed countries and small island developing States in the sustainable land management portfolio, was also recommended.
19. Parties have expressed their expectations that the necessary financing to support the implementation of the Convention could be provided through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in its role as a financial mechanism.
20. Parties are, however, encountering problems in accessing GEF funds because of the narrow interpretation of the causes of land degradation and desertification. This results in a strict application of the concept of incremental cost as well as the tedious requirements of the GEF project cycle. Moreover, the procedures required by the implementing agencies would also have to be revised in order to expedite the funding process.
21. Recognizing that addressing land degradation and desertification is essential to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, country Parties urged that their concerns be raised during the third GEF Assembly to be held in Cape Town, South Africa.
22. Decisions would have to be taken by the COP to address the problems relating to resource mobilization for the implementation of the Convention.
23. Parties have identified the benefits of accessing the GEF Small Grants Programme which could have more meaningful interventions at the local levels.
24. Parties also identified the need for national-level coordination of GEF and UNCCD focal points for more effective mobilization of resources.
25. Parties also explored options for innovative means of financing and underscored the need for self-reliance in mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Convention, including through exchanges of best practices in the region.

4. Links and synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements and national strategies

26. GEF support for national capacity self-assessment activities was welcomed by a number of country Parties as a useful tool in identifying their capacity gaps and needs for the effective implementation of the three Rio Conventions on climate, biodiversity and desertification.
27. Several Parties noted that mainstreaming of the principles of sustainable land management in national development strategies should be accompanied by raising awareness to promote its importance as a national priority at the highest levels of decision-making.

28. Parties recommended the identification of common areas with the other Rio Conventions with a view to generating more resources for the implementation of their commitments at country level, and urged the establishment or strengthening, where appropriate, of inter-agency coordinating mechanisms for sustainable development at national level for this purpose.

5. Measures taken to implement the areas identified in the Bonn Declaration

29. Recognizing that land degradation is a cross-cutting issue, the countries stated in their reports that the measures to address the areas identified in the Bonn Declaration (decision 8/COP.4) should be multisectoral, multidisciplinary and transboundary in nature.

30. Difficulties are encountered in gathering and managing data and sharing information at national levels. It was suggested that the UNCCD secretariat should identify options available through international institutions in order to encourage exchange of information and knowledge.

31. Most of the measures taken are directed towards addressing unsustainable agricultural practices, overgrazing and rangeland degradation, and deforestation through strengthening the existing legislative framework and the development of the capacity of institutions to implement these measures.

32. The reform measures taken by country Parties range from major structural policy changes in agriculture and forestry, land tenure and promotion of agricultural trade, to designing specific project initiatives that directly address agriculture, forestry and rangeland issues.

33. A spectrum of initiatives was aimed at promoting sustainable use and management of rangelands including the promotion of secure livelihoods in the pastoral livestock sector, support through research programmes in effective stockbreeding of pasture animals and the balanced offering of incentives and disincentives aimed at reducing the number of herders in pasturelands.

34. Few Parties reported efforts that correlate desertification control and land management initiatives with the development of new and renewable energy sources. During the discussions, however, it was emphasized that sustainable land management policies could encourage the development of new and renewable energy sources such as biofuels, and private sector investments in these areas.

35. Asian and Pacific country Parties may have to take the necessary steps to give special attention to the possibilities offered by sustainable land management in generating new and renewable energy resources in the next round of reporting.

36. Some Parties mentioned the possibility of linking their financial options with project activities under the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

6. Drought and desertification monitoring and evaluation

37. Parties have highlighted that the monitoring and evaluation of the biophysical and economic components of land degradation and desertification is critical to prevention and risk management in their overall strategy for the effective implementation of the NAPs.

38. Parties urged the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to devise guidelines for benchmarks and indicators, including socio-economic and biodiversity indicators, for monitoring and evaluating drought and desertification.

39. Parties urge the secretariat to take measures to promote the links between the CST and the thematic programme networks (TPNs), in terms of drought and desertification monitoring and evaluation, and recommended that the CST provide due advice to the TPNs, including information about useful experiences from the other monitoring and evaluation processes.

7. Access to and promotion of technology and know-how

40. The issue of access to and promotion of technology and know-how has not been dealt with extensively in the reports. However, several projects were identified which seek to apply, on a wider scale, proven approaches and technologies that will address desertification and land degradation.

41. Some Parties reported good practices in the use of existing technologies, including indigenous knowledge for the improvement of productivity of agricultural lands, particularly in desertified areas, water conservation and some aspects of effective agroforestry.

42. Difficulty in accessing technical services and technology continues to be a major obstacle for some Parties. Parties recommended improved networking and information exchange on technology and favourable transfer of state-of-the-art technologies as options that can overcome such difficulties. Parties have urged taking advantage of the support provided by the UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit (RCU), UNESCAP and other United Nations agencies, international agencies and bilateral partners for technical assistance and services.

8. Review of subregional action programmes and regional action programmes

43. Parties called upon the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group to integrate in its discussions issues that are associated with subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and the regional action programme (RAP), with a view to including SRAP and RAP activities in the draft 10-year strategic framework

44. Recognizing the important role played by the RCU in assisting Parties in the implementation of the Convention, Parties urged the strengthening of the Asian RCU.

45. Parties in the region recognized the progress made under the frameworks of the SRAPs, such as the Central Asian Countries Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (CACILM), and the RAP. However, many country Parties called for efforts to render the SRAPs and TPNs effective as tools for UNCCD implementation.

46. The meeting recommended that a SRAP be developed for the Pacific subregion to highlight specific sustainable land management issues for small island developing countries, and urged donor organizations and intergovernmental organizations to assist in the development of the SRAP.

47. The meeting also noted the possible benefits of setting up the North-East Asian SRAP for combating desertification and land degradation.

48. The review of the RAP revealed a need for more active involvement of the scientific community in improving the effectiveness of the use of TPNs. Parties recommended a stronger role for the CST and Group of Experts in the integration and coordination of efforts that lead to the enhancement of SRAPs and TPNs.

49. Parties highlighted the potentials of TPNs in the field of information sharing and knowledge management, including through the dissemination of good practices in combating land degradation.

50. Several subregional, regional and international institutions, such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme, pursue related activities in the region. It is suggested that Parties should explore opportunities to link their efforts to other existing initiatives in order to enhance synergy for exchange of information and data gathering.

51. Parties also discussed the possibility of using SRAPs and the RAP in addressing transboundary desertification and land degradation issues.

52. Parties also urged the GM, the GEF and other donor institutions and countries to provide the necessary resources to assist the SRAPs and the RAP.

9. Awareness-raising

53. Awareness-raising initiatives, especially on the political status of the Convention, should not only be directed towards local communities, but should also be multilevel and include national policymakers, parliamentarians, economic and financial managers, and the private sector.

54. Parties noted the need to raise political awareness of the importance of UNCCD at the international level.

55. Integration of awareness-raising on sustainable land management in formal and informal education systems, and the use of media, should be promoted.

10. Improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports

56. The meeting reviewed the progress made by the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports and, although agreeing with the conclusions drawn by the AHWG, recommended that a longer time period be allowed for consultations on a wider basis for the AHWG to complete its work.

57. Parties recognized that, although useful, the Help Guide, format and methodology currently used for the preparation of national reports do not capture the particularities of

situations such as those of the Pacific islands in the Asian region, and would have to be assessed and, where possible, made more flexible.

58. Parties also noted that templates used for national reporting should be made more flexible so as to incorporate best practices and to take advantage of lessons learned in implementing the Convention.

59. Benchmark indicators for monitoring desertification and land degradation and tracking the process of implementation are not standardized. Parties recommended that the COP should ensure that positive steps are taken to involve scientists and experts in developing the necessary and appropriate indicators (impact indicators, process indicators and performance indicators etc.), if possible, through the CST.
