United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

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Report on the first meeting of the 2022 – 2024 Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

(held virtually on 23 February 2023)

I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC Chair

1. Ms. Biljana Kilibarda (Montenegro), Chair of the CRIC Bureau, welcomed the participants to the meeting. She gave an account on where the Bureau stands with regard to its work and walked participants through the tentative agenda.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The CRIC Chair presented to the Bureau the agenda items highlighting possible action points and called for comments and/or amendments to the tentative agenda circulated prior to the meeting. The provisional agenda of the meeting was considered and adopted without amendments by the Bureau members as contained in annex I of this report.

III. Outcome of the meeting of the IWG on the mid-term evaluation

3. The CRIC Chair invited the secretariat to brief the Bureau members on the outcome of the IWG meeting that was convened in a hybrid format 13 – 15 February 2023 and particularly on the issue whether the formal meetings of CRIC 21 will be used for consultations on the report of the independent evaluation of the IWG.

4. The brief of the secretariat clarified the approach the IWG had agreed to take i.e. the preparation of various reports that will be made available by the IWG in a staggered manner. The first report to be expected is the report of the independent evaluation which will provide the basis of the final report by the IWG to the COP. The independent evaluation will contain conclusions and recommendations that will be based on the factual assessment contained in the evaluation. Those conclusions and recommendations will be consulted upon and assist the IWG in drafting its own conclusions and recommendation, including a draft decision for consideration by the COP on this subject. The second report, even though based on the factual assessment made by the independent evaluation, will also take into consideration strategic aspects and particular viewpoints held by the various constituencies representing

the Convention. The second report is meant to therefore provide the strategic views of the IWG and political interests that may not be captured by the independent evaluation.

How to approach "participatory consultations at the CRIC"

5. The Terms of Reference (Tor) of the IWG stipulates that "participatory consultations" on the independent evaluation will be organized at an intersessional session of the CRIC i.e. CRIC 21. Several options were discussed during the IWG meeting:

a) the participatory consultations are held at the time of the CRIC in Uzbekistan, but separate from the formal agenda of CRIC;
b) the IWG Chairs would briefly announce at a formal meeting of the CRIC that consultations on the outcome of the independent evaluation will be held in Uzbekistan at the sidelines of CRIC (evening);
c) the IWG Chairs would announce during a plenary meeting of the CRIC that consultations will be held at a time to be decided upon, using online consultations. That would mean that no consultations would be held at CRIC 21 (either as part of the formal agenda or outside of it);
d) the participatory consultations would be fully integrated into the agenda of CRIC 21 as a formal agenda item.

6. The Secretariat proposal initially assumed that the participatory consultations would get announced at the CRIC and that maybe interested Parties could have a meeting one evening during CRIC to provide input and feedback on the conclusions reached by the independent evaluation, but that the real consultations would be held online or in person after the CRIC. The IWG meeting discussed the proposal and had a variety of opinions spanning from CRIC 21 should focus on the national reporting and not engage in consultations as part of the agenda to a request for a full day dedicated session on the outcomes of the independent evaluation. The IWG meeting made sure that the CRIC Bureau should consider these opinions and guide the group on whether or not to integrate this into the agenda.

7. It was further clarified by the secretariat that the CRIC Bureau is going to advice the COP Bureau members in its forthcoming meeting on how to treat this issue and that it is hoped that with the guidance received from the COP Bureau the issue will be resolved.

8. The vice Chair from Peru said that annex III Parties thought that those participatory consultations would be too important to be done at the end of the CRIC. However, due to the fact that no funding is available to extend the stay of delegations for one extra day in Uzbekistan, the region would prefer a brief announcement during the CRIC and actual

consultations to be held after the CRIC. She also mentioned that it is important for the region to form their own regional views before the actual consultations started.

9. The vice Chair from France supported the views expressed by the vice Chair of Peru and said that CRIC may be too busy and focus should not be diverted from the programme of work of the CRIC i.e. the review of data submitted by Parties in their national reports.

10. The secretariat clarified that if the COP Bureau was to decide that consultations should be held as part of the formal agenda of the CRIC, those consultations could be held at the very last day of CRIC when Parties would be waiting for the final meeting of the CRIC to adopt the final report of the session.

11. The CRIC Chair then summarized the position of the CRIC Bureau being that the IWG Chairs would be invited to provide a brief status report of where the IWG is and that consultations would be held at a later stage in a virtual manner and after the CRIC. In case the COP Bureau is suggesting to have the consultations about the independent evaluation as part of the formal process of the CRIC, the best option would be to have those consultations at the very end of the CRIC (last day).

IV. Update on the 2022 UNCCD reporting: submissions and future steps

12. The secretariat was invited to provide a brief status update on the reporting process, including information on the disbursement process for enabling funds for reporting. The secretariat informed the CRIC Bureau that following the first deadline for the section on SO 1, the secretariat had received 115 submissions by the time the CRIC Bureau met which was encouraging. Some Parties prior to the deadline had reported difficulties in uploading data within PRAIS and the secretariat with the assistance of the international consultants will make sure that all will be able to submit their data. A quality control period after the passing of the deadline is being considered to ensure that submitted data is coherent and robust.

13. With regard to the deadline for the remaining parts of the report i.e. the 28th February the secretariat informed the Bureau that a couple of request for extension by Parties had already been received but that at the time of the CRIC Bureau meeting it was felt that no extension could be granted due to the timelines for preparing official documentation. The secretariat also informed the Bureau that some Parties approached the secretariat and enquired whether a submission for example in six month time would still be feasible. The secretariat informed the Bureau that in those cases Parties were informed that they are still welcome to use PRAIS to create a pdf version of their report and that those pdf files will be put on the UNCCD website together with all other national reports submitted. Parties are

made aware of the fact that in the event of such a late submission, data will not be included in the official documentation for CRIC.

14. The CRIC Chair mentioned that to her knowledge some Parties are still waiting for the disbursements of the funds from UNEP and asked what Parties will do if the funds arrive in the countries when the deadlines have already passed. The secretariat clarified that countries could still continue to engage in the reporting process and recruit the national experts or hold consultations for which money from the enabling activities can be used. With the solution found that national reports submitted late will be posted as pdf files on the UNCCD website, Parties would have proof that they continued working on their national report, even if the deadlines were missed.

15. The vice Chair from France informed the members that WEOG is compiling comments on how to improve the reporting process, including the platform in a document that it intends to submit to the secretariat. The vice Chair from Peru also mentioned that a similar submission may come from her region and reported in particular difficulties in submitting data on SO 3 by a number of LAC countries which seem to have an inherent technical problem, only to be solved by the developers of PRAIS.

16. The secretariat clarified that any suggestions of how to improve the reporting system is very much welcome and helpful to see where improvements are needed and apologized for any technical difficulties experienced. A call to use the Helpdesk for solving those issues was made again and a reference to the formal agenda item on "improving the procedures for the communication of information" was also made, during which Parties are welcome to discuss modalities for reporting, including the PRAIS portal.

V. Update on the COP Bureau meeting and how the STIC issue will be brought up

17. The secretariat was invited to provide an overview of how the issue of maximizing the engagement of STCs during COPs be tabled at the forthcoming COP Bureau meeting.

18. The secretariat clarified that the same scenarios will be provided to the COP Bureau that already were discussed with the CRIC Bureau during its last meeting, with only slight amendments. The first option is featuring the high level segment during the first week, as discussed earlier. The only difference will be that the COP would officially open its session followed with the usual statements by regions. The high level segment would start with roundtables in the afternoon, while Tuesday would be dedicated to the heads of state summit. Efforts were made to maximize meetings of the CST (5) and allow for two meetings of the CRIC to enable STCs to participate in agenda items of the CRIC. The first week also

features an Open dialogue session for the CSO community as mandated by the COP and the Committee of the Whole (COW) would also need to meet.

19. The second option is a more relaxed option with the high level segment during the second week (Monday and Tuesday). Up to three meetings of CRIC and up to seven meetings of the CST during the first week would maximize the time for STCs to engage in relevant discussions of the CRIC.

20. The secretariat also reminded the Bureau that COP 16 will be hosted in Saudi Arabia and that the host countries expressed its wish to convene the session in 2024 during the first two weeks of December. The schedule of work of COP 16 is due beginning of 2024 and important to note is that while the schedule of work needs to be agreed upon by the current COP Bureau, the high level segment will be discussed and agreed upon with the next COP Bureau presidency i.e. Saudi Arabia.

21. The brief by the secretariat closed with a remark that any reference to the need for intersessional sessions of the CST will be made most probably during the COP Bureau meeting by the CST Chair. The secretariat reminded the CRIC Bureau members that in order for such an intersessional sessions to be held, a COP decisions is needed.

22. The CRIC Chair summarized the views expressed by the Bureau members and recorded that the second option would be preferred, in order to have high level segment participants in Uzbekistan, when decisions are taken. However, she also said that ultimately the COP Bureau would make a final decision on this item.

VI. Any other matter

23. The CRIC Chair asked whether anyone had more issues to discuss.

24. Mr. Payang who seemed to have technical difficulties to join the meeting took the floor and supported the CRIC Bureau decision to have participatory consultations will not be part of the formal meetings of the CRIC except for a brief status update by the IWG Chairs. Actual consultations on the findings of the independent evaluation are then to be held after the CRIC in a virtual format.

25. The CRIC Chair thanked all participants for successful deliberations and closed the meeting.

Annex I- Agenda of the meeting

I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC Chair

II. Outcome of the meeting of the IWG on the mid-term evaluation

III. Update on the 2022 UNCCD reporting: submissions and future steps

IV. Update on the COP Bureau meeting and how the STC issue will be brought up

V. Any other matter

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Annex II schedule of work for COP 16: option 1

COP16/CRIC22/CST16 meetings (2024 -Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

HLS 2nd week; CST ends by Friday 1st week and lasts for max of 7 mtgs (similar to COP14)

Hours	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
10h-13h	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	Informal cons.	COW	CRIC	COW	COW			HLSummit	Opening HLS- ID1,2	COP-ODS	CRIC	COP	
10h-13h				CST	CST	CST	CST				Formal statements				
13h-15h	*CST, CRIC Bureaus*	*COP Bureau*													
15h-18h	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	COP	CRIC	CRIC	COP-ODS	CST			HLSummit	HLS- RT1,2,3	COW	COW	COP	
15h-18h				CST	CST		COP*				Formal statements	CRIC	CRIC		
18h-20h															

Index:

COW	Committee of the Whole
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
COP	Conference of the Parties to follow after the adjournment of the CST
Reg.cons.	Meetings of Regional Implementation Annexes I to V

COP	Conference of the Parties
HLS	High Level Segment
COP-ODS-	Open Dialogue Session

*COP to follow immediately after the adjournment of the CST

**COP -Formal statements will be delivered in the Main Committee Room; no interpretation required

***COP HLS -RT1,RT2,RT3-Round Tables will take place in MET-16, MET-17 and MET-19 -interpretation in all UN languages required

Schedule of work for COP 16: option 2

COP16/CRIC22/CST16 meetings (2024 -Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

Hours	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
10h-13h	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	HLSummit	Opening HLS- ID1,2	COP-1st mtg	CRIC	CST			CRIC	COP-ODS-4th mtg	CRIC		COW-6th mtg (CoW decs	
10h-13h				Formal statements	CST*(immed after COP)		COW-2nd mtg			COW-3rd mtg					
13h-15h	*CST, CRIC Bureaus (tbc)*	*COP Bureau (tbc)*	Science day	Science day	*CST Contact group*	*Joint CRIC/CST Contact group**	*CST Contact group*								
15h-18h	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	Regional cons. (Annexes I to V)	HLSummit	HLS-RT1,2,3	CRIC	CST	CST			CRIC	CRIC	COW-5th mtg (CoW decs Part I)	COP-5th Mtg (CRIC Rep)	COP -6th Mtg (COP decs)	
15h-18h				Formal statements	COW-1st mtg	**COP-ODS-2nd mtg	COP-3rd mtg (CST rep)			COW-4th mtg					
18h-20h					*Joint CRIC/CST Contact group*	*CST Contact group*									

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COP	Conference of the Parties
HLS	High Level Segment
COP-ODS	- CSO Open Dialogue Session

**COP- to follow immediately after the adjournment of the CST

*CST -immediately after the COP