



- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU (17 MARCH 2022) -

The eight intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually on the 17th of March 2022. Opening remarks were provided by the President, Mr. Jigmet Takpa, on behalf of his Excellency Mr. Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, and UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw.

Following the Executive Secretary opening remark, one Bureau member sought clarifications regarding a funding request tabled by the host country to the ambassadors accredited in Abidjan. The same member expressed concerns at, both, the volume of resources requested on that occasion which referred to a USD 10 million gap in funding requirements, but also the timing of such request, less than two months before COP15. The Executive Secretary informed that the secretariat was neither aware nor associated to such a demarche. Based on the information communicated by the highest political authorities the Secretariat is confident COP15 will be held successfully in May 2022. The Executive Secretary further reported that the Host Country Agreement was expected to be signed in the beginning of April and any major issue in the process will be reported to the Bureau for guidance.

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

I. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

II. Status of organization of COP 15

The secretariat introduced the agenda item by recalling the report made on the first facts finding mission organized from 29 August to 3 September 2021 and the second planning mission from 9 to 15 November 2021, which allowed on the logistical side, for a thorough assessment of the conference facilities at the designated venue of the conference.

The secretariat further informed that a third integrated UN planning mission, with representatives of United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), was organized from 14 to 18 February 2022. This mission was key in securing the finalization of all remaining logistical aspect, particularly the finalization of the agreed layout of the center and the identification of all meeting rooms, offices ; services and aspects related to the COVID 19 protocol.

The COVID 19 protocol includes several layers of barriers conceived as shield against the spread of the disease. The measures envisaged will be applied to participants and service providers alike, including the personnel working at the hotel. Summarized, the measures envisioned would include:

- compulsory vaccination against COVID19;
- when (and if) required a PCR test prior to arrival (and departure) to Abidjan;
- daily antigen test;



- the compulsory use of mask always while indoors in the conference venue, exceptions for addressing the room and when eating or drinking;
- room capacity determined by the physical distance.

The protocol is expected to be finalized shortly and will be made available to parties and participants on the dedicated COP 15 page on the UNCCD webpage

An additional mission of UNDSS and UNCCD administrative services is further envisaged in early April to further discuss on issues related to the security parameter between UNDSS and the designated host country security officials with the view to adopt a dedicated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on security; and finalize administrative aspects, including the completion of a contractual agreement for a dedicated COP15 onsite bank.

A summit of Heads of State and Government will also be held in Abidjan on 9 May 2022 on the invitation of His Excellency the President of Côte d'Ivoire. The objective of the summit, building on the previous high-level meetings, aims at bringing renewed political momentum to the deliberations of the Parties, advance the Land Degradation Neutrality Agenda, and specifically draw attention to and focus on the issues of drought and large-scale land restoration.

A bureau member enquired on the financial implications in case a delegate is tested positive during COP15. The concern of the bureau member was essentially related to the number of quarantine days referred to in the first draft of the information note for participants, additional daily subsistence allowance (DSA) and eventual reticketing.

Another bureau member also asked if there was any limitation in the size of delegations to access the plenary or the contact groups.

On the COVID 19 related queries, the secretariat clarified that further to a communication of the host country dated 7 March 2022, no PCR test will be required for fully vaccinated participants arriving at Abidjan. However, vaccination is compulsory to access to the Conference venue. On the 14 days of quarantine the secretariat explained that it was part of a former requirement included in the first version of the information note. The same has been updated and no such a mention will be included. The COVID 19 situation is being assessed on regular basis and any quarantine will be lifted upon the presentation of a negative test. The secretariat further underlined that delegate with COVID 19 positive result will self-quarantine in their own accommodation. On DSA and other cost implication, an emergency COVID 19 fund has been set-up within participation fund. An estimated 2% the fund availability will be used to cover such incidences.

On the hybrid facilities, the secretariat informed that Webcast will be available for the plenary and the main committee. Hybrid facilities are being foreseen in the non-official meeting rooms.

III. Options and implications of the scheduling of COP 16

The secretariat introduced the agenda item underlining that the information note under this agenda item aimed at seeking the bureau members' views on potential options for COP 16 scheduling. Decision on the venue and date of COP 16 will be taken during COP15 in Abidjan.



Referring to the article 22 of the UNCCD : “Unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties, the second, third and fourth ordinary sessions [of the Conference of the Parties] shall be held yearly, and thereafter, ordinary sessions shall be held every two years”.¹ two scenarios for scheduling COP16 could be envisaged :

1. COP 16 in late 2023: The postponement of COP 15 because of the pandemic may be seen as an exceptional case influencing only that COP; in consequence, COP 16 would be organized in the last quarter of 2023 and thus the usual cycle of organizing the COPs in uneven-numbered years would be maintained.
2. COP 16 in 2024: Alternatively, Article 22 may be taken literally – regardless of the timing of COP 15, next COP should be held two years after it, and COP 16 would thus be organized in 2024.

Bureau members thanked the secretariat for elaborating both scenarios in advance. A bureau member further informed that within his constituency, there are views in favor of shifting COP16 in 2024 (making reference to article 22.4 of the convention) while some expressed a preference for having COP 16 in late 2023.

Another bureau member also added that its region had a split views on COP16 scheduling. The bureau member also thanked the secretariat for bringing this to the bureau for an initial conversation and getting Parties to think about the challenges and implications of the different options

Another bureau member added that their region will meet from 5 to 7 April and the secretariat will be informed on the outcome of their discussions on the COP16 scheduling.

Another bureau member stressed that COP16 schedule should be based on the UNCCD reporting cycle taking into account that to date, eligible countries have not been provided with GEF support for these purposes. He has a strong preference for 2024; and this to allow Parties to have enough time to complete their reporting process.

The Executive secretary thanked all bureau members for sharing their views and added that this will be tabled to COP15 for a final decision.

IV. Other Business

A bureau member asked if another COP 14 bureau meeting will take place in person in Abidjan.

The Executive Secretary informed that the secretariat will indeed envisage the convening of a last COP14 bureau meeting in person, in Abidjan before the new bureau is constituted.

Finally , the Executive Secretary thanked all the COP 14 bureau members for their guidance and promised to revert, when necessary, to the Bureau on any further developments.

¹ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-01/UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0.pdf