



## **The Third Intersessional Meeting of the Bureau of the Sixteenth Session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST16)**

**Date:** 8 November 2022

**Venue:** Virtual meeting at Zoom Platform

**Working hours:** 14:00-16:00 (CET)

**Working Language:** English

The SPI co-Chair, Dr. Nichole Barger was invited to attend this meeting on agenda items II and III.

### **– Minutes –**

1. The Chair of the CST, Dr. Jorge Luis Garcia Rodriguez opened the Bureau meeting and welcomed all the participants (See Annex I).
2. The Chair gave the floor to the Secretariat Lead Scientist, Dr. Barron Joseph Orr for the welcoming remarks.
3. The Chair made his opening remarks and thanked the SPI co-Chair and Bureau members for their continued support.

#### **I. Adoption of the agenda**

4. The Chair presented a provisional agenda, which was adopted without amendments (see Annex II)

#### **II. Success stories and lessons learned from the 2020-2022 SPI Work Programme**

5. The Chair invited the SPI co-Chair to present a report to the CST Bureau on “SPI Lessons Learned and Success Stories from the 2020-2022 SPI Work Programme Report and Proposals to the CST Bureau”. The proposals provided for consideration of the CST Bureau were:

##### **A. *Early Career Scientists Programme***

- 1) Extend the opportunity for the two current SPI Early Career Scientist Fellows to serve during the 2022-2024 triennium through the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16).
- 2) Expand the SPI Early Career Scientist Fellow programme, subject to the availability of funds for their travel to SPI meetings, by nominating an additional two early career scientists to the SPI for the 2022-2024 triennium through COP 16.

##### **B. *Science Day Event***

- 1) The challenge of scheduling Science Day in a way that permits attendance by delegates from governments, which was addressed at COP15, should remain a consideration when schedules are developed for COP16.



- 2) Proposal to include an SPI Science Day in the overall planning for COP16.
- 3) The SPI should work with the secretariat on ways to ensure the official participation of the selected Science Day speakers who may not be attending COP as official delegates or observers so that a much broader pool of experts can be drawn upon for their potential contribution.

#### ***C. SPI Co-chair***

- 1) Select the future SPI co-Chair during or before the last SPI meeting before each COP.
- 2) This period of overlap between co-chairs would benefit the SPI by ensuring that the incoming co-chair is fully informed of the roles and responsibilities of the position. It is important to note that this time period is only for training and shadowing the next SPI co-Chair. During this period training and shadowing period, the current SPI co-Chair will maintain all the roles and responsibilities of the position until the completion of the work programme.

#### ***D. Global Land Outlook***

- 1) Change the role of SPI members from serving on the GLO steering committee to serving as GLO review editors. This is how scientists responsible for quality assurance are engaged in other similar processes, such as IPCC or IPBES scientific assessments. This would ensure that a few SPI members would have a more structurally defined quality assurance in addition to the scientific review role which would remain open to all SPI members.
- 2) Provide the SPI review editors the opportunity to recommend additional expert reviewers not serving on the SPI.

#### ***E. SPI Products***

- 1) Engage a science writer/precise editor, subject to the availability of funds, from the beginning of the work of the SPI through to completion to help ensure that the structure of and language used in SPI products will communicate well to non-technical audiences.
- 2) Reconsider the strategy for creative graphic design (timing and approach) to ensure greater interaction earlier in the development of SPI deliverables, so that the SPI publications could be published on time with desired graphics.

#### ***F. SPI Meetings and Deliverables***

- 1) Schedule SPI in-person meetings at least 6 months in advance for the 2022-2024 biennium.
- 2) Schedule SPI virtual meetings for objective 1 and 2 team members at least 8 weeks in advance of the meeting.
- 3) Provide at least 1 month for SPI members to review reports produced by other scientific bodies and/or panels such as IPCC, IPBES and other coordinating activities.



### ***G. Overall conclusion***

Provide an additional programmatic support e.g., additional associate programme officer(s) dedicated to supporting the SPI for delivering their work programme, helping alleviate the significant workload on the secretariat.

6. The CST Bureau thanked the SPI co-Chair for the report and recalled that the Bureau had agreed on the extension of the Early Career Scientist Fellowship Programme and the extension of the service of the current two Early Career Scientists Fellows through COP16 in its 2nd Bureau meeting in September 2022.

7. On the request of the CST Chair, the secretariat presented to the meeting the written comments and feedback contributed by one Bureau member concerning the SPI co-Chair's recommendations.

8. The CST Bureau further discussed the recommendations and agreed the following:

- a. **The CST Bureau supported recommendation B** on inclusion of scheduling and timing of the Science Day event in the COP16 planning. A Bureau member pointed out that the Science Day took place on the Saturday immediately following completion of the work of the CST during COP15 and thus many of the Science Technology Correspondences (STCs) were not able to participate, due to early departure after the conclusion of the CST session on Friday. The timing and schedule of the Science Day Event should be reconsidered in this regard.
- b. **The CST Bureau supported recommendation C on SPI co-Chair and F on SPI meetings and deliverables** and acknowledged their consistence with the discussions held during COP15 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> CST16 Bureau meeting in Bonn on 13-14 September 2022 and agreed to adopt both for further action.
- c. **The CST Bureau supported recommendations D related to the GLO.** The Bureau well recognized the need for a quick action to implement the recommendation and further agreed to expand the scientific quality assurance to other science-based reports to be published by the UNCCD, including the recently initiated GLO thematic report on rangelands.
- d. **The CST Bureau supported recommendation E** relevant to science writer/editor engagement for SPI products in general and recognized its consistency with decision19/COP.15 to increase focus on communications. The CST Bureau looked forward to receiving additional information that the secretariat may provide relative to resource availability.



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9. Considering the complexity and potential benefits that could result from a more comprehensive discussion, the CST Bureau requested the secretariat to further arrange a virtual meeting for consultations with the relevant secretariat staff on two topics:
- a. The role of SPI members in the scientific quality assurance of the next edition of the GLO and any thematic reports such as the one on rangelands.
  - b. The engagement of a science writer/editor in supporting science communications and publications.
10. With respect to the Science Day timing and the impacts of the last COP official schedule and the funding implications, the secretariat presented two options for the consideration of the CST Bureau as follows:
- a. One day extension of the STCs participation for the Science Day Event to ensure access to all delegates.
  - b. Spreading the Science Day Event into a series of shorter sessions across the first week of COP16, during the lunch hours (equal total amount of time, but schedule in time windows technically accessible for delegates).
11. The secretariat indicated these options will be shared with the Conference Services of the secretariat for COP16 planning.
12. In response to the CST Bureau enquiry on the process of selection of the Early Career Scientist Fellowship Programme, the secretariat informed that the selection of the fellows was managed by the SPI co-Chairs during the piloting phase of the past two years. However, the Bureau could adjust as needed.
13. In response to a further question raised by the Bureau regarding any formal COP decision on the Earlier Career Scientist programme, the secretariat clarified that:
- a. The Earlier Career Scientists Pilot Programme was initially proposed by SPI members after COP14, as summarized in the accomplishment report submitted to the Bureau of the CST14 presented by former SPI co-Chair, Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster.
  - b. The CST15 Bureau embraced the proposed concept of an Early Career Scientist Fellow Program and entrusted both current SPI co-Chairs to work with the secretariat in shaping and managing the programme and requested from them for timely updates.
  - c. The SPI co-Chairs, who already had experience in this kind of approach, handled the selection process and the overall mentoring of the two selected Early Career Scientist Fellows, who then worked directly with all other SPI members.
  - d. Though the COP did not directly reference the Early Career Scientist Programme in a formal decision, it was reported to Parties in the official document (ICCD/COP (15)/CST/5) that contributed to Decision 19/COP15, which is relevant to the modalities of the SPI.



14. The secretariat summarized that this programme was introduced by the SPI and welcomed by the CST Bureau. The CST Bureau members expressed satisfaction satisfied with the information provided by the secretariat in this regard.

### **III. Science Communication pathways in the UNCCD**

15. The secretariat provided a presentation on the Science Communication Pathways in the UNCCD, covering six pathways with respective illustrated cases and impacts, including:

Pathway 1. Institutionalized pathways defined in Convention and COP decision text

- The Convention text on the CST
- COP decisions on the mandate and terms of reference of the CST and the SPI
- Pathways defined in the UNCCD strategic framework or in decisions for formal processes such as intergovernmental working groups (IWGs)
- Substantive COP decisions that promote raising awareness, policy advocacy, capacity building and learning
- Substantive COP decisions focused on implementation
  - encouraging evidence-based approaches to implementation,
  - requesting the development of guidance
  - encouraging transformative approaches such as major “afforestation, reforestation, and revegetation (ARR) programs” such as the Great Green Wall
- COP decisions defining the mechanism of a science-policy interface

Pathway 2. Broader reach communication

- Official UNCCD website and knowledge hub
  - Collaboration with partners
  - Portfolio of tools/toolboxes
- Reporting platform PRAIS4
  - Part dedicated to delegates and thus not public (e.g., accessing default data)
  - Part will be dedicated to communicating the aggregated results more broadly

Pathway 3. Science-based communications

- SPI products
- Advocacy campaigns
  - Flagship Global Land Outlook main as well as thematic reports
  - Droughtland
  - Sand and Dust Storms Compendium and associated toolbox
- Traditional and social media
  - Press releases, op-eds, interviews, etc.
  - Short videos

Pathway 4. Communication to/through donors

Pathway 5. Communication to/through other international organizations



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## Pathway 6. Communication to/through scientific communities

16. A CST Bureau member reiterated the importance of focusing on the major work of the UNCCD communication globally and within each country, including: a) the major consequences of desertification and land degradation, in general hunger, poverty and food insecurity, which affect social and economic development, b) the concept of LDN which enables land degradation as a global issue, and c) the policy and actions which have led to successful land-based interventions on the ground.

17. With respect to collaboration with other platforms, one CST Bureau member pointed out the critical need to adequately expose land issues to other platforms beyond the UNCCD, such as other intergovernmental bodies. It therefore may be useful to explore a high level of engagement between the leadership of the UNCCD secretariat and other intergovernmental bodies to successfully mobilize more support attention to land issues.

18. The CST Bureau pointed out another way to enhance the impact of UNCCD science communication would be to work towards reaching political leaders, whose voice on land and drought issues needs to be captured and communicated through all pathways of UNCCD communication.

19. The secretariat confirmed that the viewpoints described by the CST Bureau are in line with the strategy of the UNCCD in communications, policy advocacy, as well as in resource mobilization supporting implementation. All of these are moving in a common direction, as exemplified by the contribution of different units across the secretariat and GM who are facilitating the official launching of the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), which initiated by the Governments of Spain and Senega, during the COP 27 of the Climate Change Convention.

20. The CST Bureau, noting the limited time available during the virtual meeting, decided to defer their discussion on two other topics initiated in the last Bureau meeting related to science communication, which were:

- a. how best to incorporate these concepts and pathways into the SPI modalities of work, and
- b. how best to communicate these concepts at the next meeting of the SPI.

21. The secretariat offered to support further discussion on these via email and during the informal meeting of CST Bureau members during the SPI meeting in December 2022. Examples may include, among others, building on the recommendations from the COP15 relevant decisions and the discussion in the last CST Bureau meeting of shorter technical reports, fewer policy recommendations in UNCCD official documents, and video summaries of SPI products.

22. A CST Bureau member requested the secretariat to share the presentations made for the agenda III as basis for further discussions on those items to be contributed to the SPI meeting in December 2022.



#### **IV. Agenda any other business.**

23. The CST Chair informed the CST Bureau that he attended the COP15 Bureau meeting which was held on 18 October 2022 where important agenda items were discussed. He further mentioned that the minutes for the said meeting had not been finalized nor officially released. In this regard, he requested on his behalf that the secretariat circulate the COP Bureau meeting minutes, once finalized and officially available, to the CST Bureau members for their insights.

24. On the request of the CST Bureau, the secretariat updated the status, progress and next steps on the SPI Review. The recruitment of the lead consultant for the external assessment, which will provide the basis for the SPI review, had been completed. The CST Bureau expressed appreciation for the selection process and selected candidate.

25. The secretariat further informed the CST Bureau that during the next weeks, focus will be on preparing a detailed work programme and schedule for the said assessment. The CST Bureau will be informed regularly, and all inputs from its side will be welcome.

26. The Chair of the CST thanked the secretariat for the update on the SPI review.

#### **V. Next meeting**

27. The secretariat recalled the tentative proposed dates for the next CST Bureau meeting for the last week of February/beginning of March 2023, to be held if it is possible back-to-back with the SPI meeting.

28. The Bureau agreed tentatively on the proposed dates of the next meeting and the exact date will be decided when the CST Bureau meet in Bonn during the SPI meeting in December 2022.

#### ***Closing of the meeting***

29. The CST Chair invited the Chief of the Science, Technology and Innovation of the secretariat, Mr. Johns Muleso Kharika, to give closing remarks, highlighting that the Parties are at critical juncture considering the interrelated threats of land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss. He emphasized the need for urgency in moving forward on COP15 commitments, COP policy decisions, and the concrete actions that are necessary. He underscored that the voice of science needs be heard by the policy makers, land managers and all others tied to the land. He reemphasized the heavy tasks of the SPI in the next triennium and thanked the CST Bureau for helping ensure the success of the SPI and expressed the readiness of the secretariat to support via all available means.

30. The CST Chair closed the meeting with thanks to all participants.



## Annex I. List of Participants

<b>CST BUREAU MEMBERS</b>	<b>UN GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONAL GROUPS<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Jorge Luis Garcia Rodriguez</b> (CST Chair)	Latin America and Caribbean Group
<b>Ahmed Abdelati</b> (CST Vice-Chair)	Africa Group
<b>Hamid Čustović</b> (CST Vice-Chair)	Eastern Europe Group
<b>Jeffrey E. Herrick</b> (CST Vice-Chair)	Western Europe and Others Group

The SPI co-Chair, Dr. Nichole Barger was also invited to attend this meeting on agenda item II and III.

<b>UNCCD Secretariat</b>	<b>Unit</b>
Johns Muleso Kharika	Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit
Barron Joseph Orr	
JIA Xiaoxia	
Furkan Dosdogru	
Lawrencja Eposi	
Satu Ravola	Evaluation Office
Jeroen Van Dalen	Communication Unit
Munazza Naqvi	Global Mechanism

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





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**Annex II. Provisional Agenda**

**Item I**

**The Third Intersessional Meeting of the Bureau of the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
Committee on Science and Technology (CST16)**

**Date:** 8 November 2022

**Venue:** Virtual meeting at Zoom Platform

**Working hours:** 14:00-16:00 (CET)

**Working Language:** English

The SPI co-Chair, Nichole Barger will be invited to attend this meeting on agenda items II and III.

**– PROVISIONAL AGENDA –**

- I. Adoption of the agenda**
- II. Success stories and lessons learned from the 2020-2022 SPI Work Programme**
- III. Science communication pathways in the UNCCD**
- IV. Any other business**
- V. Next meeting**