



UNITED
NATIONS



**Convention to Combat
Desertification**

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(5)/3/Add.3
12 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 Latin American and Caribbean
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 Latin American and
Caribbean country Parties**

Summary

The XI regional meeting of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) country Parties was held in Panama City, Panama, from 17 to 21 July 2006, with the aim of carrying out a peer review of the national reports prepared by LAC countries, exchanging experiences and lessons learned, and preparing some conclusions and recommendations to be considered by the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) at its fifth session. Forty-one government representatives of LAC Parties, plus representatives of developed countries, international, regional and subregional organizations, and non-governmental organizations, attended 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 meeting of affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties.

II. REGIONAL MEETING OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

A. Background

3. In accordance with article 26 of the UNCCD, and in observance of decisions taken by the COP, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries informed the COP, through their third national reports, about the measures undertaken from 2002 onwards to implement the Convention.

4. In order to analyse in depth the national reports prepared by LAC countries, to exchange experience, lessons learned and best practices, and to prepare some conclusions and recommendations to be considered by the CRIC at its fifth session, the XI regional meeting was held from 17 to 21 July 2006 in Panama City, Panama.

5. The meeting was attended by 41 government representatives from 33 LAC country Parties, 19 representatives from international, regional and subregional organizations, representatives of 10 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and representatives of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM).

B. Development of the agenda of the meeting

6. The presentation of national reports by subregions was the main basis for discussion during the first three days of the meeting. The achievements by country Parties on three of the strategic areas defined by the Bonn Declaration (decision 8/COP.4) were communicated. Additionally, the representative of the International Network of Non-Governmental Organizations on Desertification (RIOD) presented a report on the participation of civil society in activities within the UNCCD framework in general, and in the elaboration and validation of the third national reports in particular.

7. The last two days of the meeting were dedicated to the presentation and discussion of a series of reports on matters relevant to the implementation of the Convention in the region, in particular the improvement of the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of the reports to be presented to the COP; mobilization of resources at the national and international level; and the regional action programme (RAP) and the subregional actions programmes (SRAPs). Delegates also identified the representatives of the region for the panel discussions at CRIC 5 and approved the decisions, conclusions and recommendations of the meeting.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

8. The meeting and the national reports identified three areas of major concern affecting all actions relating to the implementation of the Convention: the need to address the lack of financial resources for carrying out priority activities identified in the national action programmes (NAPs), and for achieving sustainable development in general; insufficiency of human resources; and institutional weakness within the government sectors and the NGOs.

1. Monitoring and informing on the application of the Convention

National reports

9. The UNCCD secretariat, in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Working Group (decision 8/COP.7), should review the deadlines for the preparation of national reports. It should also improve the Explanatory Note and Help Guide to Parties in accordance with COP decisions, in order to provide Parties with a more comprehensive, comparable and flexible guiding instrument. The revision of the Help Guide should also take into consideration the NAP implementation phase, which many countries have already entered, and consider national reporting as a process to be improved while the Convention is being implemented. Country Parties should take into account the most recent provisions to improve communication and information procedures and use them to enhance the quality of their reports.

Country profiles

10. The country profiles submitted together with the third national reports show the progress made by country Parties in order to establish a baseline against which to evaluate and monitor the processes of desertification in the countries and the region as a whole. The Committee on Science and Technology is invited to take note of the difficulties encountered by the Parties in preparing the profiles, and to assist Parties to improve their capabilities to this end. Country Parties that have not submitted their profiles are invited to do so as soon as possible.

2. Thematic issues

Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations

11. Parties are encouraged to take advantage of the lessons learned during the elaboration and validation of the NAPs and national reports, and during the celebration of the International Day of Desertification and the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. They are also invited

to strengthen their commitment to integrate local actors, particularly women, indigenous people and land users, in their activities for combating desertification and to avoid the risk of oversimplifying their specific needs.

12. Parties are encouraged to apply and make use of decentralized mechanisms for UNCCD implementation through partnership and coordination with local institutions, NGOs and local development organizations.

13. Parties are invited to strengthen their institutional links with civil society integrating NGOs within their national coordinating bodies (NCBs) as well as in UNCCD implementation activities.

Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

14. The NCBs are invited to set up standard and stable operational mechanisms in order to improve their capacity to deal with the complex matters under their responsibility, such as mainstreaming of UNCCD issues into national policies, institutional coordination, and supporting the assessment and harmonization of the legislative and institutional arrangements.

Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements

15. LAC countries acknowledge the efforts made by various countries and organizations to provide technical and financial support to selected countries and to groups of countries in the framework of the SRAP. However, in the past four years the insufficient levels of financing continued to be the major obstacle to action by country Parties, and to the functioning of the secretariat. This obstacle could also risk eroding the remarkable achievements made by Parties in building up institutional and communal partnerships.

16. Parties pointed out that there are still barriers to accessing the funds of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in terms of the complexity and length of the procedures. Additionally, countries of the region expressed their concern for the insufficient level of resources allocated through the fourth replenishment of the GEF to the operational programme on sustainable land management (OP 15). The meeting requested the secretariats of the GEF and the UNCCD, together with all Parties, to explore and take the necessary measures to accelerate and simplify the procedures for channelling funds.

17. The secretariats of the UNCCD and the GM are called upon to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information about potential funding sources, including new approaches implemented by certain countries of the region and other opportunities that have so far not been explored. In view of the forthcoming eighth session of the COP, the UNCCD secretariat is invited to disseminate information on the mobilization and channelling of financial resources by the GM and the GEF.

Links and synergy with other environmental conventions and national development strategies

18. The meeting invited the UNCCD secretariat, the GEF and Parties to continue their efforts to strengthen the negotiating, planning and implementation capacities of national projects and programmes working towards achieving the objectives of the Rio Conventions. The meeting particularly encouraged country Parties to enhance an enabling institutional environment to build up sound human capacities and, as far as possible, to give their personnel sufficient time and financial resources to fulfil their responsibilities.

Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

19. The uneven progress among the countries of the region towards the development and implementation of measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, and for early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought, is a source of major concern for Parties. The meeting recommended that Parties, with the support of the UNCCD secretariat, should consolidate their mutual capacities by sharing information, organizing binational, subregional and regional workshops, and, particularly, by promoting the potentials of the Information Network on Drought and Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean (DESELAC) and the thematic programme network 4 (TPN 4) on agroforestry.

20. The meeting strongly recommended that developed countries should increase their efforts to improve access to knowledge and specialized means and equipment for early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought in all affected Parties and to ensure the sustainable management of these systems by providing training to national technicians.

21. The meeting urged Parties to monitor and systematize the achievements within their countries in the rehabilitation of degraded land and in the establishment of early warning systems under the scope of the UNCCD, and to make efforts to promote coordination among the various national organizations dealing with the issue.

Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

22. The meeting invited developed country Parties to provide technical and financial support for the use and dissemination of existing benchmarks and indicators and for desertification monitoring and assessment in affected country Parties. It also called on the latter to make all necessary efforts to apply benchmarks and indicators in these processes involving local communities in a participative manner. And it recommended them to harmonize their monitoring and assessment systems by means of information exchange and South–South cooperation, in order to develop the necessary tools for monitoring and assessing desertification and drought on a regional scale in an efficient and timely manner.

23. The meeting requested country Parties, the UNCCD secretariat, the international scientific community and international agencies to explore the possibility of establishing an observatory to monitor and assess desertification processes in the region, making use of and integrating the tools existing within the UNCCD framework.

Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

24. The meeting recommended that the country Parties develop and adapt modern technologies for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. It called on countries that have made more progress in this matter to continue and reaffirm their recent efforts in sharing information and consolidating bilateral and multilateral cooperation to help other countries in the region to access technologies and appropriate technical know-how. Accordingly, it encouraged the use of established regional mechanisms in the UNCCD framework, such as the SRAPs and TPN 5 on traditional knowledge.

3. Global issues: strategic areas for action in accordance with the Bonn Declaration

Sustainable land-use management, including water, soil and vegetation in affected areas

25. The meeting acknowledged with concern the uneven development in the region in terms of technical capacities, facilitation of an enabling environment, availability of funds and the priority assigned by governments. Additionally, it recognized the limited collaboration among government organizations and NGOs as well as those entities responsible for NAP implementation and monitoring. Country Parties recommended that all necessary efforts be made to jointly move forward in the sustainable use and management of soil, water and vegetation while consolidating the horizontal cooperation, and creating and supporting initiatives in this field, giving priority to activities identified in the NAPs.

Development of sustainable agricultural and ranching production systems

26. The meeting encouraged Parties to introduce the principles of sustainable development in their agriculture, ranching and rural policies, giving particular attention to restructuring production processes and to appropriate policies for export of their agricultural and ranching products. It called on focal points and national coordinating bodies to monitor these processes in arid and vulnerable zones.

Development of new and renewable energy sources

27. All country Parties, the UNCCD secretariat and the scientific and international community, in the framework of their mandate, are requested to support the forthcoming launching of the TPN 5 on traditional knowledge and TPN 6 on renewable energies, by providing information, coordinating activities, granting technical support and the necessary funds, and assisting with the monitoring and assessment of future activities.

4. Regional priorities

Regional programme

28. The meeting requested country Parties, the UNCCD secretariat and the GM, as well as the interested agencies, to take immediate measures to ensure sustainable funding for the six TPNs integrating the RAP programmatic line 3 and, with no detriment to the other programme

areas, to speed up its implementation before the end of the five-year period of the programme (2003–2007).

Subregional programmes

29. Parties and the UNCCD secretariat are encouraged to give priority to the implementation of SRAPs and not to spare efforts in providing the necessary human resources, exchanging information and carrying out coordination activities. In particular, Parties are called upon to ensure suitable and appropriate financial resources through negotiations with national and international funds, and to make efficient use of the resources.

D. Final conclusion

30. During the past four years, LAC country Parties have made remarkable progress in UNCCD implementation, particularly through the strengthening of the legal and institutional setting for the sustainable management and use of natural resources; the elaboration and validation of more than 70 per cent of NAPs in the region; the application of rehabilitation measures for degraded land; and the identification of benchmarks and indicators to monitor and assess drought and desertification processes. Nevertheless, these and other progress have been made in an uneven manner in the region, depending on the technical capacities, political will and human and economic resources invested by the different countries when implementing the Convention at the national level. Meanwhile, land degradation and drought affect a growing number of people in the region. As a consequence, the meeting urgently requested developed countries and the international community to fulfil their commitments under the UNCCD framework to address the lack of financial means, which contributes so much to the lack of political will and the weakness of institutional and technical capacities, and delays and hampers the achievement of the UNCCD objectives in the region.
