
- MINUTES OF THE SIXTH INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CST17 BUREAU OF 05 JUNE 2026 -

1. The sixth intersessional meeting of the Bureau of the 17th session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST17) took place in a virtual format on Friday, 5 June 2026, from 15h00 to 16h30 Bonn time, via Zoom.
2. Four CST17 Bureau members attended the meeting (see Annex I). The meeting was chaired by Dr. Nicholas Webb, CST Chair.

I. Adoption of the Agenda.

3. The agenda of the meeting was adopted without any amendments (see Annex II).

II. Status of organization of COP17, to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 28 August 2026

4. The secretariat provided an update on the status of preparations for the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17), scheduled to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 28 August 2026. The presentation was delivered by Ms. Carmen-Alina Margina of the UNCCD Secretariat.
5. The secretariat reported that preparations for the COP17 venue are progressing, based on the most recent site visit conducted on 3 June 2026. The host country confirmed its intention to finalize construction and hand over the venue to the secretariat by the beginning of August 2026. The venue is located within a national park, approximately five kilometers from the city center of Ulaanbaatar, with a number of hotels in proximity to accommodate delegations.
6. An overview of the venue layout was provided, comprising both a Green Zone with country and host nation pavilions and a Blue Zone housing the main conference rooms, meeting rooms for regional groups and interest groups, the plenary hall, Bureau meeting rooms, a media centre, a documentation and business center, and food court areas. The plenary hall configuration will follow past COP practice, with seating for two delegates per party, two advisor seats behind, interpretation booths, and presentation facilities.
7. The secretariat briefed Bureau members on the integrated schedule of work for COP17. The first week (17–21 August 2026) will be dedicated to subsidiary body meetings, including the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and the Committee of the Whole (COW). It is proposed that the CST conclude its work on Friday, 21 August, with the adoption of CST decisions, followed by a plenary COP meeting to adopt the CST report and any decisions finalized at that time. CST and CRIC Bureau meetings are foreseen for Saturday, 15 August, in advance of the opening of COP17.
8. The high-level and ministerial segment is scheduled for the second week (24–26 August 2026), with three ministerial dialogues on finance, drought, and rangelands. The concluding segment of the COP is expected to begin on 27 August, with adoption of pending subsidiary body and COW decisions, and the aim of finalizing all outstanding decisions by the close of 28 August 2026. A gender caucus has been incorporated into the official programme for the second week, pursuant to a decision by the Parties. Open dialogue sessions with civil society organizations (CSOs) are planned for Thursday, 20 August (week one) and Monday afternoon (week two).
9. Regarding logistical arrangements, the secretariat confirmed that the host country has established a dedicated online platform to facilitate visa applications, hotel bookings, and transportation arrangements. Participants must first register through the Indico system and obtain a confirmation letter, which is required when applying for their visa. The visa processing time is expected to be up to one month. The host country will also provide a list of recommended hotels in Ulaanbaatar through the platform. Shuttle services will be available to transport participants from the airport to hotels, and daily from hotels to the venue and return, including after contact group meetings. Taxi booking facilities through the conference platform or app may also be available.

10. In the discussion that followed, Bureau members sought clarification on the visa application procedure, including whether an e-visa would be issued, and on the availability and scheduling of shuttle services. The secretariat confirmed that the secretariat would work closely with the host country to ensure adequate transportation and undertook to share the presentation with Bureau members.

III. Status of the CST official documents

11. The secretariat provided a comprehensive overview of the status of official documents for CST17. With the exception of the document tied to the substantive work of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and the compilation document of all draft decisions, all other CST official documents are published and available online.
12. The first official document (CST 1) is the CST17 agenda, published in February 2026. The CST 2 official document relates to decision 16 from COP16, mandating the SPI to address aridity trends and drought planning within an integrated framework encompassing the UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), the Sendai Framework, and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) action planning. This work has been led by the United Nations University (UNU EHS), which has engaged in a consultative process with all four frameworks to develop supplemental guidance that enables project developers at the country level to identify opportunities for multiple benefits and cross-framework integration at each stage of project planning.
13. The CST 3 official document addresses technology transfer, innovation, and knowledge sharing under decision 18/COP.16. The secretariat provided highlights of the document, noting that it reports on the Secretariat's continued maintenance and strengthening of knowledge platforms, including the Knowledge Hub, the Drought Toolbox, the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox, the UNCCD Data Dashboard, and the Global Restoration Information Hub. The secretariat also acknowledged with appreciation the voluntary contributions that have supported targeted scientific and knowledge-sharing initiatives under this agenda item. These include the voluntary contribution from the Russian Federation, which supported two scientific publications: a feasibility study on carbon farming in Greater Central Asia, implemented with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and regional partners, and a handbook on LDN assessment in Central Asia. The secretariat further acknowledged with appreciation the voluntary contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which supported work to address scientific and technical gaps in monitoring land productivity dynamics and trends in soil organic carbon stocks in hyper-arid environments, including through an international expert process convened in Riyadh. Collaboration with the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) global database, now comprising over 2,500 documented sustainable land management technologies and approaches, was also highlighted. Recent developments include stronger integration with the PRAIS 4 system, the Drought Toolbox, and the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox.
14. The CST 4 official document relates to decision 19 from COP16, mandating FAO and partners to develop guidance on addressing, avoiding, reducing, and reversing land degradation on agricultural lands. The document is a co-branded product of FAO and the UNCCD Secretariat. Given the volume of existing guidance, the document itself is relatively concise, with an annex providing links to existing elements. Significantly, FAO has partnered with twelve organizations and integrated this guidance into an AI-powered knowledge base (ATTIO), which provides practitioners with targeted, high-relevance responses on agricultural land degradation. The secretariat underscored that this approach creates a living resource that remains current beyond the point of publication, and noted the potential significance of this for food security and food systems at a moment of heightened global attention.
15. The CST 5 official document addresses the future functioning of the SPI under decision 20/COP.16. This document covers: (i) procedures for receiving requests for SPI work programme topics; (ii) procedures for preparing flagship reports, including the Global Land Outlook (GLO); and (iii) procedures for preparing fast-track assessments, information products, and advice. The development of these procedures drew upon best practices from relevant intergovernmental assessment processes, including the IPCC and IPBES, as well as lessons learned from the current biennium, including the preparation of GLO3 and the piloting of a fast-track assessment on sand and dust storm source

mitigation. The procedures include detailed flow diagrams clarifying roles, responsibilities, and processes, including the establishment of a report steering committee comprising SPI members, the secretariat, and the Global Mechanism to ensure coordinated oversight and communication throughout the preparation of flagship reports.

16. A joint CRIC/CST official document addresses national reporting progress. The secretariat noted that this document is primarily within the domain of the CRIC and did not elaborate in detail. The secretariat drew the Bureau's attention to the concept of Knowledge Hubs, which was presented to the CRIC Bureau earlier the same day, and encouraged Bureau members to consider how these hubs might evolve to provide more ongoing science and technology support, beyond the reporting cycle.
17. Regarding the SPI work and GLO3 specifically, the secretariat noted that the work has been undertaken under an exceptionally compressed preparation timeline, following the SPI renewal process, and with limited available support capacity across concurrent CRIC and CST workstreams. The secretariat also recalled that previous editions of the Global Land Outlook benefited from substantial in-kind support, while noting that comparable support arrangements were not available for the current biennium.
18. The CST Chair elaborated on the SPI's emerging substantive focus for the current biennium. He noted that GLO3 is expected to focus on land stewardship, considering how people-centred approaches to sustainable land management, informed by Indigenous and local knowledge and existing national practices, can contribute to transformative change, resilience and human security. The CST Chair highlighted the alignment between emerging GLO3 messages and relevant findings from the IPBES Transformative Change Assessment and the IPBES Nexus Assessment, which may provide important scientific context for discussions at CST17.
19. The CST Chair proposed that, following the meeting, the two procedure documents developed under decision 20/COP.16 would be shared with Bureau members for individual review. The Chair suggested holding bilateral consultations with each Bureau member to discuss any questions or proposed revisions before proceeding to formal approval by correspondence. Bureau members concurred with this approach.
20. Subsequent to the meeting, and in accordance with the process agreed by Bureau members, all CST Bureau members completed their review and approved the procedures prepared by the Bureau in response to decision 20/COP.16. The Bureau acknowledged with appreciation the collective effort undertaken to develop these procedures and noted their significance for strengthening the future functioning of the Science-Policy Interface, including by providing greater clarity, transparency and consistency in: (i) receiving requests submitted to the SPI for consideration in its work programme; (ii) preparing thematic assessments forming the basis of the Global Land Outlook and similar flagship reports; and (iii) preparing fast-track assessments, information products and advice. The Bureau requested that this collective review and approval be duly acknowledged in the minutes of the sixth meeting of the CST17 Bureau.

IV. Any other business

21. No additional items were raised under any other business. The CST Chair and Bureau Vice-Chairs expressed appreciation for the comprehensive updates provided by the secretariat and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the preparatory process for COP17.

V. Next meeting

22. The secretariat confirmed that the next CST Bureau meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 15 August 2026, from 13h00 to 15h00, in parallel with the CRIC Bureau meeting, on the margins of COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The meeting will take place in the dedicated CST Bureau meeting room at the venue. The secretariat also noted that a dedicated meeting room has been reserved for SPI purposes at the venue, should a meeting of the SPI Co-Chairs and relevant parties be required during COP17. Bureau members were advised that additional Bureau meetings could be convened during COP17 if required by the course of negotiations.
23. The CST Chair expressed his anticipation of meeting all Bureau members in person in Ulaanbaatar and closed the meeting.



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

Annex I. List of participants

CST Bureau Members	UN Geographical Regional Groups¹
Nicholas Webb, CST Chair	Western Europe and Others Group
Jean Didier Leho, CST Vice-Chair	Africa Group
Chay Asdak, CST Vice-Chair	Asia Group
Michelle Alvarez, CST Vice-Chair	GRULAC
UNCCD Secretariat	
Johns Muleso Kharika	Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit
Barron Joseph Orr	Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit
Olga Andreeva	Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit
Eneedy Njoroge	Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit
Carmen-Alina Margina	Governing Bodies and Legal Affairs Unit

¹ <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups>

Annex II. Agenda of the meeting

Sixth Intersessional Meeting of the Bureau of the 17th session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST17)

Date: Friday, 5 June 2026

Time: 15h00 –18h30 (Bonn time)

Working language: English

Virtual format: Zoom (via **Link**)

— Provisional Agenda —

- I. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
- II. Status of organization of COP17, to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 28 August 2026
- III. Status of the CST official documents
- IV. Any other business