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The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)
Follow-up on outstanding Joint Inspection Unit recommendations

The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018). Follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

Revised procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification meetings and processes, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions

Summary

Building upon a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit, in the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018), Parties directed the secretariat to develop revised procedures for the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) meetings and processes, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions.

In addition, in decision 3/COP.8 the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested that input from CSOs be taken into account when formulating the selection criteria for financial support for their participation in UNCCD meetings and processes, consistent with the established rules of procedure of the COP.

In compliance with the above-mentioned provisions, the secretariat circulated a document entitled "Draft eligibility criteria for funding the participation of CSOs in UNCCD processes and events" which went through a broad consultation process with the accredited CSOs. The COP may wish to consider the draft eligibility criteria contained in the present document, and take action as deemed appropriate.

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I. Introduction

1. Participation of civil society organizations (CSOs)[1] in the official meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and its subsidiary bodies is an asset to the process, and is referred to in the text of the Convention,[2] in several COP decisions[3] as well as in the recommendations of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).[4]

2. In this regard, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) draws resources to support the participation of representatives from CSOs from the Supplementary Fund,[4] in accordance with the financial rules of procedure of the COP.

3. Further to decision 23/COP.6, in which the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was requested to undertake a comprehensive review of the activities of the UNCCD secretariat, a number of recommendations were addressed to the secretariat, which has informed the COP on their implementation in a timely manner.

4. Recommendation no. 9 of the JIU report states that "The Executive Secretary should, as a matter of priority, propose revised procedures for the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the COP and other activities, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions."[5]

5. In the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) the UNCCD secretariat was directed to develop "revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings and processes, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions in line with JIU recommendations".[6]

6. In addition, in decision 3/COP.8 the COP requested the Executive Secretary "to take into account input from civil society organizations when formulating the selection criteria for

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1 The wording "civil society organizations" is consistently used in this document, in line with the terminology used in the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) and in other relevant organizations and processes. These CSOs include non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, trade unions, faith-based organizations, indigenous peoples' movements, foundations and many others.

2 Article 22, paragraph 2 (h).

3 In particular, decision 27/COP.1 on the inclusion of activities of non-governmental organizations within the official programme of work of the COP.

4 In accordance with paragraph 9 (a) of the annex to decision 2/COP.1 containing the financial rules of the COP, its subsidiary bodies and the secretariat of the Convention, the Supplementary Fund shall receive voluntary contributions to be used for, inter alia, support to the participation of some representatives of non-governmental organizations from affected developing country Parties, particularly the least developed among them, in sessions of the COP.

5 JIU/REP/2005/5, p. 7**,** as transmitted to COP 7 in conformity with article 11.4 (d) of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit.

6 ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, para. 20 (b) (iii) d.

financial support for their participation at UNCCD meetings and processes, consistent with the established rules of procedure of the COP."[7]

II. Background information

7. In response to these provisions, and in line with expected accomplishment 1.3.1 of its 2008–2009 work programme: "Stronger mechanisms to support a CSO network, enable effective participation in the work of UNCCD bodies and regional/national meetings",[8] the secretariat has:

(a) Developed a proposal for revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings and processes, contained in a document entitled "Draft eligibility criteria for funding the participation of civil society organizations in UNCCD processes and events", aimed at establishing objective eligibility criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions, in line with the JIU recommendation;

(b) Consulted widely with CSOs in order to include their input in establishing the revised procedures for their participation in UNCCD process and events.

8. In order to formulate the revised procedures as requested, a proposal including various options of selection criteria was developed, taking into account the following principles:

(a) Clear criteria (the proposed procedures should contain clear selection criteria aiming at ensuring a balanced participation of CSO representatives);

(b) Participatory approach (the proposed procedures should be developed through broad consultations with CSOs);

(c) Transparency (the proposed procedures should be published on the UNCCD website and all stakeholders should have the opportunity to comment on them);

(d) Flexibility (in applying the proposed procedures, the support provided by developed country Parties, financial institutions and mechanisms will be taken into consideration).

9. The draft eligibility criteria were first discussed at the CSO meetings in the sidelines of the seventh session of CRIC (CRIC 7) and the first special session of CST (CST S-1) in Istanbul, and the representatives present at the meetings commented in writing on the draft guidelines.[9]

10. A survey was then launched in order to gather inputs from accredited organizations and identify how better to involve CSOs in the implementation of The Strategy, and specifically their suggestions on the draft eligibility criteria and a mechanism to ensure balanced participation in

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7 ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, para. 37 of decision 3/COP.8.

8 ICCD/CRIC(7)/2/Add.2, p. 8.

9 Available at http://www.unccd.int/ngo/docs/UNCCD_CSO_draft_eligibility_criteria-comments_by_CSOs.pdf, and conveyed to all accredited organizations with a request for further comments on the draft eligibility criteria.

the COP and related meetings. To this effect, the draft criteria were circulated to all accredited CSOs via e-mail, fax and post, together with a questionnaire developed for the survey, in order to facilitate feedback from the organizations.[10]

11. As of 31 May 2009, 83 accredited organizations had provided feedback through the questionnaire. In addition**,** five non-accredited organizations had provided feedback on the draft criteria after downloading the information from the UNCCD website (two of them having submitted their request for accreditation and one deciding to submit it after reading the questionnaire, while the remaining two had never been in contact with the secretariat before).

12. These inputs have been taken into consideration in preparing the revised version of the draft eligibility criteria, which is contained in chapter III below for consideration by the COP and any subsequent action it may wish to take in this regard.

III. Draft eligibility criteria

A. Introduction to the proposed criteria

13. Given that a considerable number of the 860 CSOs accredited to the COP base their work on professional expertise which is quite often volunteer or non-career-oriented, these organizations are seldom able to financially support their participation in the COP and other official UNCCD meetings, to which however they can greatly contribute.

14. A representative number of organized CSOs from the 193 Parties to the Convention are periodically sponsored by the secretariat to participate in official conferences, through funds allocation aimed at securing and enhancing the involvement of grass-roots organizations. It is therefore particularly crucial to set in place an official, transparent and fair system which provides equal opportunities for a mutually beneficial relationship between the secretariat and all CSO counterparts, in particular since the UNCCD secretariat is not in a position to provide funding for all of them, but is nevertheless accountable for the support provided.

B. The draft eligibility criteria

15. The purpose of developing these criteria is, inter alia, to:

(a) Ensure an equitable participation of eligible CSOs on a rotational basis;

(b) Guarantee a fair and transparent selection process;

(c) Facilitate substantial contributions to the process, through targeted participation.

16. The ultimate goal of the exercise is to enhance the participation and inclusion of civil society in the UNCCD process in order to make its contributions more targeted, with a view to improving the role of the CSOs in the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. It

[10] The questionnaire was made available in three languages and posted also on the civil society web page of the UNCCD website: http://www.unccd.int/ngo/menu.php.

is expected that a more enabling environment will provide civil society counterparts with more effective tools for contributing to the UNCCD process.

17. The following proposed criteria would apply in facilitating funding for the partcipation of CSO representatives to COP sessions and meetings of the subsidiary bodies:

(a) Geographical balance - all regions should be represented through a quota that takes primarily into account the number of accredited organizations from each Regional Implementation Annex.[11] The following table reflects the expected distribution of CSOs proposed for funding in accordance with this criterion:[12]

Regional Implementation Annex	Parties (%)	Eligible accredited organizations (%)	Proposed for funding (%)
Annex I	34.64	61.87	50.00
Annex II	33.98	18.69	25.00
Annex III	20.92	16.38	20.00
Annex V	10.46	3.06	5.00
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	**100**

(b) Turnover regime - all accredited organizations should, within a regular timeframe, be allowed to participate in the COP and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies in a way that ensures consistency of the inputs from the CSO community to the process;[13] care should be taken to ensure that there is a fair balance of organizations in terms of their prior involvement and initiative in partnering with the secretariat, as well as their proactive and ongoing dialogue with the secretariat, not only on the occasion of the conferences. The proposed ratio of past participants (i.e. those which have already taken part in UNCCD conferences) and first-time participants is up to 60:40;

(c) Consideration of representative networks - this applies to regions/subregions having established networks that elect their representatives on a rotational basis, in order to ensure wider involvement and circulation of information. The proposed ratio of representatives from networks and representatives from individual organizations is up to 30:70;

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[11] As of 26 November 2007, date of the last accreditation to the COP which took place at COP ES-1 in New York.

[12] This table reflects the eligible accredited CSOs (690 out of the total of 860 accredited organizations) and the countries from the Regional Implementation Annexes entitled to receive support under UNCCD.

[13] A representative group of accredited organizations should be invited to attend one COP and the following intersessional meetings of its subsidiary bodies, in order to ensure consistency of inputs, follow-up, regular communication and sharing, with a multiplier effect to other connected organizations, as well as carry-over of the collective work between the two sessions of the COP.

(d) Experience/expertise balance - special attention should be paid to facilitating the participation of organizations with scientific and technical expertise and experience, relevant to specific items on the agenda of the COP and/or its subsidiary bodies;

(e) Gender balance - a balanced gender representation should be achieved, ideally in a ratio of 50:50, inviting CSOs to identify candidate representatives in such a way as to ensure this target is achieved.

18. Applying these criteria to facilitate funding of CSOs by the secretariat would not ultimately result in a fully-balanced representation at official meetings. It is important to stress that a preliminary check should be undertaken, in order to assess the number and representation of CSOs funded by other entities and take them into account, with a view to ensuring a balanced attendance. To this effect, funding entities should be requested to coordinate with the secretariat and provide information regarding support to CSOs for participation in UNCCD official meetings.

C. Report on the provisional application of the draft criteria

19. The above-mentioned draft criteria were provisionally applied in financing the participation of CSO representatives in CRIC 7 and CST S-1, in order to test the applicability and effectiveness of the criteria. The attendance of CSOs funded through the Special Trust Fund at those intersessional meetings was as follows:[14]

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Regional balance</td><td>Annex I</td><td>Annex II</td><td>Annex III</td><td>Annex IV</td><td>Annex V</td><td>Total</td></tr>
<tr><td>53%</td><td>16% [15]</td><td>25%</td><td>-</td><td>6%</td><td>100%</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Turnover regime</td><td colspan="3">First time participants</td><td colspan="3">Past participants</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">41%</td><td colspan="3">59%</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Representative networks</td><td colspan="3">Networks</td><td colspan="3">Individual CSOs</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">34%</td><td colspan="3">66%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Experience/expertise balance</td><td colspan="6">Not applicable</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Gender balance</td><td colspan="3">Female participants</td><td colspan="3">Male participants</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">28%</td><td colspan="3">72%</td></tr>
</table>

[14] A total of 32 representatives from CSOs received support from the UNCCD secretariat in order to attend these meetings.

[15] In accordance with the draft criteria, a number of CSO representatives from Annex II were invited, but not all of them could actually participate.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

20. The COP at its ninth session may wish to:

(a) Review the draft eligibility criteria as contained in chapter III of this document, with the view to adopting them;

(b) Request the UNCCD secretariat to apply these criteria starting from the next sessions of the CRIC and/or the COP, as applicable;

(c) Request the UNCCD secretariat to report to COP 10 on the applicability and effectiveness of the criteria;

(d) Invite developed country Parties and international financial institutions to continue supporting the participation of CSOs in official UNCCD meetings, and to consult with the secretariat with a view to making the participation of CSOs in these meetings more balanced;

(e) Call upon developed country Parties, international organizations and relevant stakeholders to continue providing voluntary contributions to the Special Trust Fund of the Convention, to ensure broad participation of CSOs in official UNCCD meetings.

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