



**- MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COP 15 BUREAU  
(18 OCTOBER 2022) -**

The first intersessional COP 15 Bureau meeting took place in Bonn, Germany on 18 October 2022. Opening remarks were provided by the COP 15 President, Mr. Alain Richard Donwahi, and UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw.

An overview of matters discussed, and decisions taken by the Bureau are presented below.

**I. Adoption of the Agenda**

A bureau member presented his excuses and informed that, due to a prior commitments, he would have to leave after the morning session. The same bureau member accordingly proposed to move agenda item 4.) *Intersessional process* for the morning session.

Another bureau member further proposed to address under ‘‘other business’’ the initiative related to the ‘‘International Drought Resilience Alliance’’.

The agenda was adopted with these modifications.

**II. Status of Organisation of CRIC 21**

**a. Organizational process**

The secretariat introduced the agenda item and provided updates on the organizational process of the twenty first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21). As per COP 15 decision, the CRIC 21 had been scheduled for May 2023 in Uzbekistan.

A first planning mission went in Uzbekistan from 3 to 7 October 2022 to assess the situation and initiate consultations with the host country to ensure a successful organisation of CRIC 21. The main purpose of this first planning mission was to ascertain the date and venue of CRIC 21.

Following assessment of venues both in Tashkent and Samarkand and further consultations with the host country, it was jointly decided that CRIC 21 will be held in Samarkand from 09 to 13 October 2023.

The secretariat further underlined that Uzbekistan’s authorities both at national and local level are committed to facilitate to the best and possible manner the participation of all delegates.

A bureau member thanked the secretariat for the report and congratulated the Uzbekistan authorities for initiating already consultations in the organisation of the CRIC 21. The same bureau member urged his peers to start thinking as a bureau how to enhance discussions at CRIC 21 in order to be more effective in the action on the ground. CRIC 21 will be an opportunity for all delegates to be committed in the implementation of the convention. CRIC shall as well serve as an effective tool for Parties to face the many and diverse environmental challenges.



The secretariat thanked the bureau members for their feedback and took note of all the comments and guidance.

#### **b. Substantive process**

The CRIC Chair introduced this agenda item by underlining that the twenty first session of the CRIC will focus on the analysis of information prepared on the basis of data submitted by Parties in their national reports. Parties will have policy documents to consider particularly the ones on the drought, Sand and Dust Storm (SDS), Gender and Land tenure. The progress report by the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) will also be tabled for Parties to consider at CRIC 21.

The CRIC Chair further informed that a final report of the session will be produced containing targeted recommendations that will be used to prepare draft decisions to be tabled at the CRIC during its twenty-second meeting (CRIC 22) which will be held in conjunction with COP 16.

The CRIC Chair also informed that two CRIC Bureau meetings were organized, respectively on 5 July and 28 September, to address the reporting deadlines and implementation of umbrella project in eligible country parties. CRIC bureau members expressed concern about the deadline of reporting and delays in disbursement of funds to eligible countries. Consultations have since then been engaged between the CRIC Chair and the funding (GEF) and implementing agency (UNEP) to expedite the funds disbursement process and to reach out to countries and encouraging them to submit their necessary documents for fund disbursement.

Further to the CRIC bureau meetings, it has been decided that countries submit their national report by 23 January 2023 (for the first submission) on Data and information on strategic objective 1 and ; by 28 February (for the second submission) for all the remaining strategies objectives and information related to the implementation of the framework.

### **III. Intersessional process**

#### **a. Intergovernmental working group on midterm evaluation**

The secretariat presented the agenda item by underlining that the process of the intersessional midterm evaluation was to produce findings and recommendations for the consideration of COP 16 in 2024, as per COP decision 7/COP.15.

It's key components include: (1) an intergovernmental working group (IWG-MTE) to oversee the process; (2) an independent external assessment managed by the secretariat ; (3) a participatory process to provide feedback to the draft report of IWG-MTE and (4) a final report of the IWG-MTE for submission to COP 16.

The IWG-MTE has three members per region; seven observers (2 from SPI, 2 x CSO, from and 3 from IGO).

The IWG-MTE plans to have three meetings: (1) an organizational meeting early 2023; (2) a second one back-to-back to CRIC21 to consider the external assessment report and coordination with other groups and processes and the (3) third one in 2024 for the completion of the report for submission to COP 16.



The IWG-MTE coordinates as well with other processes such as the IWG on Drought, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) review, and the Gender Action Plan (GAP) evaluation.

The secretariat concluded by drawing the attention of the bureau on the next steps that include :

- a welcoming message to the nominated members;
- the completion of the identification of the observers;
- the terms of reference for the team of consultants that will prepare the external assessment;
- the set-up of the first IWG-MTE meeting;
- the preparation of the background paper and other information for the group.

A bureau member proposed to have the first IWG MTE meeting in February 2023 given to the many international events also planned for November and December 2022 where the same IWG members attendance is required.

A second bureau member proposed to send a “*save-the-date*” to the already known IWG members so for the meeting to be penciled in their respective calendars. The same bureau member further enquired on how the secretariat will handle a situation when one IWG member/nominee cannot participate. Is an alternate member allowed ?

Another bureau member asked to put on record that the bureau invites all parties to stick to the COP decision and send to working groups the agreed number of representatives to make the work and results as successful as possible and requests the Secretariat to facilitate the work of the groups accordingly, e.g. invite the 3 representatives from regional groups to participate permanently and consult and share information to all Parties of their respective group.

Another bureau member also requested that notification for the first meeting to be sent in advance to allow IWG members to have enough time to prepare.

The secretariat clarified that a meeting on February 2023 is feasible and notification will be sent to all IWG members in due time.

The Executive Secretary further clarified on the issue of the nominee/alternate that the realities and situations are different in each region and the challenges are many and various, accordingly some region or Party under certain exceptional circumstances can consider having an alternate, but the secretariat would encourage all the Parties to seek more continuity and efficiency in running the IWG. The Executive Secretary concluded by stressing that having many alternates in the group may affect the efficiency of the work .

## **b. Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought**

The secretariat presented the agenda item by recalling the decision 23/COP.15 on the establishing of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought during the triennium 2022–2024.



The IWG on drought has been tasked to:

- identify and evaluate all options, including, inter alia, global policy instruments and regional policy frameworks, and linking, where relevant, to national plans, as appropriate, to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought management;
- prepare justifications and outline possible elements, processes, institutional arrangements, and mechanisms for establishment for each policy option;
- present interim results at CRIC 21 and the final findings at UNCCD COP16 in 2024.

The IWG will consist of three-Party representatives nominated by each respective regional group based on nominations by national governments (21 members), plus two representatives from civil society organizations (as observers), two representatives from international organizations working on drought and two independent experts.

The secretariat also informed that the designation of IWG members by Annexes and regional groups is completed. On the nomination of representatives from IGOs independent experts and representatives from CSOs, the secretariat opened a call for expressions of interest for the independent experts and IGOs. The CSO panel made a proposal for consideration of the Bureau, Once the Bureau confirms its decision on the six additional members the Secretariat will contact the totality of the membership to advise them on next steps .

The secretariat finally added that the first meeting of the IWG is scheduled on 29-30 November 2022 in Bonn. Information on logistical arrangement as well as preparation of supporting documentation such as a draft agenda, a foundational document, a tentative calendar of work and the complete list of members will be disseminated in due time.

A bureau member congratulated the secretariat for all the efforts being made in establishing the working group. The bureau member further proposed to replace the representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) by the representative of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The bureau member also endorsed the candidature of the representative from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the Civil Societies nominees and would appreciate if the said candidate could also be ranked first.

Another bureau members also thanked the secretariat for the work done and expressed appreciation for the Gender balance that has been reflected during the selection process. The bureau member further recalled, as per the COP decision, that both Gender and the regional dimension aspects are keys in this process. The same bureau member also wished to see in the list of nominees an increased representation from former IWG members. In that respect, the bureau member proposed to select, under the independent experts, the candidate who was a former member, given to her experience and knowledge of the IWG process .

Another bureau member expressed concern on the date of the IWG meeting that seemed to be very closed to the CBD COP 15; which some IWG members might also have to attend.



As a conclusion; it has been agreed that :

- for the Civil Society: the bureau members endorsed the recommendation made by the CSO Panel;
- For the IGOs : to rank the representative from WMO as first and the representative from the Global Water Partnership (GWP) as second;
- For the independent expert: to rank the representative from the GeoData Institute at the University of Southampton first and the representative of the College of Law at Qatar University as second.

#### **IV. Report by the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)**

The CST Chair presented the agenda item.

Since COP 15, the CST Bureau has convened two meetings. The first one meeting was held virtually on 4 July 2022 and the second one on 13-14 September 2022 as a hybrid meeting.

During these meetings the following key topics have been discussed :

- responsibilities and duties of CST Bureau until the next COP in 2023, including its interactions with the larger CST, the secretariat and its role in the governance of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI);
- preliminary review of the CST16 work programme and the 2022-2024 work programme of the SPI and discussed as a priority the most urgent work needed to be done: 1) the staged renewal of the SPI membership and observers to enable SPI implementation of its work programme for the triennium 2022-2024 as the most urgent work and 2) maximizing the STCs participation in the sessions of CRIC;
- ways of scoping the work of the SPI on its two thematic objectives of scientific assessments and seven coordination activities.
- agreed on the process for the SPI staged renewal, taking into account the required expertise to deliver the SPI work programme for the triennium 2022-2024, as well as geographical and gender balance.
- The CST Bureau also opened a global call for new independent scientists<sup>1</sup> to serve on the Science-Policy Interface (SPI). The application period was between 21 July 2022 and 25 August 2022. A total of 217 applications were received through the open call. The applications were aggregated into a single database that was used for the selection of the six global independent scientists and five regionally nominated independent scientists.
- The CST Bureau also considered and discussed a tentative plan of the intersessional work proposed by the secretariat with a tentative consultancy plan and indicative

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/stories/call-independent-scientists-join-unccd-science-policy-interface-extended-25>



timelines on 1) development of the SPI gender policy and implementation plan; 2) revising the SPI Terms of Reference (TORs) and selection criteria to be consistent with the gender policy and implementation plan described above. The Bureau also considered the secretariat support for 3) managing the review process of SPI supervised outputs, and SPI publications (Technical report) in line with the timelines of the SPI work programme on the two thematic objectives and coordination activities for 2022-2024, 4) supporting CST Chair's reporting to the COP Bureau and 5) the CST's contributions to other international processes as the scientific subsidiary bodies of the convention, especially to the IPBES 19th Meetings of Bureau and Multidisciplinary experts Panel to be held on 27-29 September 2022, as well as 6) the initial schedule of the first meetings of the renewed SPI, 18th Meeting of the SPI to discuss in details its 2022-2024 work programme.

The CST Bureau agreed to consider a joint CST-CRIC Bureau meeting with a tentative proposal for an in-person meeting on 17 November 2022, which was rescheduled for 16 December back-to-back with the forthcoming SPI meeting and requested the secretariat to make consultation with the CRIC Bureau on this proposal. The joint meeting will discuss inter alia how to further engage STCs in the work of the CRIC relating to reporting.

The CST Bureau also agreed to hold a virtual meeting on 8 November 2022, as well as the possibility of an in person meeting back-to-back with the second meeting of the SPI, tentatively scheduled for 27 February to 2 March 2023.

A bureau member commended the efficient work done by the CST bureau, but expressed concern on the limited number of candidate and the procedure of the regional nomination of SPI members. The Asian and Pacific region for example was presented with only candidates to select but not nominate by the region. The bureau member proposed a refining of the procedure and drawing on experience from other intergovernmental panel such as IPCC and IPBES.

The secretariat took note of the comments and guidance of the bureau members.

## **V. Other Business**

As requested by a bureau member, the secretariat provided clarifications on the International Drought Resilience Alliance, an initiative proposed by Spain and Senegal and supported by the secretariat.

The Executive Secretary recalled the call made by the President of the Council of Ministers of Spain during the UN General Assembly, to initiate a process whereby a global initiative will be established to enhance collaboration on Drought related matters. The President of Senegal responded positively to that call. The two countries are now working together with the COP 27 host country and other interested parties to organize a High level event at COP27.

The International Drought Resilience Alliance is envisioned to be a collaborative platform to catalyze political momentum and action that supports countries, cities, and communities. It aims to go beyond disaster response to reduce country and community



vulnerability to drought by promoting effective and efficient preparedness and adaptation measures.

A bureau member wondered how the Alliance is linked to UNCCD process and the IWG on Drought. The same bureau member requested the secretariat to share the concept note of the initiative.

Another bureau member enquired on the linkage between this initiative, the Abidjan call and the UNCCD process. The bureau member asked about any budget implications.

A further bureau member raised a concern on the fact that individual Parties are tasking the secretariat without any COP decisions on some particular initiative, as this might constitute time and resources consuming matters for the secretariat.

Another bureau member referred to decision 23/COP 15 to express support and encouraged the secretariat to bring this initiative further. This initiative is indeed in line with Parties hope as per the same decision mentioned in reference.

The Executive Secretary clarified that this is an initiative from Spain and Senegal and underlined that the secretariat has been requested to support. It is commonly understood from the Abidjan call and previous COP decisions that Drought is a central issue for the UNCCD process. There is therefore a need to join forces and efforts for actions and bureau members are invited to play an active role and shape the initiative.

A bureau member thanked the Secretariat for delivering documents on COP 15 stocktaking e.g. UNCCD key messages expressing that these documents are informative for the Bureau and the regional groups as containing good communication tools on land matters. The bureau member further recommended to share the docs in the regional groups and/or via website. These documents serve as communication tools and can be adapted by Parties and other stakeholders to the national/regional context and priorities.

A bureau member requested the working documents of the upcoming COP Bureau Meeting to be circulated in due time to all bureau member

Another bureau requested that the Invitations letters to the meeting to be circulated two month prior to the meeting to facilitate the travel of the bureau members.

Another bureau member also added that the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face numerous challenges due to remoteness but more and more fundamentally threatened by sea level rise.

The Executive Secretary underlined that SIDS facing submergence is addressed under climate change impacts but should also be addressed under UNCCD.

## **VI. Next Meeting**

A next bureau meeting is foreseen during the first quarter of 2023, to be held in Abidjan as per the invitation of the COP President .